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Through the Eye and Into My Heart: Scenes of Embrace in Morgan MS M.245 and the Tactile Responses They Provoked

Zoe A. Coyle
CUNY Hunter College

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Through the Eye and Into My Heart:
Scenes of Embrace in Morgan MS M.245 and the Tactile Responses They Provoked

by

Zoe Coyle

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Art History, Hunter College
The City University of New York

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Thesis Sponsor:

December 8, 2018
Date
Cynthia Hahn
Signature

December 8, 2018
Date
Maria Loh
Signature of Second Reader
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And finally, to Nick: if our life together is all an allegorical dream vision, I hope I never wake up.
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Introduction

Much has been made of the miniature on folio 11r in MS M.245, a Roman de la Rose in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library (figure 1). The scene depicts a man and woman embracing as they stand at the Fountain of Narcissus. The remarks on this image by contemporary scholars overwhelmingly pertain to the curious crowned head that floats in a nearby tree, and whose reflection is illustrated in the fountain’s waters. In a similar way that this small depiction of an amorous assignation has drawn interest from modern art historians, the miniatures in M.245 previously attracted tactile attention from medieval readers. Throughout the manuscript, there is evidence of rubbing—poignant traces where past hands once moved across variegated pigment and smooth parchment. This thesis examines the representations of embrace and touch in M.245 (hereafter referred to as “the Morgan Rose”), and the haptic responses they induced. I argue that the pictorial program plays upon the text to emphasize physical contact, and that the embrace emerges as a site to explore complex and sometimes contrasting notions of power, desire, ambivalence, embodiment, and not least, the persistent deception of images. I focus on the example of the Morgan Rose to explore a personal, distinctly physical reading practice in which miniatures would be tactually privileged through rubbing or even kissing.


In Chapter 1, I analyze miniatures that depict full-on embraces, as well as highlight others that imply or anticipate closeness. Chapter 2 subsequently considers the manuscript’s images that resist and delay intimacy. Next, in Chapter 3, I consider how the manuscript itself becomes a site of embrace, exhibiting signs of touch as a tactile object, one that bears the marks of its passionate and engaged readership. Chapter 4 examines the Morgan *Rose* within the context of late medieval reading practices which similarly privileged materiality. Finally, Chapter 5 orients the Morgan *Rose* within the historical specificity of Valois patronage and the famous *Querelle*. The goal, similar to Sylvia Huot’s in her innovative work on the *Rose*’s reception, is, as she suggests, “not to assert that this reading was necessarily planned or intended, but more to show what kind of experience a medieval reader could have had and what sort of experiences the illuminated manuscripts can produce.”

By looking closely at the physical and visual interplay between text and image, reader and page, history and manuscript, this thesis attempts to retrieve the sensory experience of reading intrinsically bound up in the object’s materiality, and give it a voice.

There are over 9,000 actual or planned illustrations in the three hundred-plus extant manuscripts and fragments containing the late medieval poem, *Le Roman de la Rose*. This sheer quantity makes the celebrated tome the period’s most popular and illustrated literary text, paralleled only by Dante’s *Commedia*. Unlike other vernacular works of its era, however, the *Rose*’s imagery is relatively varied. In fact, no two surviving manuscripts share the exact same

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4 Meradith T. McMunn, “The Illustrated Fragments of the Roman de la Rose,” in *Interpreting and Collecting Fragments of Medieval Books*, eds. Linda L. Brownrigg and Margaret M. Smith (Los Altos Hills, CA: Anderson-Lovelace, 2000), 98. McMunn has calculated that 77% of extant *Rose* manuscripts are illuminated, have blank spaces, or contain holes where illustrations were removed. The first major article on the iconography of *Rose* manuscripts was Alfred Kuhn, “Die Illustration des Rosenromans,” *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaisershauses*, 31.1 (1912): 1–66.
illustrative program. While illuminators were clearly drawing from the same well of imagery, individual artists introduced new scenes and compositions in addition to varying their subjects’ clothing, poses, and most notably gender. Even Rose rubrics exhibit variation, increasing in number, wording, narrative emphasis, and chapter division.

The poem enjoyed an impressive period of popularity from the 1270s when Jean de Meun finished his extension of Guillaume de Lorris’ poem, through the 16th century when printed editions took over from the manuscript tradition. The earliest surviving illuminated manuscript has been dated from 1283, which means that if de Meun’s original treatment was not illustrated, the bi-authored text began to circulate with images soon thereafter. The poem itself was a lengthy medieval bestseller; the first 4,000 lines were written by de Lorris circa 1230 and then expanded upon forty years later around 1275 by de Meun, who penned an additional 17,000 lines. While these two writers were recognized as co-authors of the Rose, Sylvia Huot stresses the scores of anonymous scribes, editors, illuminators, and other medieval readers who helped

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8 Vatican City, Vat. Urb. lat. 376. McMunn citing Eberhard König’s dating of the manuscript in “The Illustrated Fragments of the Roman de la Rose,” 98 note 4. There McMunn also notes the earliest explicitly dated illustrated Rose is Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana 79 (dated 1308 by its scribe). The Rouses, however, find the dating of Vat. Urb. lat. 376 “unlikely,” though they don’t explain why. See Manuscripts and Their Makers, 389.
shape the text. Despite its multitude of contributors, in its time, the Rose was relatively stable by medieval standards and understood by contemporary readers as a single entity.

If there is relative diversity in Rose imagery, patterns nonetheless emerge across illustrative programs. A consistency is felt when combing through the extant manuscripts, where scribes and illuminators follow a general, largely predictable visual format. The first and sometimes only miniature that the reader encounters is the Lover asleep in bed. Often this is followed by individual portraits of the personifications of the vices that the Lover observes on the garden wall. Notably, illuminations typically appear more frequently in Guillaume de Lorris’ section than the one authored by Jean de Meun. The latter writer routinely receives an author portrait near the beginning of his textual contribution, while Guillaume’s likeness is less

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10 Christine de Pizan, in a letter to Pierre Col: “I consider the work a single entity..for the whole work comes to a single purpose in the conclusion, interpret as you will.” Joseph L. Baird and John R Kane, *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 132. Further to this point, only one extant manuscript contains de Lorris’ poem independent from de Meun’s (BnF fr. 12786), suggesting that the former’s work was considered incomplete in the Middle Ages and that considering the two parts separately is a modern phenomenon since they circulated together, see Jonathan Morton, “Le Roman de la Rose,” *French Studies* 69, no. 1.1 (January 2015): 81. For the genesis of recent scholarship that posits that de Lorris conceived of his poem as a complete entity, that the lack of closure was intentional, and was not unfinished as previously thought, see David Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First ‘Roman de la rose’* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).
12 Nine vices are named in the text, but these are illustrated with as few as eight or as many as ten individual miniatures.
13 The Rouses suggest that this may be simply because patrons ran out of money by the time they got to Jean de Meun’s section, *Manuscripts and Their Makers*, 243; although another reason could be that de Lorris’ writing is more allegorical than de Meun’s, and therefore more conducive to pictorial support.
common. Over the years scholars, including Rosemond Tuve, have remarked on the redundancy in *Rose* imagery. Richard and Mary Rouse’s comprehensive study tries to posit the reason for this lack of creativity. They contextualize the overwhelmingly generic and harried aesthetic of much romance illustration amidst the rushed, large-scale production methods on the rise in Paris in the first half of the fourteenth century. Writing on Richard and Jeanne de Montbaston, the prevalent illuminators of vernacular texts, the Rouses note the husband and wife’s popularity with wealthy patrons despite “their comprehension of the texts they illustrated seldom penetrated the surface, that their pictures were simple and unsophisticated responses to chapter-titles.” The Montbastons typify the “vernacular style” or “mass production style…a style characterized by an abundance of miniatures clichéd in iconography and undistinguished in execution.” A similar assessment appears in the curatorial descriptions from the Morgan Library for two *Rose* manuscripts, remarking that in M.503, the “quality of miniatures is pedestrian and mediocre,” and in M.185: “the miniatures are somewhat crudely drawn and coloured.”

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16 Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers*, 235. According to the Rouses, the Montbastons were involved in the production of 19 *Rose* manuscripts, see page 242.
17 Rouse, *Manuscripts and Their Makers*, 247. The Rouses note that “mass production style” to describe vernacular illustration was first suggested by Joan Diamond in her 1983 article, “Manufacture and Market in Parisian Book Illumination around 1300.”
Elsewhere, M.185 is described as “the miniatures in this book are distinctly hasty and rough,” see *Catalogue of manuscripts and early printed books from the libraries of William Morris, Richard Bennett, Bertram, fourth Earl of Ashburnham, and other sources* (London: Chiswick Press, 1906), no. 111, 173.
It is against this slew of relatively uninspired illustrations that the Morgan Rose’s illumination stands out. Produced in France—possibly Paris—around 1405, the manuscript’s high quality of embellishment (replete with accents of gold leaf) reflects the renown of the text as well as the wealth of its recipient. In fact, the quality of decoration and in particular, the border ornament, is comparable to other manuscripts produced for King Charles VI and his uncle, Jean, Duke of Berry, suggesting that the first owner was a member of the court or even the royal family.\(^\text{20}\) A marginal note on a flyleaf dated January 20, 1720 by Jean Boivin, librarian in the Bibliothèque du Roi, claims the work was made by Nicolas Flamel, secretary for the duke, though the veracity of this attribution has been debated.\(^\text{21}\) While a specific, original patron cannot be definitively identified, in the late sixteenth century, a title page and dedicatory poem was added to commemorate the subsequent gift of the manuscript by the poet Jean-Antoine de Baif to King Charles IX in 1571.\(^\text{22}\) If the Morgan Rose was indeed initially owned by Charles VI or his associates, this later circulation of the book marks the re-entry of the object into the house of Valois (as Charles IX was five generations in Valois lineage removed from Charles VI). More significantly, the physical passing of the manuscript between hands via its status as a personal gift also resonates with the scenes of touch and intimacy inscribed within its pages.

In the illuminations themselves, particular care and emphasis has been laid on bodily points of touch, and it is worth noting that the Morgan’s curatorial description remarks, “an unusual attenuation in the drawing of legs, feet and hands marks the work of the better artist.”\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{20}\) “Morgan Library Curatorial Description for MS M. 245,” [http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf](http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf); The shield of France is also represented on fol.111v. On fol. 1r the ivy border contains seven shields from which the arms have either been left blank or erased.


\(^{22}\) This poem is examined in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

\(^{23}\) “Morgan Library Curatorial Description for MS M.245,” [http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf](http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf); the Morgan identifies two artists, one of whom was influenced by North Italian painting.
This illuminator’s “emotional, and graceful style” seems an appropriate aesthetic for a manuscript so centered on embrace, where the subjects are imbued with a sense of gliding movement that stands in opposition to more standard and static *Rose* illumination.

Overall the miniatures follow a pattern typical of *Rose*: the incipit illustration is the largest and depicts the dreamer in bed. Individual portraits of the personifications of the nine vices that punctuate the two columns of text follow. Similarly, the remaining twenty-five miniatures are supplant within the text block, sequentially drawing on moments or details in the poem. The majority of miniatures occur in the section authored by de Lorris; only five miniatures—one of which is an author portrait—appear in de Meun’s sprawling coda. Further texturing the interpretive playing field of the page are vertical banners, carrying names or short, descriptive phrases written in blue and red ink that float alongside the miniatures’ sprouting foliate borders, serving as captions; change of speaker is indicated by names penned in red or by a backwards capital “D.”

The dating of the Morgan *Rose* to ca.1405 places the manuscript within a salient moment in the reception of *Roman de la Rose* as well as a fraught political juncture within Charles VI’s life. The opening years of the fifteenth century witnessed a spirited debate surrounding the *Rose* and its portrayal of women in particular. Originating out of literary discussions between Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil and growing into a series of interrelated letters, the dispute, *La Querelle de la Rose*, grew to include some of the most important figures of the period and garnered widespread attention that extended beyond elite literary circles. In February 1402, Pizan wrote a letter to the wife of Charles VI, Isabeau of Bavaria, to accompany a package of documents pertaining to the debate that she had compiled for the queen. The letter

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urges Queen Isabeau to review Pizan’s “diligence, desire, and wish to resist by true
defenses…some false opinions denigrating the honor and fair name of women, which many
men—clerks and others—have striven to diminish by their writings.”26 That Pizan addressed a
letter to the Queen was not only a bold move, but one that was politically savvy. King Charles VI
experienced his first bout of madness in 1392, and by 1402 Isabeau was granted authority on the
regency council formed in the wake of her husband’s unstable condition.27 The Queen therefore
wielded an unusual amount of power for a woman. By directing her letter to Isabeau—rather
than another member of the court—Pizan acknowledges Isabeau’s influence, while also hoping
for a sympathetic reception from a woman of high stature. In fact, Isabeau went on to become a
patron of Pizan, as exemplified in “The Book of the Queen” (British Library Harley MS. 4431)
and a miniature in which Pizan presents a manuscript of her collected works (which includes the
“Le Livre des Épîtres sur le Roman de la rose”) to the monarch.

It is against this background of political disturbance in France and social outrage
surrounding the text that the original reader of the Morgan Rose would have encountered this
dition. This context is even more relevant when one considers that the manuscript was very
possibly acquired by a member of Charles VI’s court or even his own family. Dating the Morgan
Rose to the opening decade in the fifteenth century means that it would have likely been
commissioned after de Pizan’s letter to the Queen and the dispersal of La Querelle.28 Yet the

26 Baird and Kane, La Querelle, 66.
27 The regency council otherwise was made up of the Princes of the Blood, who did not rule harmoniously. Isabeau
was installed to mediate between the rival dukes. For more on Isabeau’s unique political role, see Tracy Adams, The
Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
28 Meradith T. McMunn surveys five illuminated manuscripts that Pizan could have come into contact with and
possibly helped form her opinion of the Rose, but excludes M.245 because its dating is slightly too late; see
“Programs of Illustration in Roman de la rose Manuscripts Owned by Patrons and Friends of Christine de Pizan,” in
Au champ escriptures: Ille Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, ed. Éric Hicks (Paris, 2000), 737-753; her
brief discussion of M.245 is on 744-745.
manuscript’s very production and signs of wear and repeated use speak to its enjoyment and perusal nonetheless. For the original reader of the Morgan Rose, any criticism of the poem or accusation of misogyny did not seem to detract from the pleasure of reading its expansive verse and admiring its vivid illuminations.

Before delving in, it is necessary to briefly sketch the contours of previous scholarship, as Roman de la rose studies have surged in recent years. The first modern French edition of the poem was compiled by Ernest Langlois in 1914-24, with Félix Lecoy’s three-volume 1965-75 text becoming the scholarly standard. English translations followed, by Charles Dahlberg in 1971 and Frances Horgan in 1994. For the purposes of this thesis, I refer to Dahlberg for line quotations and default to his character names for consistency. Alfred Kuhn’s 1912 article in German was the first major investigation of Rose illumination, and remains the definitive art historical source pertaining to a wide swath of manuscripts; it does not, unfortunately, include the Morgan Rose. A subsequent publication by John Fleming included a significant number of miniature reproductions, but manuscript illumination was not his focus. When he referred to

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29 Ost notes how illuminated copies produced during the time of the debate do not seem to comment on it; see “Illuminating the Roman de la rose in the Time of the Debate,” 410.
30 Scholarship on the Rose (especially from literary standpoint) is overwhelming and too numerous to list here; for a comprehensive bibliography, see Herman Braet, Nouvelle Bibliographie du “Roman de la Rose” (Louvain, Peeters: 2017); Jonathan Morton provides a condensed but helpful overview of scholarship in “Le Roman de la Rose,” 79-86.
31 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la rose, ed. by Ernest Langlois, 5 vols (Paris: Champion, 1914 – 24)
36 See John V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose.
Rose images, they were often ancillary to his overarching argument about the meaning of the poem. And Eberhard König has done extensive research on Rose manuscripts, but his scope was strictly limited to illuminated copies in the Vatican’s collection.37

The 1992 volume, Rethinking the ‘Romance of the Rose’, edited by Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot marked a turning point in Rose studies.38 Uniting scholars from across disciplines, the essays assembled therein tackled issues related to the poem’s reception and interpretation. In the introduction, the editors observe that modern analysis can be broken down into three perspectives: reading the Rose as Christian allegory, reading it in the context of neoplatonism, or taking a purely literary route that emphasizes narrative structure, genre, poetics, and the Rose’s influence on other medieval literature.39 This latter approach was espoused by most of the writers in the collection; a section on illuminations is included, but contains only two essays, both written by literary scholars.

Sylvia Huot’s work has been an essential contribution.40 Focusing on the manuscript tradition, she observes shifts and variants in textual transcription. In looking at actual copies of the Rose, rather than considering the text isolated from its material means of transmission, Huot brought attention to how the poem circulated and was received by medieval readers. Her research exposed the range of experience and reactions the Rose could produce, while also highlighting other non-textual elements on the folio, notably images, spotlighting their importance in glossing and reshaping the poem’s message. A particularly masterful chapter on

BnF fr. 25526 carefully traces marginalia across quires to analyze the pictorial additions of the illuminator (believed to be Jeanne de Montbaston) and how they play off the text. Across her analyses, Huot attributed a kind of authorship to illuminators, *remanieurs*, and even individuals who made notations in their own copies. While literary scholars tend to draw on this intricacy and its implications for expanding notions of medieval authorship, Huot’s work has also—no less significantly—helped bring images to the forefront of critical discourse.

A subsequent publication compiled by Catherine Bel and Herman Braet, *De la Rose*, incorporated more scholarship on *Rose* imagery, consisting of equal parts iconographic and literary investigations.41 Similarly, the still more recent *Nouvelles de la Rose* speaks to the growing interest in illumination.42 If in the hands of literary scholars, images were often considered as subject to the text, art historians are increasingly bringing attention to the *Rose*’s robust visual tradition. A boon has been digitization projects—especially the joint effort of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins University in the creation of the *Roman de la Rose* Digital Library43—which have become enormously helpful tools in cross-referencing manuscripts across repositories. No single approach dominates across this vast and continually blossoming field of study. Scholars often track and compare depictions of characters or events across extant manuscripts, as in Suzanne Lewis’ investigation of scenes of openings and closure.44 Another frequent strategy is to identify a unique emphasis in an individual manuscript’s image program that informs a reading of the poem—for instance,

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41 *De la ‘Rose’: Texte, image, fortune*, eds. Catherine Bel and Herman Braet (Louvain, 2006).
43 https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/
Heidrun Ost’s interpretation of the pictorial focus on mythological exempla in a manuscript produced for either the Duke of Burgundy or the Duke of Berry.\textsuperscript{45} My own method is most in line with the latter. In highlighting a manuscript whose broader pictorial theme of embrace has been overlooked, I deploy the example of the Morgan Rose to tread into overlooked territory concerning the reader’s corporeal interaction with the manuscript and to posit the notion of romances as sites for a distinctly physical reading practice, in which miniatures would be kissed, rubbed, or pierced.

Citing art historians including Michael Camille, Suzanne Lewis, Meradith T. McMunn, Martine Meuwese, Heidrun Ost, among others, I am interested in using their work to tease out a fuller reading of the Morgan Rose, as so far, scholarship has addressed this specific manuscript only in passing. The distinctive style of the illuminations has drawn questions regarding the region of production. In his French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry, Millard Meiss mentions the Morgan Rose in a footnote, dismissing it as “not French,”\textsuperscript{46} yet without explicating why he reached that conclusion. Correspondingly, the Morgan’s curatorial notes state that Otto Pächt considers one hand to be that of a German panel painter.\textsuperscript{47} These attributions remain un-expounded, and the manuscript is consistently categorized as French. The most extensive discussions of the Morgan Rose have been concentrated on the seemingly incongruous miniature of folio 11r with which this thesis opened, and will be incorporated into my discussion of the image in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{45} Heidrun Ost, “The ‘Mythographical Images’ in the Roman de la Rose of Valencia,” in De la ‘Rose’: Texte, image, fortune, eds. Catherine Bel and Herman Braet (Louvain, 2006), 141-182.
\textsuperscript{46} Millard Meiss, in French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries (New York: Braziller, 1974), 433, note 11, states: “The splendid Morgan Library M. 245 is not French either.”
\textsuperscript{47} The Morgan’s notes state that Otto Pächt considers one hand to be that of the German panel painter discussed by Ernst Buchner, “Eine Gruppe Deutscher Tafelbilder vom Anfang des XV. Jahrhunderts,” Oberdeutsche Kunst der Spätgotik und Reformationszeit, eds. Buchner and K. Feuchtmayr (Augsberg: Filser, 1924); see “Morgan Library Curatorial Description for MS M.245,” http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf
Previous theorization on the interweaving of desire and representation is especially relevant to my project. This entwinement is the subject of one of the two essays concerning illustration in *Rethinking the ‘Romance of the Rose’*; Stephen G. Nichols’ *Ekphrasis, Iconoclasm, and Desire* examines both the textual descriptions and visual depictions of the vices on the garden’s wall. He observes how, as some of the first illustrations the reader encounters, the illuminations of the vices stipulate a mode of gazing, one that explores “the rhetoric of perception as sensual event.”\(^4\) Indeed, as explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis, just as an image of the Rose (its reflection in the fountain of Narcissus) stimulates the Lover’s desire, rousing him to action, the miniatures in manuscripts prompted readers’ imagination, sometimes provoking them to take part in the physical act of rubbing images.

Similarly, touch, longing, and love are key ingredients for Victor Stoichita’s thesis in *The Pygmalion Effect*, in which he argues that mimesis in Western art is an inherently libidinal pursuit.\(^4\) While I find his overarching, grand narrative problematic—he sidesteps social history, questions of power, and remains entrapped within antiquated notions of the genius male artist—his discussion of the *Rose* highlights the necessity of images in the construction of desire. I agree with his assessment that, “without the ‘arrow piercing through the eye,’ there would be no *Romance of the Rose*, and above all, there would, in my opinion, be no illustrated *Romance of the Rose*.”\(^5\) The entangled nature of image, desire, and action is most succinctly stated by Michael Camille, who asserted, “without the image love could not exist.”\(^6\) Camille’s exposition

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of idolatry in the context of courtly love and the Pygmalion episode in the *Rose* furthers this point on the erotic elements of images.\textsuperscript{52}

The work of Camille, Nichols, and Stoichita selects *Rose* illuminations from disparate manuscripts. My aim, instead, is to approach the Morgan *Rose* as a holistic object. This particular manuscript is a fitting case study with which to flesh out the insistence of desire and representation; its scenes of embrace and the haptic responses these images have induced are key facets in its biography, and have so far gone unremarked. As mentioned above, Sylvia Huot has been a champion of *Rose* manuscript studies, but her work on reader response privileges additive gestures, such as textual variants or marginal notes.\textsuperscript{53} Mark Cruse’s brief essay, “Matter and Meaning in Medieval Books,” points to the inherent sensorial nature of reading, but the article’s limited purview only surveys the material turn in recent scholarship, ultimately calling for more work to be done in this vein on romances.\textsuperscript{54} Cruse mentions the general practice of iconoclasm in passing and does not cite devotional touching of miniatures at all.\textsuperscript{55} In fact, no scholarship has comprehensively addressed rubbing in romance manuscripts outside the context of censorship.\textsuperscript{56} My examination of the Morgan *Rose*, other holdings at the Morgan, and twenty manuscripts at the BnF (as well as virtual consultations using the Digital Library), suggest that this sort of rubbing in secular manuscripts was common, and may have larger implications for understanding the *Rose*’s reception. Given the number of extant *Rose* manuscripts, however, a wider sampling is necessary to substantiate this hypothesis and must remain outside the scope of the present paper.


\textsuperscript{53} See Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers*.


\textsuperscript{55} For the sentence mentioning iconoclasm of miniatures, see Cruse, “Matter and Meaning,” 53.

\textsuperscript{56} Censorship of romance scenes is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.
Here, I center my argument around one manuscript. By confronting the illuminations of the Morgan *Rose*, we can get at their role not only in shaping the telling of the story, but how these images provoked an embodied response that is distinct from the effect of the words written on the same pages. Images, after all, do something text cannot. To paraphrase *Rose* verse, images enter “through the eye and into the heart.” An art historical analysis taps into this particular intensity, to access what Jennifer Borland has called the “tangible materiality and the immediacy of medieval material.” I argue it is an essential aspect of the Morgan *Rose*, one that has gone previously unexplored.

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57 de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 54; line 1687.
Chapter 1: Embraces

The first miniature opens the poem with iconography standard in illuminated *Roman de la rose*: a scene of the Lover asleep in bed (figure 2). Emphasizing the dreamlike state, the bed rests on a grassy lawn, yet its canopied drapes speak to placement within interior space. A woman wearing a floral crown hovers at the foot of the bed while a couple stands over the dreamer, locked in an embrace. The man stands behind the woman, his hands wrapped around her; he appears to kiss or whisper something in her ear. The two sets of hands amidst the woman’s flowing cloak and the rubbing this part of the image has endured make it difficult at first to discern exactly where one figure ends and the next begins—and also whose hands are whose—adding to the prominence of their close physical entanglement. Upon closer inspection, the man’s hands appear to be the lower set, which encircle the woman’s waist. Does her right hand lay across her heart in a sign of endearment? Or is that hand raised, meant to swat away the man’s advancements? Whether this coupling represents wanted or unwanted contact, the fact that these two figures are even included in an opening miniature of the *Rose* is notable, as they are not named in the text and they do not appear in similar scenes of any other known manuscripts of the poem.59 Their mysterious inclusion is underscored by considerable rubbing across their bodies and faces. In a sense, the movement of the reader’s fingers fervently circulating along the paint’s surface mimics the frenzied nature of their embrace.

59 “Morgan Library Curatorial Description for MS M.245,” [http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf](http://corsair.themorgan.org/msdescr/BBM0245a.pdf); this description refers to them as “two embracing lovers.” When other figures appear in opening miniatures of the *Rose*, they are usually Resistance or Idleness.
The pair’s particular position is unusual and warrants further commentary. In attempting to find other compositions in which a man holds a woman from behind while standing, I have come across only three so far that bear similarities. The first, on the lid of a wood casket, has a far more explicit context, showing a couple copulating standing up. This scene is meant to be didactic, demonstrating the what-not-to-do of immoral behavior, namely tergo or backward, the fourth sexual position outlined by Albert the Great and susceptible to the highest level of condemnation.60

The second example showing a tightly entangled upright couple is a miniature from a Li Ars d’Amour in the collection of the Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er, Brussels (MS 9543, fol. 22v).61 While in this case the figures are closely side-by-side rather than back-to-front, their intimate union is emphasized in the blue garment that encircles them both, just as in the Morgan Rose the woman’s long, voluminous sleeves confuse and play up the pair’s physical relation to one another. In the former, the man and woman hold a long, blank scroll that implies the legal formality of marriage through which two people become one.62 This point is made even more explicit in another Brussels manuscript of the Li Ars d’Amour (Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9497). Here the couple has merged into a single being with two sets of heads and shoulders but just one pair of legs. This somewhat monstrous joining of male and female bodies prompted a reader to scratch out the bicephalous creature’s faces.63 These instances outline two possible extremes for

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60 Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, 146 (with image).
61 MS 9543, fol. 22v and the casket lid are illustrated in Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, 145-146.
this type of embrace: it could represent an abhorrently sinful act, or on the other hand, a completely sanctioned one.

The third comparison invokes both playful and didactic associations in a scene from a *Breviari d’amor* (figure 2a). This miniature is part of a pictorial cycle demonstrating the perils of worldly pleasures, where demons have been inserted into otherwise stock scenes referencing romance illumination. The picture is captioned, “The devil makes the lover adore his lady.” Here the coupling on the right recalls the entwinement in the Morgan *Rose*; the grey devil seems to be propping the lady up, positioning her left arm just so, in a prescribed gesture of female modesty. He stands in as a nefarious, yet humorous cupid, goading his coquettish charge to perform the inane rituals of courtship. While the *Breviari*’s composition of the lover kneeling before his beloved consciously recalls clichéd illustrations typically found in romances like the *Roman de la rose* (in fact, Pygmalion and his image assume the same poses in the Morgan *Rose*; figure 11), the orientation of the lady and her supporting devil are recalled in the strange couple in the Morgan *Rose* (figure 2). Just as the grey creature sinfully but impishly impels the lady, the man in our Morgan manuscript ensnares his captive with lustful and aggressive advances.

If we imagine that the woman being embraced from behind in the Morgan *Rose* could be a personification of the Rose itself, and therefore a foreshadowing of the poem’s end in which

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of male and female also brings to mind the story of Hermaphrodite, which was included in medieval retellings of *Metamorphoses*, such as the *Ovide moralisé*. An initial online search for illuminations of this scene in extant manuscripts did not yield compositions similar to the strange embrace in the Morgan *Rose*. That said, contemporaneous interpretations of the Hermaphrodite myth seem relevant here. The tale was read variously as cautionary against indulgence in worldly/fleshly pleasures, as endorsement of harmonious accord, as a proper trajectory toward civilized behavior, and later in the early modern period, as Christian allegory; see Miri Rubin, “The Person in the Form: Medieval Challenges to Bodily ‘Other,’” in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester University Press, 1994), 107. Rubin notes how the hermaphrodite was considered “monstrous” in the Middle Ages, though not necessarily with completely negative connotations, 102.


the Lover finally reaches and overtakes her, the ambiguity of their embrace is central. Questions of consensual action are key as the text and some miniatures highlight an aggressive aspect to the poem’s climax.\textsuperscript{66} In this interpretation, the ultimate goal of the Lover’s dream is illustrated as a chimera while he is simultaneously shown asleep in bed. Indeed the entwined lovers’ placement is unclear; they could be standing behind the side of the bed in the real space of the story, or levitating above the dreamer as phantoms. This latter possibility is strengthened through comparison with dream visions depicted in other illuminations, for instance a contemporaneous Rose manuscript (Valencia, Biblioteca Histórica de la Universidad, MS 387) that illustrates Socrates’ dream of a swan as flying above him as he snoozes below (fol. 40r).\textsuperscript{67} From the beginning, in this illustration, the Morgan Rose draws our attention by incorporating a strange scene of embrace, a theme of the poem and one that as we will see, plays out across its images.

Following the miniatures of the nine vices on the exterior of the garden wall, the Carol of the God of Love is illustrated on folio 6v. (figure 3). Set inside the verdant garden of Diversion, this composition introduces the environment in which all subsequent amorous unions will occur. The Rose text evokes a rich sensory haven: the smell of herbs planted along the pathway, the sounds of musical accompaniment, and the looks of a constellation of beautiful guests whose beauty and vestments are described in great detail.\textsuperscript{68} In the Morgan Rose, the array of people described in the text has been scaled down to a representative three couples. A sole musician, perched on the ground, plays a harp. The God of Love is recognizable by his crown and wings;

\textsuperscript{66} For example, Valencia, Biblioteca Histórica de la Universidad, MS 387, fol. 147v depicts the Rose as half-human/half-sculpture, toppled over amid wisps of red flames.

\textsuperscript{67} BnF fr. 159 (Bible historiale), fol.256r shares a similar composition depicting Mardochai’s dream of dragons, although here the dreamer, still in bed, is shown at the moment of awakening. Heidrun Ost discusses both of these miniatures (with images) in “Illuminating the Roman de la Rose in the Time of the Debate,” 411-417.

\textsuperscript{68} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. The Romance of the Rose, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton University Press, 1971), 40-48; lines 691-1303. English translations throughout are from Dahlberg unless otherwise noted; I also default to his character names for consistency.
he holds the arm of his companion as his right foot steps on her mauve skirt. The women’s 
flowing gowns, with their pools of gem-colored fabric, imbue the ladies with a liquid movement. 
Their male partners similarly appear to glide, their feet drawn as delicate slivers of white or 
black. The composition is punctuated by a golden freestanding wall positioned centrally behind 
the revelers. While more modestly rendered versions of this scene in other manuscripts typically 
portray the dancing subjects compacted frontally in a straight line set against a solid block of 
gold leaf, the Morgan Rose contextualizes that gold, making it a structure that inhabits the space 
of the characters in a garden where they move freely. The gold here is not only a decorative 
element that highlights the scene’s prominence in the story—this first and formative encounter 
with the God of Love being the genesis for the following narrative—but additionally describes a 
three dimensional fixture that situates the realm of the miniature in a physical space. Whether or 
not the metallic polyptych would have been a real backdrop for courtly festivities, the object, 
with its four joined panels, recalls the form of an altarpiece (or perhaps something found on a 
stage set). It adds a dimension of pious display, signifying the dance’s status as a focal point of 
court ritual. Indeed the Lover reaches for empyrean when describing the revelers: “in absolute 
truth, they seemed winged angels.”

The scene is also notable for the crenelated top of the garden wall that cuts across the 
lower margin, giving a sense that the viewer is privileged to be looking into a private, secluded 
space. This sense of perspective is analogous to the Lover’s viewpoint, who, although according 
to the text watches from inside the garden’s walls, is still very much an outsider looking in. 
Already in this first, generally milder and romantic, part of the text, the Lover describes coming 
across the dancers in aggressive, violating terms that augur the assaultive language that later

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69 de Lorris and de Meun. The Romance of the Rose, 40; line 725.
describe his conquest of the Rose: “I found Diversion nearby when I penetrated to a secluded place where he was.” The association of the garden as an amorous enclosure was widespread in late medieval culture; notoriously it was where lovers would meet, exchange gifts, and embrace. As explored in subsequent chapters, the Morgan Rose, as an object enclosed between covers, itself becomes a surrogate loci amoeni, inspiring touch and delight in its readers.

Sequentially, the next miniature of embrace takes place at the Fountain of Narcissus (figure 1). The mythical fountain is situated in the garden where the Lover begins his dream vision and subsequent quest, eliding Ovidian lore with the Lover’s memory, in what Suzanne Lewis terms “past myth and present fiction.” This strange temporality is warped still further in the Morgan Rose, where, as I mentioned, an unfixed head bobs in a nearby tree and is reflected in the pool below. Lewis has contended that the extraneous head is none other than Charlemagne, since the poem reads, “not since the time of Charlemagne has such a fair pine tree been seen.” Rather than the gross misreading of the text by the illuminator that Lewis stipulates, another explanation was put forth by Jacqueline Thibault Schaefer, who argued that this scene was recycled from the Tryst of Tristan and Iseult. In this line of thinking, the crowned head is King Mark, whose reflection signals to Tristan that he is being spied upon. Alternatively, Alcuin Blamires and Gail C. Holian are confident that it is the God of Love who

71 For the garden as epicenter for love, see Paul F. Watson, *The Garden of Love in Tuscan Art in the Early Renaissance* (Philadelphia, 1974); Camille has a brief overview of this notion (with a selection of related imagery) in *The Medieval Art of Love*, 73-93. The garden had other connotations including as the hortus conclusus, which represented the purity of the Virgin, and the Virgin in the Rose Garden was a popular subject in art of the later Middle Ages; see Virginia Brilliant, “The Virgin in the Rose Garden,” in *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, ed. Martina Bagnoli (Yale University Press, 2016), 47-53. For the polysemy of medieval gardens, see essays in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986).
haunts the tree, although they don’t acknowledge and reconcile the fact that otherwise the deity in the Morgan Rose is portrayed youthful and clean-shaven. Regardless of any exact iconographic explanation, the scene stresses a sense that the amorous events are being watched, and that the spy risks being betrayed by his reflection, positing the danger of images. This curious detail in the Morgan manuscript warns that any image—including the Lover’s vision of the Rose—could lead to peril. After all, another reflection in the same fountain led to Narcissus’ own demise.

Encountering this miniature, the reader also reaches a pivotal moment in the text. It is in the fountain that the Lover first sees the object of his desire: the titular rose of the poem. The Lover describes the flower’s exquisite beauty and intoxicating aroma, but he is not satisfied to admire it passively, mediated through the water’s reflection; instead he yearns to physically embrace it. The Lover declares he “would have approached to take it if I had dared stretch out my hand to it. But the sharp and piercing thorns that grew from it kept me at a distance.” This urge to obtain the rose drives the arc of the following narrative, yet immediate gratification is thwarted because of the rose’s prickly nature. In folio 11r, this delay is rendered visually. The man reaches his arms around the woman, but his hands remain extended; they hesitate to clasp her body in a tight, total embrace. We can follow the banner’s textual identification and read the male figure as Narcissus, with the ambivalence of his hands meant to signify his refusal to requite Echo’s love. Or, based on Lewis’ observation that because of the woman’s sweeping blue gown, “she appears literally to flow out of the fountain,” this awkward hug could represent the...

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75 Alcuin Blamires and Gail C. Holian, The Romance of the Rose Illuminated, 23-24, note 60. In a later scene in a different manuscript (BnF fr. 12588), the God of Love sits in a tree as he shoots the Lover (fol. 12r).
76 de Lorris and de Meun. The Romance of the Rose, 53; lines 1663-1665.
77 The banner reads: “or voyez ceste compaignie cest Narcissus et s’amie.”
Lover’s fantasy, embracing a pictorially rendered realization of the rose metaphor. Yet their total embrace remains unattainable for now, a realization registered by the Lover’s vulnerable, unsatisfied gesture of his outstretched hands.

This initial and formative encounter with the Rose raises issues of power central to the notion of the embrace itself. The gesture was, in Michael Camille’s terms, “a multivalent social sign,” one that had a greater range of associations and connotations in the Middle Ages than it does today. Writing specifically on a subset of bodily union, the kiss, Camille remarks how depending on context, a kiss could imply sexual desire, spiritual connection, legal formality, courtly love, Judas-like treachery, mysticism, or peaceful unity. Although the embrace as a category is a broader umbrella, one that speaks of extensions of hands and arms toward other bodies, similar issues arise in representations of both. Like the kiss, the embrace’s diversity of meaning makes for an especially slippery subject when it comes to being rendered visually. An image of two people kissing could motivate a multitude of actions; the same scene could inspire piety, if read as a cautionary tale, or alternatively arouse sin if the sign is misinterpreted. What is interesting about the desired physical contact that fuels the quest of the Rose is that it is the woman who has the power to bestow a kiss on the Lover, but holds back through a series of obstacles or personifications. This inversion of power was also a reversal of the traditional

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79 For a discussion of the representational mode of the rose, see Hult, Self-Fulfilling Prophecies, 250-255.
82 Alison Stones incorporates the embrace in her discussion of the kiss, defining it as being “less intimate,” see “Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere,” 126.
83 François Garnier classifies this gesture as signifying protection, see Le langage de l’image au moyen âge (Paris: Le Léopard d’or, 1982), vol. 1, 214.
84 The Rose itself can also be considered a multivalent sign; see Hout, The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers, 239. She notes how the poem was read in a range of medieval circles and how it took on a variety of interpretations given the context.
practice of embrace. Typically, the woman was the passive recipient of the kiss, as in the carving of *Luxuria* at the Amiens Cathedral, but in romance literature, the courtly kiss is “where, as lords over their lovers, women wielded the kiss as tactic, shield, and weapon.”85 The Rose plays hard to get, its prickly exterior repelling the Lover while at the same time its magnificence perpetually spurs him on.

Even early in the text, when Venus intercedes and compels Fair Welcoming to let the Lover kiss the rose, this brief union is not enough and only stokes the Lover’s desire. Fair Welcoming warns the Lover, “for he who can attain to a kiss can hardly remain at that point.”86 This cautionary message is echoed in a statement written by the 13th-century French poet, Robert de Blois, in *Les Chastiement de dames*: “the kiss leads to other things.”87 The kiss as a segue to additional physical contact—namely, sex—is integral to both its appeal and its danger. It is not until the final lines of the poem, when the Lover physically overpowers his object of desire by violently assailing the castle in which the rose was imprisoned, that he finally achieve his ultimate goal and exclaim, “I plucked, with great delight, the flower from the leaves of the rosebush.”88 Jean de Meun’s description employs emphatically sexual metaphor, making it clear—in case the reader hadn’t realized in the preceding lines of not-so-subtle verse—that the Lover’s quest is of a deeply lascivious nature. The shift from Fair Welcoming’s subtle warning about the potency of kisses at the beginning of the story to the Lover’s ferocity in the final encounter epitomizes the disparate styles of the two authors: Guillaume’s allegorical dream.

85 Camille, “Gothic Signs and Surplus,” 162. In a further reversal, modern critics have interpreted aspects of the *Rose* as parodying courtly love; see Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose*, 208-226. Also, Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*, 275-278.
86 de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 79; lines 3405-3406.
vision versus Jean’s verbose and unabashed extension. Notably, in the Morgan Rose, the eventual carnal scene and the violence leading up to it is not depicted in miniature form. Perhaps the illuminator and patron considered the ending too raunchy for visual representation—especially in the wake of La Querelle—although the lack of any illumination of the closing scenes is not unusual, and many extant Rose manuscripts end their pictorial cycle with Pygmalion, as we will see, is the case in the Morgan Rose.

Before getting ahead of ourselves, I’d like to take a cue from the Rose’s narrative and delay chronological gratification and closure in order to return to analysis of the illustrative program’s initial depictions of physical contact. We will momentarily skip over the one miniature on folio 13r (figure 10) that follows the lovers at the Fountain of Narcissus to discuss the miniature on folio 15r, as here another embrace as power play can be seen (figure 4). If the image of the lovers’ assignation at the fountain aroused suspicion, here the God of Love is shown embracing the Lover in a joyful scene demonstrating a complete, compliant union. In the text, the Lover offers to kiss the deity’s foot, but the God of Love insists, “you will kiss me on my mouth, which no base fellow touches.”89 The God of Love directly invokes power in relation to their embrace; he designates a hierarchy between foot kissing and mouth kissing, with mouth-to-mouth contact as more exclusive. He also implies that the Lover is worthy of such a kiss, therefore elevating our protagonist above any “base fellows.” In visualizing this meeting of lips, the miniature presents the Lover on bended knee, spatially lower than the God of Love who is seated in his golden throne, implying a rigid distribution of power between the two figures. The God of Love is higher, and it is he who embraces the Lover, placing the latter in the passive, sponsa role typical of the woman in a heterosexual union. This idea of servitude and obedience is

89 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 57; lines 1931-1932.
perhaps comparable to the male-male embrace in the context of the *osculum feodale*, a ritual of vassalage. In the feudal kiss, J. Russell Major writes, “the vassal, without sword, belt, or spurs, knelt bareheaded, placed his joined hands between those of his lord…the lord then kissed the vassal on the mouth and said that he took him as his man.” On folio 15r, the God of Love’s opulent accessories (golden crown and wings; belted purse) contrast with the Lover’s plain attire, echoing the vassal’s modesty of dress in Major’s description. The *Rose* text also enforces the notion of a feudal embrace, stating, “Immediately, with joined hands, I became this man. And you may understand that I grew very proud when his mouth kissed mine; this gift gave me great joy.”

The joy the Lover feels in embracing the God of Love is clearly expressed in the miniature. The Lover’s entire body—save for one dangling foot—rests on the golden throne, as if his bounding enthusiasm has thrust the Lover right into the God of Love’s arms. With no space visible between the two figures, their bodies are fully contiguous. Their hands on each other’s backs can either be read as gently resting, or as levers by which they can pull one another even closer. Lips touching, they gaze into each other’s eyes. This scene reveals a vehemence that exceeds the pious servitude stipulated in the text. Lewis notes that while the poem mentions only a kiss on the mouth, many manuscripts go further to depict a full-on embrace of “forced

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90 Camille makes this association between the feudal kiss and the Lover’s kiss with the God of Love. Camille observes how courtly love repurposes elements of spiritual and legal/secular systems, see “Gothic Signs and Surplus,” 162.
93 While this author finds the practice of kissing with eyes open awkward, most medieval representations of kissing seem to portray partners with eyes open. Perhaps this is because eyes closed would imply a sexual connotation, and therefore be inappropriate, though I haven’t yet found a discussion or acknowledgement of this. Eyes open during a kiss might also point to the important role of vision in desire and falling in love; see Chapters 3 & 4 of this thesis.
closure.” Yet while the Morgan *Rose* presents this scene as a full body union rather than a simple peck, any notion of a coerced capture of the Lover seems to be overtaken by his eagerness. The “forced closure” Lewis identifies in Bodleian Library MS Douce 195 (fol. 15v) shows the Lover awkwardly positioned away from the God of Love, as if in a gesture of resistance. The Lover in the Morgan *Rose*, instead, seems honored and willing to find himself in such a bind.

The heat of such passion does subside in the next miniature, where the Lover’s servitude to the God of Love is rendered more stoically on the verso of the same folio. Here the miniature in the left column illustrates the God of Love locking the Lover’s heart (figure 5), a suggestion put forth by the Lover to demonstrate his allegiance. The text describes this closure in gentle, almost intimate terms: “Then he touched my side and locked my heart so softly that I hardly felt the key.” Even the gesture of fitting a key in a lock radiates sexual metaphor. Yet at the same time, the figures’ positioning in the miniature lacks the passion of the previous illumination, instead underscoring the Lover’s subservience through his downward gaze and crossed hands. It is worth noting that the flowering, black background visually recalls the backdrop behind the lovers at the Fountain of Narcissus on folio 11r, suggesting a parallel of the relationship between the Lover and the God of Love, and that of the Lover and his Rose; both are founded on unequal footings of power.

Like the pairing of the embrace and locking scenes between the Lover and the God of Love, the pair of miniatures on the recto and verso of folio 26 are in dialogue with each other; the verso formally and sequentially reacts to the scene on the recto. In the miniature on the top of

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95 Illustrated in Lewis, “Images of Opening,” 228.
the right column on folio 26r, Fair Welcoming speaks to the Lover (figure 6). Gendered male in the text, Fair Welcoming here is depicted as a statuesque woman in a vibrant gown. The two figures’ bodies are arched away from each other, as if leaving room for their conversation to unfold. On the verso (figure 7), Fair Welcoming embraces the Lover, compositionally eclipsing the space that was between them in the previous miniature. Since this second image is also placed on the top right column, and the pigment of the recto image can be seen through the vellum, the effect leaves a trace of what came before (figure 8), reminding the viewer of how so many of the openings in the *Rose* are countered by closures. The embrace of Fair Welcoming and the Lover is a tightly coiled embrace; in his enthusiasm the Lover even steps on Fair Welcoming’s skirt, and his head is buried somewhere between shoulder and chest. The features of Fair Welcoming’s face have been completely abraded, leaving behind a flesh-colored oval. This blank canvas of a face is fitting given the text’s similar obfuscation, since this miniature accompanies verse that reads:

“Fair Welcoming, who felt the breath of Venus’s torch, gave me a gift of a kiss with no more delay. Venus and her torch had done so much that I had no longer to wait, but straightaway took a sweet and delicious kiss from the Rose.”

As David Hult has observed, the beginning of this passage is initially unclear. The kiss at first seems to be shared with Fair Welcoming, but concludes with the statement that the Lover in fact kisses the Rose. The Morgan *Rose* (and its rubricator and illuminators) supports this confusion.

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97 This is not unusual for *Rose* iconography, though scholars debate its significance. Fleming writes it off as an insignificant grammatical accident, see *The Roman de la Rose*, 43-46, while Simon Gaunt stresses it as a formative detail, see “Bel Acueil and the Improper Allegory of the Romance of the Rose,” *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 65-93; on pages 66-67 he sums up other interpretations.

98 Openings coupled with closures are a prevalent theme in Suzanne Lewis’ “Images of Opening,” quoted throughout; the observation regarding the bleed through of pigment is my own.

99 de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 80; lines 3473-3476. Some manuscripts illustrate this scene as an actual embrace between man and flower, for example: BnF fr. 1567 (f. 26v).

Rather than identifying the recipient of the Lover’s kiss as the Rose, the banner accompanying the miniature reads, “Here is Fair Welcoming and the Lover.” 101 That Fair Welcoming’s visage has been wiped clean by a zealous reader allows for the Lover—and reader—to project his desires onto it. 102 Through the personification of Fair Welcoming, and with Venus’ aid, he kisses the Rose.

In her essay on the embrace in medieval theater, Pamela Sheingorn argues that the embrace is a sign of embodiment. 103 However, in coming together physically and transgressing bodily boundaries, one nonetheless acknowledges distinctions between the self and other. In the miniature on folio 26v (figure 7), the Rose is embodied in the female form of Fair Welcoming through the very act of the embrace. That the personifications represent components of the rose, and that the Rose itself is a metaphor for a woman, has been explored by a multitude of literary scholars. 104 Yet the fragmented ineffability inherent in the object of desire at the heart of the poem makes the issue of visual representation a thorny one. Portrayed as a flower or a woman, or throughout the same manuscript as both interchangeably, the slippery ambiguity raises the practical question of how to represent an allegorical subject. 105 Across illuminated manuscripts of the poem, including the Morgan Rose, Fair Welcoming becomes a helpful solution to bridge the immateriality of the Lover’s desire. As Suzanne Lewis succinctly remarks, “Fair Welcome

101 “CEST CY BELACUEIL ET L’AMANT.”
104 See Hult, Self-Fulfilling Prophecies, 250-255. But Barney, Fleming, Nichols, and Tuve, cited in the bibliography, also speak to this point.
105 This slippage between Fair Welcoming and the Rose in the Morgan Rose’s pictorial program points to the tension between the poem’s literal and allegorical plots. On this conflict, see Gaunt, “Bel Acueil and the Improper Allegory of the Romance of the Rose,”, 69, especially note 10.
becomes a centre who is visibly accessible in the illustrations.”^106 In a sense, the character serves to ground the object of desire in a personification to which the reader can more easily relate. Stephen G. Nichols touches on this complex interplay of symbolism, body, and text in the Rose, stating, “the images of figural language serve as deictics pointing to the presence of the body in the word. Images evoke sensual responses…that signal the presence of the body as the other, the body as signifier rather than referent.”^107 In folio 26v, the metaphorical nature of the poem is echoed in the similarly symbolic image and the female body becomes a site of meaning. Fair Welcoming stands in for the Rose in this visualization of the embrace, while also being a part of the Rose that is receptive to the Lover’s advances; Fair Welcoming is metonymy and synecdoche at once.

The blurring of identities manifest in the blank face and female form in the embrace of the Lover and Fair Welcoming brings to mind the myth of Zeuxis that Jean de Meun mentions later in his text. The Lover laments, “But Nature is of such great beauty that Zeuxis could do nothing in this connection, no matter how well he could represent or color his likeness.”^108 The text goes on to explain that Zeuxis:

in order to make an image in the temple, used as models five of the most beautiful girls that one could seek and find in the whole land. They remained standing quite naked before him so that he could use each one as a model if he found any defect in another, either in body or in limb.^109

^108 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 274; lines 16197-16199. Elizabeth Mansfield has noted that in late medieval culture, the exempla of Zeuxis was usually deployed in this manner, emphasizing the insufficiency of classical mimesis to accurately represent nature, even though in classical and early modern periods the myth is instead associated positively to champion and encourage mimetic representation; see Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
^109 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 274; lines 16191-16196.
While the subject of Zeuxis painting is not illuminated in the Morgan Rose, the miniature of Fair Welcoming and the Lover on folio 26v raises a similar theme of amalgamation central to this myth that is referenced much later in the narrative.\footnote{Manuscripts where it is illuminated include: Morgan M.948 (fol. 159r); Library of Congress, Rosenwald 396 (PLIr); Bodleian Library, MS Douce 332 (fol. 148v).} As Zeuxis painted an ideal image of beauty from composite parts, the illuminators of the Rose found a way to represent parts of an idealized, allegorical beauty by personifying different aspects of the Rose’s personality in characters like Fair Welcoming or Resistance.

A miniature from a manuscript containing Cicero’s Rhetoric (which de Meun cites as his source for his appropriation of the myth) is instructive. Here Zeuxis is shown creating his image for the temple.\footnote{Musee Conde, Chantilly, MS.590, fol. 45v. Camille discusses this image, though not in relation to the Rose, in The Gothic Idol, 318.} The woman’s face is left intentionally blank, signaling that Zeuxis is still in the process of working, but it also grants the same effect as the abraded face in the Morgan Rose in that they both allow for the reader to complete the image. While I am not suggesting that the embrace between the Lover and Fair Welcoming would have necessarily triggered an association with Zeuxis in the medieval reader’s mind, rather, the consequence of a blank face allows the reader to imagine their own ideal of beauty, or perhaps the face of a real-life beloved. After all, artistic representation, as de Meun states in his interpretation of Zeuxis, fails to do justice to beauty. Perhaps in solidarity with this notion, the reader of the Morgan Rose has intervened, allowing their own internalized vision of beauty to prevail.

In these initial instances of embrace, complex issues of representation, power, longing, deception come to the fore. Already, images have inspired the Lover’s fantasy, warned of peril, summoned confusion, invited debate, fostered a space of privacy, exhibited willing enthusiasm
as well as reticence. The following chapter will further plumb the range of meaning bound up in the Morgan Rose’s images.

Chapter 2: Tensions

In the familiar narrative of courtly love, the Lover pursues his lady in order to win her affection. As Camille indicated regarding the courtly kiss (cited above), the embrace in this context holds the promise of union with the beloved, while also marking a space of division. Ladies who use the kiss as a kind of shield are seizing its power. An absence of kissing stokes the desire for more, future kissing, with the prospect of further embrace dangling like a carrot. The theorization of love in the later Middle Ages involved opposing forces facing off; courtship was frequently likened to competitive pursuits of chess or hunting, in which the lady plays hard to get. The dualities of advance and retreat, closure and opening, love and loss, abundance and lack are central to romance literature and the Rose narrative in particular. These notions also run parallel with an implication of Sheingorn’s thesis; that although the embrace presumes unity, it simultaneously reinforces bodily borders. No matter how tightly one squeezes one’s beloved,

112 The term “courtly love” was coined in the 19th century by Gaston Paris, though its precise definition and applicability have been debated; for the complications of the term in relation to literature, see Sarah Kay, “Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love,” in The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81-96. While the expression and to what it exactly refers is disputed, obstacles in the path of the lover are a common feature. For more detail, see Roger Boase, The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love (Manchester University Press, 1977).

113 Camille stresses the surplus nature of the kiss; both its excess of meaning but also its ability to inspire further physical action; see “Gothic Signs and Surplus,” 151-170.
poignantly he or she remains ever-unknowable, external, and decidedly other. To move past a boundary is to acknowledge that such limits exist. The miniatures in the Morgan Rose, with their emphasis on touch, uphold this understanding, while at the same time highlight the tension implicit within it. Even certain visual elements that repeat throughout, such as when men step on the hems of ladies skirts, or when drapery or limbs spill outside the miniatures’ foliate frames, foreground a desire to transgress boundaries while at the same time maintaining a physical autonomy.\footnote{In the Morgan Rose, a figure stepping on another’s hemline is seen between the God of Love and his Carol date (fol. 6v), the Lover and Fair Welcoming (fol. 26v), and later with Pygmalion and son ymage (fol. 152r); the motif of drapery extending outside the miniatures’ frame occurs repeatedly (folios 2v, 3r, 4v, 11r, 25r, 26v, 27r, 32r, 74v, 89r, 111v, 150v, 152r). For limbs that reach beyond the miniatures’ frames, see folios 2r, 2v, 4r, 13r, 15r, 15v, 22v, 23v, 25r, 89r.}

In illustrations of such tensions, clothing colors, employed inversely in pairings, draw attention to characters’ reciprocal relations. In the miniature depicting the Lover lamenting to his friend (figure 9), the former, hands to heart, wears a green robe and draped blue headgear, while the latter is dressed oppositely, with a blue robe and green cap. Perhaps more significantly, in the miniature of the God of Love aiming his arrow at the Lover (fol. 13r; figure 10 and discussed at length later), the deity’s outfit alternates green collar, blue robe, green purse; the Lover’s wardrobe reverses this color pattern with his blue hat, green robe, and an accent of blue lining peeking out behind his right foot. The coordination foreshadows the homosocial union that occurs between the two in the next miniature, a couple folios later, where the Lover and the God of Love come together in a feudal embrace (fol. 15r; figure 4).

This sort of complimentary dressing between partners occurs again in the two scenes of Pygmalion and his creation where Pygmalion’s blue robe with green collar is inverted in the ymage’s green dress and blue underskirt (fol. 150v; figure 11), or subsequently when his red
collar matches her vermillion gown (fol. 152r; figure 12). More subtly, for the personifications of Covetousness and Avarice (fol. 2v; figure 13), two miniatures reside next to each other on the folio, underscoring the text’s statement that these images are depicted on the garden wall, “side by side.” Their physical proximity, as well as their closeness in iniquitous meaning, is additionally evidenced in the red and blue of Covetousness’ outfit which is reflected in the garments of the same colors hanging above Avarice in her scene.

Later, the two hues provide a sense of chromatic symmetry in the illumination of the Carol of the God of Love (fol. 6v; figure 3), where two couples dressed in red and blue flank the central pair. The couple on the left renders the woman in red, and the man (God of Love), in blue, while the rightmost couple flips this schema so that the man is in red, woman is in blue. Finally, in another scene with several figures, where False Seeming and Forced Abstinence address Slander (fol. 89r; figure 14), the red, blue, and green of the three standing figures recur in the outfit of the seated female personification of Slander. These examples highlight the role of color in the Morgan Rose; not only does it create visual harmony, but additionally it signals relations between characters—telling the viewer who goes together. Like Lewis’ comment about Fair Welcoming serving as a useful “centre” for the Lover’s fragmented object of desire, the complimentary colors help unify related personages.

The juxtaposition of hues also played an important role in medieval mnemonics, where images were essential in acquiring, retaining, and transmitting knowledge. The humanist and Augustinian friar, Jacques Legrand, stressed color’s role in cuing memory:

Wherefore one best learns from illuminated books, for the difference between the colors bestows remembrance of the different lines, and therefore of the thing itself. Thus, when the ancients wanted to remember and to get something by heart, they enhanced their

115 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 33; line 195. In M.245 it reads “assise coste a coste de Couuoitise” below the miniature of Avarice.
books with different colors and figures so as to strengthen the memory through diversity and difference.\textsuperscript{116}

The strategic variegation of pigments upon the folio facilitated readers’ recollection of a story’s narrative; extremes are simply more memorable.\textsuperscript{117} Elsewhere, Legrand pointed to colors conjuring semantic opposition: “And as we see the painter applying to an image several beautiful and ugly colors so that each shows up better by contrast with the other, we can recite the good and evil with our doctrines.”\textsuperscript{118} Here difference and contrast in color contribute to a reader’s understanding of binaries of beautiful and ugly, good and evil. The Morgan Rose’s chromatic reversal (rather than explicit, one-to-one matching) evokes a kind of magnetism, where opposing charges attract or repel. Color coordination may be unified to summon compatibility or ignite comparison, but like in the union of an embrace, each body nonetheless remains distinct.

The push and pull motif, witnessed in these small details in the Morgan Rose, is of course a major theme of the poem, and these narrative events are often singled out for illustration. A very literal representation of the Lover’s obstacle to obtain the Rose is visualized when Jealousy commands a castle be built. According to the text, the fortress has at its center a tower to imprison Fair Welcoming, with the rosebushes (protected by a bailey) surrounding it.\textsuperscript{119} The single miniature on folio 29r dealing with this episode (figure 15) heads off a column of text, which states, directly beneath the picture’s frame, “From now on it is time for me to tell you of


\textsuperscript{117} Speaking of images, the fourteenth-century scholar Thomas Bradwardine stated: “Their quality truly should be wondrous and intense, since such things are impressed in memory more deeply and are better retained,” in Mary J. Carruthers, \textit{The Book of Memory: A Study Memory in Medieval Culture} (Cambridge, 1990), 284.

\textsuperscript{118} English translation is from Buettner, “Profane Illuminations,” 84.

\textsuperscript{119} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 85; lines 3833-3859.
the activities of Jealousy."^{120} As is common, the miniature anticipates what is going to be described.\(^{121}\) Two workmen are shown breaking ground,\(^{122}\) while a male personification of Jealousy,\(^{123}\) arms crossed, stands off to the right side, as if waiting impatiently until orders are carried out. At the same time, a walled enclosure is already erected behind them. The structure is relatively short, and the rosebushes it is meant to detain are very much visible, their branches extending beyond. It is unclear whether the masonry is complete, its curtailed height a visual aid to reveal what it encloses, or if it is merely in progress. If the workmen are meant to be breaking ground on the tower for Fair Welcoming, their placement outside the rosebushes jars with the poem’s prescribed layout, which places the secured building at the center. Admittedly, the text’s explanation of the castle’s configuration is confusing and it is difficult to visualize an actual structure that could possibly conform to the description.\(^{124}\) There is the possibility that the book planner or illuminators sought to simplify and condense the scene through their composition (as they did in the Carol of the God of Love; figure 3). Or they merely interpreted the tower as imprisoning the Rose (rather than Fair Welcoming), or at least felt that would make for a stronger visual, since here the rosebush resides in the middle of the construction.

Regardless, the active nature of the scene and the fact that a rosebush is depicted are notable. Whereas earlier when Fair Welcoming allows the Lover to kiss the Rose, and the accompanying miniature rendered the Lover embracing Fair Welcoming instead (fol. 26v; figure

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\(^{120}\) English translation from de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 85; lines 3797-3798. In the Morgan *Rose* these lines read: “Des ores est droit que je vos die / la contenance Jalousie.”

\(^{121}\) Like the pairing of disparate colors discussed above, this placement of image and text played a role in the tradition of memory training, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 240-242.

\(^{122}\) The rubric accompanying this miniature is partially illegible: […] et […] Jalousie. The illegible words in blue probably name the two workmen, since the Morgan Rose’s banners typically provide the names of characters in the scenes.

\(^{123}\) Jealousy is gendered female in the text, but depicted as a man in the Morgan *Rose*.

\(^{124}\) The workers could be breaking ground on one of the moats described; for the text’s full description of the castle’s construction, see de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 85-86; lines 3797-3902.
7), here an illumination where the reader would plausibly expect to see Fair Welcoming alternatively shows a rosebush. The lack of distinction between Fair Welcoming and the Rose, which has come up earlier, speaks to their close association and possible interchangeability, since while technically named as separate characters in the story, they nonetheless have been interpreted as the same entity.\textsuperscript{125} Demonstrating the variability this ambiguity can produce is that other manuscripts feature the tower completed, with a human face of Fair Welcoming imprisoned behind a barred window.\textsuperscript{126}

In contrast, the Morgan Rose depicts freely visible flowers surrounded by a circular wall. Whether or not this fortification is in the process of being built, it nevertheless does not appear as a finite, imposing impediment; one could easily lean over its futile wall and pick the Rose. This transitory moment evokes hope that the construction could be stopped, or that procurement of the Rose might still be possible. While Jealousy orders the fortress in order to protect the Rose, its representation in the miniature makes it unexpectedly accessible. Suzannah Biernoff has argued that the allegory of the castle, with its encasement and openings (windows, doors), stands for the permeability of the body itself.\textsuperscript{127} The miniature of the cloistered but available Rose on folio 29r foreshadows events that ultimately overcome the walled barrier: Venus’ attack (in which she shoots an arrow into the narrow opening between two pillars in the tower\textsuperscript{128}) as well as the

\textsuperscript{125} Douglas Kelly most strikingly equates Fair Welcoming and the Rose, see his \textit{Internal Difference and Meanings in the Roman de la Rose} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), especially page 61 where his interpretation replaces Fair Welcoming with the Rose as the recipient of the Old Woman’s speech without explanation. This assimilation of the two characters, however, is debated amongst modern scholars, just as it seems to have caused confusion in medieval times as evidenced by the slipperiness of representation of Fair Welcoming and the Rose in the Morgan Rose and other extant manuscripts.

\textsuperscript{126} Getty’s MS 83.MR 177 (Ludwig XV.7) shows similar ambiguity: the Rose is illustrated in the castle on fol. 26r, but on fol. 27v Fair Welcoming is shown in the castle.


\textsuperscript{128} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 340; lines 20793-20796. While this is not depicted in the Morgan Rose, Valencia, Biblioteca de la Universidad, MS 1327 (fol. 144r) and J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XV 7 (fol. 129v) make clear the sexual meaning of the hole in the wall by placing the target of Venus’ arrow between the legs of a female statue.
Lover’s climatic procurement (in which he shoves his staff through said opening). At this moment in the Morgan Rose, the visual display and vulnerability of the Rose allows the reader to do what the Lover cannot at this juncture in the narrative: reach out and touch the flower.

The overwhelming impetus to touch an image is exemplified in the anecdote of Pygmalion, the last and longest of Jean de Meun’s mythological digressions. The overarching narrative of the Lover’s quest is fueled by his desire to possess the Rose, yet he is denied total satisfaction until the very end of the text, and even then it is all just a dream. In its pictorial program, the Morgan Rose enacts this prolonged deference, never giving the reader the gratifying closure of seeing the protagonist achieve his goal. The images end, not with embrace between man and flower, but culminate in union of man and ivory. The final miniature in the Morgan Rose is of Pygmalion embracing his creation-turned-woman (figure 12). In the miniature, Pygmalion wraps his arm around his beloved, who in turn gazes at her creator and clutches his cheek as they kiss. In an additional point of contact, Pygmalion’s right foot steps on her gown, which is so voluminous that rich red folds spill outside the miniature’s frame, nearly covering the letters beneath. The red rubric above the image states, “by the prayers of Pygmalion his image came to life and spoke to him.” In the text a few lines below the miniature, one reads that the two “embraced one another in their great love and kissed each other as if they were two doves.” This is not the first time Pygmalion tries to embrace his object of affection, but it is the first time she reciprocates. The illuminator has chosen not to depict earlier, failed embraces.

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130 In spite of this seemingly tactile opportunity, the miniature, unlike others discussed in Chapter 3, does not appear to have been rubbed.
131 Like the inclusion of the myth of Zeuxis, the digression about Pygmalion also deals with the theme of an artist attempting to create their ideal beauty. In the context of the Rose, Zeuxis was inadequate while Pygmalion was successful.
between man and material, for example when “he took her in his arms again and laid her down on his bed and embraced her and kissed her again and again, but the situation was not that of a good school, when two people kiss each other, and the kisses did not please the gods.”133 This scene is comically rendered in the Bodleian Library’s Douce 195, fol.151r, with an eager Pygmalion learning over his tomb-like nude, who lays unresponsive on the bed.134

The Morgan Rose’s pictorial program does not depict that futile action, but ends with an exuberant, consensual embrace. Yet the ultimate union of Pygmalion and his carved girlfriend is one that speaks just as much to the pleasure and allure of visual representation as to their deception. It is the banner text, “Pymalion et son ymage,”135 as well as the surrounding narrative of the poem, that identifies the scene. Without textual context, the figures are just two ordinary lovers sharing a passionate hug. Even when the ymage is still technically a mute statue prior to Venus infusing her with life, on fol.150v (figure 11), she has been rendered just as fully animated as the other figures throughout the manuscript. Indeed, Pygmalion’s achievement was that he made a sculpture “so pleasing, so exquisite, that it seemed as alive as the most beautiful living creature.”136 By choosing not to illustrate his beloved as a sculpture of the female form and refusing to differentiate her from a flesh-and-blood woman—as in the rigid, grey statue of Bodleian Library’s Douce 195 fol.149r137—the illuminator of the miniature on fol.152r achieves the same feat as Pygmalion; he has created an image that convincingly passes for a human lady within the visual narrative of the Morgan Rose. In a sense, this artist, like Pygmalion, has

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133 de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 344; lines 21059-21062.
134 This can be viewed via the Roman de la Rose Digital Library: https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/.
The resonance between contemporaneous transi tombs and depictions of Pygmalion sculpting his ymage (including this one) has been noted by Victor Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect*, 37-39.
135 On the word “ymage” as referring to both 2D and 3D likenesses, see Christina Normore, *Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance, and the Medieval Banquet* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 25-37.
137 Another example is Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 19156 fol. 134r. Both images can be viewed via the Roman de la Rose Digital Library: https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/
demonstrated the capacity of pictures to mislead, to pose as things different from their referent. But it is that same artistic rendering that also highlights the physical joy of the couple’s embrace; they are simply two bodies coming together. Any indication that the object of desire was once an inanimate image has not been visually expressed, nor is it relevant. The miniature seems to be celebrating the same triumph of mimesis felt by the mythical sculptor, not simply warning of its illusory perils. Pygmalion’s blank stare registers both a realization of the madness of his desire and total shock that his prayers were answered. The wondrousness of the occasion is even reflected in his clothing. Instead of accessorizing his outfit with the humble tools of his trade, as in the previous scene, Pygmalion now sports an elegant white cloak accented with vibrant red to compliment his divinely awakened, and sartorially sophisticated, partner. The artist has truly triumphed and has even been crowned with a foliate couronne, a seeming endorsement of encouragement by the Morgan Rose’s illuminator. If de Meun’s textual excursus on Pygmalion further associates the Lover’s dream vision with that of myth, recalling the citation of Narcissus at the beginning of the poem, the illustration in the Morgan Rose lauds the image-obsessed individual, resisting any moralistic interpretation that might damn him. Both Narcissus and Pygmalion fall in love with their image, but Narcissus’ idolatry is his ultimate demise while Pygmalion’s tale ends happily with a human woman. 138 That the miniatures in the Morgan Rose culminate with Pygmalion’s awe-struck entwinement suggests just how gratifying the pursuit and enjoyment of images can be.

138 My interpretation is based on Camille’s positive reading of Pygmalion in the Rose as opposed to John Fleming’s moralistic argument which posits that Narcissus, Pygmalion, and the Lover are all damned because of their image obsessions. See Camille, The Gothic Idol, 316-337; and Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, 228-238.
Chapter 3: Caressing Vellum & Stroking Pigment

In the Morgan Rose, it is not only the illuminators who highlight touch and signal an awareness of the sensorial potential of the manuscript; the reader(s) responded in kind, caressing vellum and stroking pigment. The considerable rubbing the miniatures in this Rose have endured is not unique, and as we will observe, other extant illuminated manuscripts of the poem exhibit similar wear. As Mark Cruse has posited, romances, with their sensual plots of desire, seduction, and embrace, seem especially primed for physical and emotional response.139 Hand-inscribed on vellum, illuminated by careful brushstrokes, its delicate folios subsequently turned over in the readers’ fingers, a medieval manuscript was very much an entity that spoke through and to the body. In this sense, the Morgan Rose itself becomes a site of embrace, exhibiting signs of touch as a tactile object, one that bears the marks of its passionate and engaged readership. It is the traces of this contact between book and reader that this chapter examines.

If art provoked Pygmalion to plead to Venus, and the Lover was aroused by an image of a flower, the illuminations in the Morgan Rose can also be considered within this context of representations that provoke action. It is important to note that the God of Love’s arrows each enter the Lover’s body “through the eye and into my heart.”140 Similarly, the miniatures in the

140 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 54; line 1687. For a discussion of eyes and vision sparking desire, love, and lust, see Biernoff, Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages, especially 46-59; and John W. Baldwin, The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200 (University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially 118-119 and 138-141. For the erotically aggressive eye and metaphor, see Ruth H. Cline, “Heart and Eyes” Romance Philology 25, no.2 (November 1971): 263-297.
Morgan *Rose* have inspired the impassioned response of rubbing—an act, like falling in love—that is spurred from initial visual apprehension.\(^{141}\) According to Michael Camille, images of embrace especially inspired action,\(^{142}\) so it is not surprising that many of the miniatures in the Morgan *Rose* show signs of repeated touch. The manuscript has also sustained a significant triangle of water damage (figure 16), as if the corner was dipped in liquid as a kind of improvised love potion—like a religious book of the period would have been to cure devoted followers, or as the Book of Durrow was allegedly submerged in water to be given to sick cows.\(^{143}\) Kathryn M. Rudy has discussed the physical nature of medieval readers’ responses to manuscripts, and although she focuses on devotional texts, it is not hard to imagine the reader carrying over the same sort of practice to vernacular literature.\(^{144}\) She notes how selective readers were in kissing or rubbing of images, often targeting particular miniatures, and even specific regions, figures, or body parts, within them.\(^{145}\) Correspondingly, in the context of vandalism, David Freedberg has observed that faces and other parts of the human body were common targets.\(^{146}\)

In the Morgan *Rose*, a notable instance of an abraded miniature that prefigures closeness and has been mentioned so far only in passing is on folio 13r where the God of Love aims his

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\(^{141}\) The notion that mimetic representation is inextricably entwined with desire has been argued elsewhere and undergirds this thesis, discussed in Chapter 4. For major works on this topic, see Camille, *The Gothic Idol* and *The Medieval Art of Love*; Victor Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*, trans. Alison Anderson (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

\(^{142}\) Camille, “Gothic Signs,” 159. He writes, the “focus on the kiss was too explosive and was often erased by later readers, so charged was its negative association.” This is a point I expand upon later in this chapter.


\(^{144}\) On the talismanic use of images in a corporeal context, a literary example also comes to mind: in the Occitan romance *Flamenca*, the titular character kisses and folds the image and poem sent by her lover, the way that Rudy describes followers carrying folios of prayers on their bodies; see Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, 130.


bow and arrow at the Lover (figure 10), seeming toward the Lover’s chest. It is worth noting that in this case, the illuminator depicts the anticipatory moment right before an arrow actually pierces the Lover; other manuscripts choose to show the weapon coming into contact with the Lover’s body, at varying points not always literally in accordance with the “through the eye and into my heart” of the text. For example, in BnF fr. 1575 (fol. 13v), the first arrow is lodged in the Lover’s eye, while in BnF Smith Lesouëf 62 (fol.13r), the invading instrument penetrates the stomach. Elsewhere, in BnF fr. 799 (f.11r) the arrow went straight for the heart, and is depicted jutting out from the chest. BnF fr. 805 (f. 13v) shows the arrow striking the back of the head; in Morgan MS M.948 (f. 21r) the shaft stabs the lower back. In a final comparison, BnF fr. 12595 (f. 14v), the arrow, mid-air, is headed for the Lover’s neck.147

In the case of the Morgan Rose, the Lover is seated before a tree, his legs splayed open. A phallic-shaped object stands upright on top of the Lover’s purse, unapologetically at crotch level. This visual euphemism recalls a now well-known miniature in another manuscript with Valois ties, owned by the voracious collector, Jean, Duc de Berry. As Camille argues, there is “no fifteenth-century manuscript image as phallic in its imagery as this glorious courtly ritual painted by Pol de Limbourg for the January page of the Très Riches Heures.”148 Amongst the sumptuous display of people and things gathered and arranged for the duke’s pleasure, Camille homes in on the handsome, well-dressed young men in the foreground, two of which sport dark pouches with what seem to be golden sword handles jutting out suggestively from below their waists, just like the Lover’s protuberance in the Morgan Rose. In Camille’s interpretation, “These corkscrew-like objects are not only insignia of office, they are playful emblems of youthful virile sexuality.”149

147 These can be viewed via the Roman de la Rose Digital Library: https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/en/romandelarose/.
149 Camille, “‘For Our Devotion and Pleasure,’” 177.
On the one hand, the parallel in dress associates the Lover with this class of courtier, making him an appropriate avatar for the presumed reader—the protagonist is of the same high status, making it easier for the reader to see themselves in the story.\(^{150}\) The sartorial correspondence between the Lover and the courtiers in the January page also evinces a common denominator sense of humor; in medieval visual culture, the phallic and scatological was a fount of funny.\(^{151}\) Adding to this in the Morgan *Rose*, is the triangle of blue between the Lover’s feet (mentioned earlier during the discussion of characters’ color coordination) that mimics the size and shape of the triangular purse hanging around the God of Love’s waist. There is something lewdly comical about the excessive, sagging weight of purses in the Morgan manuscript that furthers a risqué and winking reading.\(^{152}\) The scene of the God of Love and the Lover manifests possibly an added layer of satire, one that pokes fun at haughty aristocrats like Jean (with his alleged Ganymede-like favoritism of young men)\(^{153}\) and his ilk and their courtly pursuits—

\(^{150}\) Paul Zumthor cites the *Rose* as an exception to his assertion that “medieval poetry does not recognize first-person narrative.” In the *Rose*, first-person narrative “for the audience, it takes on the omnipresence and anonymous universality of a grammatical \(I\),” *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 130.

\(^{151}\) For phallic humor in a *Rose* manuscript, see Jeanne de Montbaston’s marginalia in BnF fr. 25526, especially the phallus tree (fol. 106r). For more on ribald humor (excrementary in particular), see Karl P. Wentersdorf, “The Symbolic Significance of Figurae Scatologicae in Gothic Manuscripts,” in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1984), 1-21.

\(^{152}\) Patricia Simons notes that purses were used as metaphors for both male and female sexual organs. She even mentions the *Rose*, pointing to an illuminated Italian translation in which a character’s staff and moneybag are “equally genital.” Furthermore, “late medieval and Renaissance purses and bags, usually hanging near a man’s genitals, were often designed to mimic them, somewhat akin to codpieces.” Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172; for her full discussion of “purse” as sexual metaphor, see 169-177. Religious associations also abound; in the introduction to his translation, Charles Dahlberg comments on the Lover’s sack recalling the pilgrim’s sack, and how that “reinforces the ironic point of view,” 23. For an overview of purse imagery, see Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, 63-65.

generally, the “topos of the courtier as an effeminized man, who takes more care of his appearance than in following the manly acts of war.”\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, the God of Love preaches a commandment stating the importance of fine dress to succeed in the amorous life, specifically encouraging the Lover to “deck yourself out with gloves, a belt, and a silk purse.”\textsuperscript{155} Later, in Genius’ sermon, the purse’s sexual connotation is confirmed; he warns of the peril awaiting (male) writers who do not use their innate talent and write: “the loss of their purse and testicles, the signs that they are male!\textsuperscript{156} Sincerely or sarcastically or some combination of the two, our courtly hero is represented in relatively elegant garb that accentuates his slender frame and stylistically elongated appendages; he is suitably a gentle man of leisure, one whose masculinity is proudly on display.

Perhaps these sensual associations provoked a response in the reader. Further emphasizing the Lover’s nether region is a cloud of paint loss billowing from between his legs and extending to the tip of the God of Love’s arrow. This mark of reader participation enhances the drama of the scene, with the blurring of the red-orange background even superimposing a flame-like effect. The rubbing has also smeared the delineation of the arrow’s point, literally dulling it and rendering it ineffective. Perhaps the reader sought to intercede on behalf of the Lover in hopes of preventing physical and emotional harm. The miniature illustrates the text directly beneath it, which describes the God of Love with arrow drawn.\textsuperscript{157} By obfuscating the ready weapon in the image, the reader attempts to avert “the great pain and danger” the Lover

\textsuperscript{154} Camille, “‘For Our Devotion and Pleasure,’” 177.
\textsuperscript{155} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 60; lines 2159-2160. Later, when the Lover is finally granted access to the Rose, he sets off with “the sack and the staff so stiff.” He counts this sack (a gift from Nature) as one of his most prized possessions in a passage mixing metaphors of pilgrimage and forging to describe the finale of his amorous quest, see 348; lines 21346-21376.
\textsuperscript{156} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 324; lines 19668-19669. I discuss this quote further in relation to sexual metaphors and writing in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{157} The lines read, “Li Dieu d’amours qui l’arc tendu / auoit tous jours mout entendu.”
experiences according to the text after being wounded by the first of five arrows. In this sense, the reader would have been participating in an act of eradication of evil that has been documented in other manuscripts, and, as we will examine, elsewhere in the Morgan Rose itself. While the God of Love is not categorically demonic, the reader may have been conditioned to intervene, like a courtly hero against presumed violence.

Miniatures depicting the God of Love shooting the Lover in other manuscripts also bear traces of touch. BnF fr. 1558 (fol. 14r; figure 17) renders a slightly later moment in the story, when the first arrow has just lodged itself in the Lover’s eye. The arrow is exaggeratedly thick, almost comically so, jutting out at a perpendicular angle. While this detail has been left undisturbed, the God of Love’s face has been completely wiped clean, leaving traces of outlines of head and hair. In other cases, it is not only the perpetrator who gets singled out. When the God of Love draws his bow in BnF fr. 1576 (fol. 7r; figure 18), damage has been done to the Lover’s face, while his body exhibits signs of wear and paint loss excessively not commensurate with the other miniatures in the manuscript. The dark grime extends beyond the Lover, across to the readied bow, onto the hands and upper body of the God of Love (yet leaving his face legible), and reaches outside the frame.

Elsewhere, it is solely the Lover’s image that gets tactile attention in subsequent miniatures of initial encounters with the God of Love. His face has been rubbed clean in BnF 19157 (fol. 14r; figure 19) in a miniature in which the God of Love produces a key from his pouch to lock the Lover’s heart. When the Lover pays homage on bended knee in BnF Smith

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158 de Lorrys and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 54; line 1721.
159 For example, see Borland, “Unruly Reading,” 97-114.
160 The God of Love has a total of ten arrows, five of which are “blacker than a devil from hell,” aligned with negative attributes, while the other five exhibit relatively positive qualities, and notably these are the ones that pierce the Lover; de Lorrys and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 43-44; lines 916-984.
Lesouëf 62 (fol. 14r; figure 20), a grey smudge overtakes his face and raised hand. In these instances, the themes of the miniatures are the feudal qualities of obedience and service. By removing or obscuring the Lover’s individuality (his face) the reader aids in the Lover’s vow of subservience. While this action ultimately mitigates the protagonist’s personal identity, at the same time it makes visible the reader’s presence. Furthermore, if the reader used his (or her) finger, rather than a scribal tool, his singularity is made even more present through the uniqueness of his finger print deposited on the page.

A manuscript that exhibits material engagement across several of these formative moments between the God of Love and the Lover is BnF fr. 19156. When the two figures first meet (fol. 7v; figure 21), the God of Love stands, right arm akimbo, casually holding two bows in his left hand. While the Lover resides on the right of the image unharmed, the God of Love’s facial features have been removed and replaced with a black smudge. The miniature’s placement and lack of descriptive captions further complicate exact identification of this scene. The image is integrated within a block of text that mentions the God of Love’s attendant, Sweet Looks, and the two bows and ten arrows he carries. Yet here it is the winged God of Love who is shown holding his own instruments, and the other figure—presumably the Lover—holds his right hand up in a speaking or welcoming gesture. Later, when the God of Love shoots the Lover (fol. 12v; figure 22), diagonal black marks stretch across the latter’s body, haphazardly radiating outside the miniature’s frame.

More darkened rubbing is evidenced on another miniature of the God of Love and the Lover in the same manuscript, although in this instance it is the Lover’s face that is smudged (fol. 14r; figure 23). The two are engaged in an embrace in which the Lover submits to the God of Love. In contrast to the same scene in the Morgan Rose (fol. 15r; figure 4), here the union
lacks the enthusiasm and pride espoused by the text. The bodies are upright and barely touching, save for the God’s left hand resting on the Lover’s upper arm, which serves as the only visual signal that the characters are embracing. The blackened blurring of the Lover’s face extends to the God’s hand, emphasizing their point of contact. Again in expunging the Lover’s traits from the page, the reader eliminates the figure’s identity, furthering a sense of submission and coming together, while also momentarily inserting himself into the scene. Just as the Lover and God of Love embrace to seal an agreement, in rubbing the vellum, the reader reaches his own hand to meet them, creating a gesture of solidarity or comradery reminiscent of the modern-day practice of sports teams stacking hands in a circle.

Across these examples is a tendency of readers to tactiley privilege imagery depicting two main characters. Perhaps the marks were the result of touches meant to emphasize, to literally point out important moments or characters in the narrative. Overall these scenes seemed to inspire close touching—and therefore looking. What is notable about the rubbing on the scene in the Morgan Rose is that it focuses on the action (the flying arrow) rather than a stationary individual. The abrasion heightens the moment of tension and the anticipated point of contact.

This preliminary comparison between the Morgan Rose’s signs of touch and other extant Rose manuscripts raises points that must be kept in mind as one considers the topic of reader participation. While it is unknown whether the abrasions were the accumulation of multiple readers over a span of time or one particularly emphatic individual, we can note the distinction between broader areas of smudging versus more localized removals of faces. The blackened blurs that Rudy dutifully measures with a densitometer are a kind of additive grime,¹⁶¹ which is

¹⁶¹ Kathryn M. Rudy, “Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer,” Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art 2.1-2 (Summer 2010), at https://jhna.org/ Elsewhere, Rudy makes the point that manuscript owners both added and subtracted material; pigment was removed through touching, but sometimes notes, prayers, badges, sketches, and curtains were inserted, “Kissing Images,” 4.
differentiated from the subtractive acts—violent scratches, erased pigment, and piercing of vellum—that Jennifer Borland studies in a manuscript of a saint’s life. While it is impossible to know precisely when the smudging, rubbing, and erasures occurred during the life of the manuscript, the similarities across these examples of defacement imply a localized, momentary trend. Michael Camille has suggested that much censorship over sexual imagery occurred during the late Middle Ages, for example. What is clear is that these images incited reaction. In lieu of discerning individual motivations and plumbing past readers’ inner lives, it is fruitful to orient some of these markings within the medieval practice of defacing images of evil-doers, on one hand, and venerating a religious figure like Christ, on the other.

Images, even diminutive ones painted in manuscripts, were believed to hold power. What was seen could influence a person physically, with eyes being a potent locus of maleficent contagion. For instance, pregnant women were discouraged from viewing anything ugly, like a monkey, since it could negatively affect the traits of their offspring. Scenes of demons, sin, or peril were threatening proprietors of the “evil eye,” encompassing the potential to contaminate the beholder through mere sight. Miniatures depicting these demonic forces often

162 Borland, “Unruly Reading,” 105.
164 For more on the power attributed to images and objects, see Caroline Walker Bynum, Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe (New York, 2011).
166 Camille, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 143. On the same page he also cites a 13th-century story of a woman giving birth to a black baby after looking at an image of a Moor. Facquart and Thomasset mention that even a woman’s imagination (a visual mode) could affect a child in utero, for example if she pictures another man than her partner during the sexual act, the subsequent child will resemble the former and not the biological father, Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages, 166.
167 Suzanne Lewis briefly discusses direct and indirect representations of evil and their subsequent mutilation in Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse (Cambridge, 1995), 127.
exhibit obliteration by readers, for example when a snake in a twelfth-century scene of Adam and Eve has his eye exactly cut out.\textsuperscript{169} Most commonly, seemingly wicked characters in manuscripts were rubbed out by a moistened finger.\textsuperscript{170} This was the fate of a party-crashing devil leading a dance in a fourteenth-century \emph{Breviari d’amor} (British Library Royal MS 19.C.i), whose face has been rendered a brown-black smudge (figure 24), one among countless examples of inoculating against evil.\textsuperscript{171} This particular miniature is part of a pictorial cycle demonstrating the perils of worldly pleasures, where brown and gray demons have been inserted into otherwise stock scenes referencing romance illumination. Even in this secular, arguably parodic context, the representation of a devil nonetheless posed a threat. Similarly, in the \textit{Rose}, the touching that features prominently upon negative forces or figures that stand in the way of the Lover’s pursuit are most contiguous within this broader practice of defacement of evil.

The personifications of the vices depicted on the exterior of the garden wall are frequently illustrated in \textit{Rose} manuscripts, and given their immorality, unsurprisingly manifest signs of touch. In BnF fr. 19156 (fol. 2v; figure 25), Avarice’s eyes have been gouged out by a superstitious beholder who perhaps feared being infected with greed. The miniature of Villainy in the same manuscript (fol. 2r; figure 26) also bears defacement, although interestingly in this case it is not the personification of the vice herself that has been attacked, but another figure in the frame offering her a goblet. This kneeling, deferent fellow demonstrates Villainy’s cruelty; she is so full of contempt that she kicks the generous soul who is doing something nice for her.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{169} Camille, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 142.
\textsuperscript{170} Camille suggests the possibility of readers spitting on particularly heinous imagery, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 145.
\textsuperscript{171} For more examples of smudged devils, see figures in Camille, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 139-154.
\textsuperscript{172} Villainy kicking a servant, while not explicitly described in the text, is an iconographic interpretation of the verse, “a woman who knew little of how to honor what she should (lines 167-168);” Garnier discusses this gesture as evidencing a person of high status not respecting the comportment of their station, see \textit{Le langage de l’image au moyen âge}, vol. II, 158.
Instead of rubbing out Villainy, a reader has curiously eradicated the face of the innocent servant. When the same situation is illustrated in Walters Art Museum, W. 143 (fol. 2r; figure 27), reader response is focused on Villainy’s extended foot. The smeared pigment weakens the abusive appendage, while at the same time adding kinetic emphasis to its scornful trajectory toward the genuflecting server. Similarly, the untidy erasure of Sorrow in BnF fr. 1558 (fol. 3v; figure 28) excises the slattern’s negative presence from the page yet the resultant grubby streaks extending outside the frame aesthetically mimic the frenzied, anguished psychological state of the subject. In this and other manuscripts, Sorrow registers her profound sadness by woefully pulling at her long hair. De Lorris writes “she had not been slow to scratch her whole face, and she had torn her dress in many places, until it was practically worthless, as though she had been in a violent rage.”173 By rubbing out Sorrow, the reader performs an act of destruction that is similar to the self-destruction attributed to the vice herself.

The cloudy marks extant on these miniatures and the rubbed images in the Morgan Rose suggest that the participants indiscriminately used their fingers, rather than a precise scribal tool that would have cleanly and efficiently erased without leaving a trace of what came before.174 This kind of messy defacement is the result of an immediate, visceral reaction on the part of the reader, rather than a premeditated, professional correction. As John Fleming has mused, “The illustrations in medieval books must often represent, at the very least, some hours of close and thoughtful work; yet their destruction is the work of a moment.”175 The emotional hastiness of this sort of response is reflective of the image’s perceived power and the ingrained belief to

173 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 35; lines 313-316.
174 Borland, “Unruly Reading,” 103. On this page she notes this sort of messy erasure calls to mind “the grey smudge that is often left behind by a dirty pencil eraser.”
175 Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, 137.
vanquish evil. Yet as Camille has observed, the removal of bad guys—or whatever readers wished to render unseen—ultimately draws more attention to what is being covered up, in the way that nudity is often blurred out in contemporary media.\textsuperscript{176}

Swift, righteous smearing is also witnessed across depictions of Resistance, the main guardian of the Rose, and therefore the Lover’s most substantial and reviled enemy. Envisioned as a superlative villain, unrelentingly brutish, Resistance’s likeness is one of the most popular targets of annihilation by \textit{Rose} readers. In the Morgan \textit{Rose}, Resistance’s face has been abolished by a reader who left grimy smears in his wake (fol. 25r; figure 29). Elsewhere Resistance receives similar treatment; in another Morgan Library manuscript, MS M.324 (fol. 21r; figure 30), his expression has been wiped clean, leaving a ghostly-faced figure admonishing Fair Welcoming. Resistance’s body was the recipient of fervent fingers in a miniature in BnF fr. 25523 (fol. 104r; figure 31) depicting the character asleep while guarding the rosebushes; his supine form has been smeared nearly to oblivion. While in the narrative at this point the Lover is far from plucking his beloved Rose, here the reader has already eradicated the main obstruction. Likewise, in BnF fr. 1561 (fol. 93v; figure 32), when Openness faces off against the Rose’s monstrous keeper, the two figures stand, weapons in hand. The fight hasn’t quite started according to the image or the surrounding text, but a pugnacious reader has blotted out Resistance’s face, in a sense dealing the first blow and aligning himself on the side of Openness and the Lover.

As a major character, Resistance appears frequently throughout illustrated copies, yet he is not always defaced. In the Morgan \textit{Rose}, he is only defaced once (fol. 25r), and depicted three other times (fols. 21v, 22v, and 111v) where his likeness remains unscathed. First, he

\textsuperscript{176} Camille, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 145-146.
materializes as one of three guards of the Rose (fol. 21v; figure 33). Identifiable by his beard and club, he wears an outfit that matches the red of the flower he protects as he crouches in the bushes with personifications of Foul Mouth and Shame. A couple of lines beneath that miniature, the text introduces Resistance as “a base churl.” On the verso of the following folio (fol. 22v; figure 34), Resistance stands next to the Lover in front of a gold filigree background. The intoxicating beauty of the Rose has receded as Resistance confronts the Lover; in the text block below, he tells him to flee or else. The tension of the faceoff even registers in the figures’ complimentary costuming, each inversely sporting red and green (opposites on the color wheel), with further parity between the shape of Resistance’s green purse and the Lover’s red glove. While the poem renders the affront as threatening, with Fair Welcoming spooked and the Lover instilled with fear, the illumination paints a scene less explicitly ominous. Resistance’s face is tilted upward, looking intently. His dejected expression could be an appeal to the heavens, since in the text he cries “God save me” and curses Fair Welcoming for leading the Lover to the roses. Resistance’s curiously focused look also seems to land on the written verse above (where Fair Welcoming warns the Lover not to pluck the Rose), as if he agrees the Lover should heed this message. The extreme bend of Resistance’s head additionally gives the character a grotesque quality, an aspect repeated throughout the poem.

Finally, Resistance is visualized in the Morgan Rose before a passage in which he fights Openness (fol. 111v; figure 35). In the miniature heading off this section, Resistance is armed with his characteristic club, while Openness holds a shield and slender lance. She is elegant; he is

177 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 70; line 2824.
178 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 71-72; lines 2920-2950.
179 de Lorris and de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 71; lines 2926-2927.
180 This engagement with the text above the frame forms a nice relation with the text beneath, as the figure stands outside the frame, on top of the word “illec” (a space-related adverb: “in that place”), literally grounding him.
thuggish. The text describes how he wields “dangerous blows all around him,”\textsuperscript{181} nearly killing Openness. In the Morgan \textit{Rose}, her shield is actually the heraldic escutcheon of France—blue dotted with gold fleur-de-lis. Notably, the poem states that Openness “would have died if she had had a shield of wood.”\textsuperscript{182} Here the wondrous strength of her weapon is equated with royal sovereignty, a somewhat ironic comparison given that the manuscript was produced during the tumultuous reign of the mad king, Charles VI, and possibly for a member of his court, a topic further explored in Chapter 5. For now, it is worth asking why this—and the miniatures with Resistance on folios 21v and 22v—remain unblemished by the reader’s touch? Arguably, the smeared miniature on folio 25r accompanies an exchange in which Resistance is the least menacing; it is where he agrees to Openness’ and Pity’s request to let Fair Welcoming return to the Lover.\textsuperscript{183} In the Morgan \textit{Rose}, a blotting out of a villain at first glance seems like an eradication of evil, yet upon further interrogation reveals complexity.

This sort ofambiguous touch on the part of the reader(s) is seen elsewhere in the Morgan \textit{Rose}. Case in point is the avid erosion of Fair Welcoming’s face discussed earlier where the character embraces the Lover (fol. 26v). In one interpretation, the defacement could be the reader’s emphatic agreement with Jealousy’s scolding, which chastises Fair Welcoming for letting his guard down, allowing him “to dishonor both me and Chastity.”\textsuperscript{184} Or perhaps the reader was expressing surprise at seeing the Lover embrace Fair Welcoming instead of the Rose, as I suggested previously, either pointing out the blurring of their identities or merely correcting what he interpreted as a mistake. Another motivation of the erasure could have been the reader working through the ambiguity of Fair Welcoming’s gender (male), despite the character being a

\textsuperscript{181} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 260; line 15306.
\textsuperscript{182} de Lorris and de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 261; line 15370.
\textsuperscript{183} de Lorris and Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 78; lines 3317-3324.
\textsuperscript{184} de Lorris and Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 81; line 3552.
proxy for the Rose (female). In rendering a grammatically masculine object of desire as a woman in the illuminations, the Morgan Rose is an example of pictorial programs that attempt to normalize the Lover’s polymorphous erotic drive. 185 Perhaps the reader was uncomfortable with Fair Welcoming, since, according to Noah Guynn, “Bel Acueil personifies a kind of sexual receptivity that courtly readers would have considered distinctly unmanly.” 186 Alternatively, the blank face could be a result of tender, affectionate caresses while contemplating the story’s object of desire, as one would meditate on the body of Christ in a religious context.

The potential for this sort of gentle reverence toward pictures has precedence in practices during mass, where images were not just touched but embraced. 187 The priest was instructed to kiss an image of the cross at the beginning of the Te igitur, often depicted in the book (missal or sacramentary) he was using. Evidence of this osculation can be found in pages where parts of Christ’s face or body or a locus on the cross itself have faded from repeated contact. 188 Sometimes, in addition to the miniature of the Crucifixion, a smaller cross would be painted beneath in the margin, redirecting the kisser’s lips so that the surface of the main scene could remain intact.

While the Rose is obviously not a sacred text, the possibility of a reader’s loving response—as opposed to a superstitious, fearful one as evidenced in the defacement of evil-doers

187 On kissing images, especially the priest and the missal, see John Lowden’s keynote address at the conference “Treasures Known and Unknown,” held at the British Library Conference Centre, 2-3 July 2007, text published at http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourKnownC.asp.
188 Camille cites and reproduces an example of a manuscript in the Huntington Library, MM 26061, fol. 178v, “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 141 (fig. 2). Lowden (see note above) reproduces kissed miniatures. Rudy also discusses other instances in “Kissing Images.” Borland notes that Byzantine ivories indicate a similar type of devotional touch, “Unruly Reading,” 104. A later sculptural example is that Michelangelo’s Risen Christ famously had a metal cap added to protect against kisses; Cynthia Hahn briefly discusses the relic-like status of Christ’s footprints in this work, see The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), 22-23.
discussed earlier—nonetheless exists. The hundreds of extant manuscripts certainly speak to the poem’s popularity and the numerous readers who presumably enjoyed it. Moreover, Brigitte Buettner has observed that by the late fourteenth century:

[representations of] pagan women usurped the forms of saintly figures and endlessly translated the ultimate Christian model, the Virgin. The Valois could legitimately delight in pagan exemplary figures…while absorbing the marital and extramarital love stories in place of the *amor Dei*.\(^{189}\)

According to Buettner, the fluidity between sacred and profane illumination—where it often becomes impossible to distinguish secular figures from blessed ones without the aid of the text\(^{190}\)—allowed noble readers to enjoy romances in a similar mode as they would have approached a sacred text. Just as devotees lavished the missal or pax with loving touch as if it were the body of Christ, Buettner makes a similar correlation between the vernacular book and the female body, in that they are both things that can be owned and petted. By envisioning women in literature on the same plane as a religious ideal (at least in miniature form), she writes, “manuscript patrons could through a glance caress and possess exemplary but human feminine stereotypes.”\(^{191}\) Perhaps the embrace between Fair Welcoming and the Lover in the Morgan *Rose* inspired a beholder to physically participate; to follow Venus and Fair Welcoming’s allowance to let the Lover “take a sweet and delicious kiss from the rose,”\(^{192}\) therefore mimicking the protagonist’s action—the painted surface muddled by reader’s lips on pigment. Whether the

\(^{189}\) Buettner, “Profane Illuminations,” 85-86.

\(^{190}\) Model books were shared across workshops and genres, for an overview see Scheller, *A Survey of Medieval Model Books* (Haarlem, 1963). For (a few of many) specific instances of iconographic crossover and assimilation, see Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, 220-241; Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 333-338. For exchange from vernacular to religious imagery, see Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). Alison Stones examines religious iconography in relation to a vernacular manuscript in “Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere,” where she notes that the exchange goes both ways, specifically kisses in in religious contexts becoming more erotic, “suggesting that their formal treatment takes its impetus as much from literature of romance as from biblical exegesis or spiritual literature,” 126.

\(^{191}\) Buettner, “Profane Illuminations,” 86.

\(^{192}\) de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 80; lines 3475-3476.
reader or readers of the Morgan Rose were practicing iconophobia or iconophilia in their interactions with the manuscript’s miniatures is not always clear and further enhances the often ambivalent nature of the embraces themselves.193

The literal defacement of a figure in the midst of an embrace supports the earlier quote from Camille, that visually represented romantic unions were singled out for tactile engagement.194 He attributes this to the surplus quality of the kiss; that it could provoke desire, and therefore was sometimes judged as obscene. Citing an illustration of a kissing couple in a thirteenth-century saint’s life, he observes how selectively their lips ("the place where flesh meets flesh") have been removed.195 More expansive censorship occurs in a Rose manuscript (Bibliothèque Municipale d’Arras MS 897) where several of its miniatures have been expurgated. John Fleming notes a scene of Nature perpetuating the species (fol. 87r; figure 36), where a couple in bed typically illustrates this episode,196 has been destroyed, while God remains intact in the upper right corner. On folio 119r (figure 37) he posits that a nude woman or idol would have originally been portrayed where a grey cloud of grime now overtakes much of the remaining composition.197 The manuscript’s final miniature of the Lover plucking the Rose is

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193 The Morgan Rose is remarkable for the extensive rubbing throughout the manuscript. Another example is BnF fr. 12593, where a reader rubbed several miniatures, including: Narcissus’s face, but not his reflection in the fountain (fol. 12v); the jealous husband beating his wife (68v); False Seeming and Foul Mouth (91r); a battle scene (112v); Venus shooting the castle (150v); Pygmalion sculpting son ymage (151r) Pygmalion embracing his transformed ymage (153v). The miniature of a couple in bed during Nature’s lecture remains untouched, however (116r).

194 Camille, “Gothic Signs,” 159. Alison Stones lists some lovemaking scenes in romances that have been effaced in “Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere,” 156 note 73. See also Michael Camille, “Manuscript Illumination and the Art of Copulation,” in Medieval Cultures: Constructing Medieval Sexuality, eds. Karma Lochrie and Peggy McCracken (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 58-90.


197 For his discussion of Rose defacement, see Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, 135-137. He proposes that this censure was done by Post-Reformation zealots rather than contemporaries or near contemporaries of de Meun. Camille dates this sort of censorship to the 15th century, and discusses the changing attitudes toward sex and nudity in “Obscenity Under Erasure,” 151-154. Regarding obscene language in the Rose, Sylvia Huot writes that during the
also defaced (fol. 120v; figure 38). Fleming suspects it envisioned the climatic union “with the allegorical veil removed,” and therefore proved too scandalous for subsequent generations.198

The rubbed miniatures in the Morgan Rose, however, differ from this sort of censorship. Nudity or sex is not depicted in the image program; the scenes of embrace are tastefully chaste, in line with the courtly ideal of fin’amor rather than fol’amor.199 The marks of erosion appear at dramatic, narratively important scenes and therefore suggest a sincere understanding and engagement with the story, rather than a prudish need to censor. The images themselves, with their emphasis on closeness, invite touch. Not only do the illustrations enhance and gloss the poem’s theme of desired intimacy, but the miniatures, as Marilynn Desmond observes about a contemporaneous Rose manuscript now in Valencia: “also elicit a readerly awareness of the corporeal materiality shared by text and viewer.”200 This union between beholder and manuscript is manifest in the extant smudges and erasures that divulge a past reader’s physical presence in front of the page.201 The exact motivation behind these small, surviving traces will forever remain out of reach. What does emerge from these seemingly ambiguous remnants is evidence for a deeply personal reading, one that still speaks—long after the reader has closed the book’s

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Querelle, Christine de Pizan objected to the “salacious passages and vulgar language that could only serve to arouse the passions of its readers,” *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers*, 22.

198 Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose*, 137.

199 Medieval texts rarely used the expression *amour courtois* and instead *fin’amor* (Occitan) or *amour fine* (French); its contrast was *fol’amor* which referred to unrefined, lust-driven love; see Joan M. Ferrante, “Cortes’Amor in Medieval Texts,” *Speculum* 55, no. 4 (October, 1980), 687.

200 Desmond, “The Visuality of Reading in Pre-Modern Textual Cultures,” 229. Desmond here is specifically talking about a Rose manuscript (Biblioteca Històrica de la Universitat de València, MS 387) that contains several illuminations of mythical scenes mentioned by de Meun, but I think the Morgan Rose’s pictorial program exhibits a similar awareness.


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covers—to the polysemy of embrace images, but also to the multivalent nature of the Morgan Rose itself.

Chapter 4: Embodied Reading

The impact of the Morgan Rose’s illumination on readers—that it inspired tactile engagement—comes into view amidst the physical nature of medieval visuality. Sight was regarded as the most important of the senses, although its primacy was coupled with distrust since it could be deceived by desire, a theme, notably, of the Rose.\textsuperscript{202} Power and control resided not only in the viewer, but agency was also attributed to the object of vision itself, so that, as Carolyn Collette writes, “the act of looking [was] always a dynamic interchange between viewer and viewed.”\textsuperscript{203} Falling in love, predicated on sight, exemplifies this power; a lover internalizes the image of his beloved, and that image subsequently can act on him, overwhelming his senses, and causing lovesickness.\textsuperscript{204} The beloved’s likeness can even impress itself on the very muscle of her lover’s heart.\textsuperscript{205} The notion of vision—the mere sight of one’s lady—as the trigger for love abounds in medieval poetry. The Lover, importantly, embarks on his amorous quest after

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\item[202] For optical theory, allegory, and the Rose, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory (University of Toronto Press, 2004). She relates the structure of de Lorris’ poem to that of a mirror, with Narcissus at the center. In de Meun’s extension, Narcissus gets subsumed by Pygmalion, so that the act of looking shifts from self to object. A thesis of the book is that according to optical theory, vision (and allegory) always involve a level of distortion.
\item[204] Collette, Species, Phantasms, and Images, 20. Sylvia Huot touches on this notion of the internalized image when she analyzes a marginal drawing of a lover with his beloved’s face painted across his chest in response to the text’s declaration, “in my heart, lady, I carry your image,” see “Visualization and Memory: The Illustration of Troubadour Lyric in a Thirteenth-Century Manuscript,” Gesta 31, no. 1 (1992): 11.
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seeing the Rose reflected in the fountain. While acknowledging the importance of sight in poetic conceptions of love, Heather Webb argues that the encounter between lovers goes beyond mere vision; spirits emanating from the heart allow for two bodies to come together in a wholly physical way without actually touching.\textsuperscript{206} In the case of the \textit{Rose}, however, the Lover is not satisfied with this courtly chastity and vows to pluck his object of desire from the garden.

Nonetheless, Webb’s point gets at vision’s inherent entwinement with love and touch, viewer and viewed. The nuances of the active, reciprocal relationship fundamental to medieval vision were debated according to extromission, a theory of vision where rays radiate out from the viewer’s eyes to the object, and intromission, in which the object produces visible forms (multiplication of species) until they reach the viewer’s eye. In either case, vision possesses an inherently physical quality, a point expounded upon by the thirteenth-century thinker Roger Bacon, who sought to synthesize the two theories. The distance between seer and seen is collapsed because, as Suzannah Biernoff summarizes:

> the species of an object reproduces itself as a \textit{corporeal entity} between the object and the eye and, from there, through the internal senses. So if the object does not itself come into direct contact with the eye, its species not only touches the sense organ, but materially alters it.\textsuperscript{207}

According to Bacon, the act of looking itself is a kind of material union between viewer and viewed. He even aligns looking and touching when he writes, “flesh perceives in touch, just as the eye in vision.”\textsuperscript{208} This visceral comparison, where, as Biernoff notes, “looking becomes analogous to touching,”\textsuperscript{209} recalls the act of an embrace, where one body brings another closer. Similarly, the eye in Bacon’s conception is “reaching forward like a hand to grasp or feel its

\textsuperscript{206} Heather Webb, \textit{The Medieval Heart} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 69.
\textsuperscript{207} Biernoff, \textit{Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages}, 89.
\textsuperscript{208} Bacon, \textit{Opus majus}, 2: 474 (5.1.8.1) as quoted in Biernoff, \textit{Sight and Embodiment}, 90.
\textsuperscript{209} Biernoff, \textit{Sight and Embodiment}, 85.
objects.” The organ of sight serves as a permeable membrane, ferrying back information to be processed. This internal/external status, as well as Biernoff’s statement, “vision—like the flesh—exceeds the boundaries of the body,” speaks of a surplus comparable to that which Michael Camille identifies in the kiss, where the union ultimately contains an excess of meaning.

Not only were vision and touch analogous in the Middle Ages, but writing and reading also had bodily associations. Written on stretched flesh, manuscripts were literally made of the body. Sarah Kay has examined the relation of flayed bodies of saints in narratives and the flayed animal skins upon which they were written. The Rose’s theme of desired embrace also resonates with the materiality of manuscripts themselves, where the reader caresses pages (“mute doublings of living human skin”) as the characters touch (or obsess about touching) one another. Illuminations, comprised of pigment resting on vellum, epitomize yet another skin-like layer. More broadly, books evoked other human parts in the cultural imagination; they were employed in sexual puns, with the open book considered a euphemism for bodily openings, especially female genitalia (for instance, Nature’s “beautiful and valuable tablets” in the quote from the Rose below).

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212 See Camille, “Gothic Signs,” especially 154. In writing on another transgressive, bodily activity—that of eating—Jacqueline Jung observes how a depiction of the Last Supper provided surplus meaning: “the image exceeded the contents of any codex they could have read, whether the Bible or a guide to good manners. It communicated in the language of the body, the language of material culture, the language of formal unity and antithesis,” *The Gothic Screen*, 179.
214 Mark Cruse, “Matter and Meaning in Medieval Books: The Romance Manuscript as Sensory Experience,” *Senses & Society* 5, no.1 (2010): 45. His language follows that of Sarah Kay: “folios bearing defects like these thus constitute a mute doubling of the kinds of suffering undergone by the protagonists of many of the texts that are written on them,” “Original Skin,” 36.
On a similarly salacious note, the scribe’s tools were considered phallic, and the act of writing—pressing ink into fleshy parchment—akin to coitus, the author’s resultant book, their offspring. Jean de Meun inserts a pen/penis metaphor into Genius’ sermon in which he exhorts sexual reproduction:

But those who do not use their pens, by means of which the mortal live for ever, on the beautiful and valuable tablets which Nature certainly didn't prepare for them in order that they should lie idle, on the contrary she lent them in order that all [men] should be writers upon them, so that all men and women might live; those who receive the two hammers and do not work straight at forging on the right anvil with them as they should;... those who despise such a mistress [as Nature] and read the text askew, and refuse to set about correctly understanding the right meaning, but rather pervert the text when they come to read it: may all these, along with the excommunication which damns them, since they are resolved to go that way, lose, before they die, the purse and the testicles which are the sign that they are male!... May the pens be taken from them, since they haven't wished to write on the precious tablets that were suited to them!

Here writing is a means through which the author (in this case de Meun, but also Genius himself since he is reading from a script he wrote dictated by Nature) can gain immortality, just as a couple can produce children that will extend their legacy. As we have seen, when this passage was illustrated, it sometimes showed a man atop a woman in bed. While this scene is not depicted in the Morgan *Rose*, a creative example eliding another metaphor of Genius’ sermon (that of forging) with procreation can be found in University of Chicago Library, MS 1380 (fol. 102v; figure 39). Nature personified as a woman wields a hammer and an infant as she somewhat

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218 Examples can be found in: Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 5209, fol. 107r and Walters Art Museum, W. 143, fol. 105v.
ominously lurks at the foot of a couple active beneath the sheets—the red-hot fire of the furnace blazes in the background.219

Reading and writing were actively physical, and “the medieval manuscript was almost prosthetic in its extension and incorporation of the body.”220 Libraries were spaces of intimacy, performance, and the corporeal.221 Michael Camille goes on to stress that “the very act of reading was a libidinal experience, of penetrating the bound volume, that dangerously ductile opening and shutting thing”; and that the practice of book collecting, with its obsession of amassing exquisitely crafted objects, was inherently “fetishistic.”222 In this context where paging through a romance could incite the senses, the rubbing of miniatures in the Morgan Rose can be considered an embodied response.223 The body of the reader and the body of the book come together, flesh meets flesh, and the manuscript itself becomes a site of embrace.

This idea can be pushed further, I think, in considering the Morgan Rose against the broader context of sensorial possibilities for the original reception and transmission of the romance genre. In addition to illumination, other graphic features of the folio, including rubrication, abbreviation, layout, and script suggest that manuscripts were not inert objects, but

219 Sometimes Genius’ sermon is accompanied by a miniature of Nature at her forge, without copulating couple, for example: J. Paul Getty Museum, Ludwig XV 7, fol. 101r; Morgan Library MS M. 948, fol. 156r; Bodleian Library, MS Douce 195, fol. 114v; Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 802, fol. 105v.
221 Books even entered the privacy sanctuary of the bedroom, as seen in an illumination of a monk in bed surrounded by books (Flores Bernardi, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 753, fol. 9r), pictured in Michael Camille, “The Book as Flesh and Fetish,” 66 (figure 4).
222 Camille, “The Book as Flesh and Fetish,” 34-77; see pages 41 and 37 respectively for quotes. Notably, the Valois were considered voracious book collectors, as examined in Chapter 5 of this thesis. Speaking to the active role of the role of the viewer (specifically in front of an image of coitus) and how they are implicated in the act that is represented: “This observer of human sexuality is, however, also always a participant because he or she is using one of the senses, sight, to experience the sexual act,” Sander L. Gilman, Sexuality: An Illustrated History (John Wiley & Sons, 1989), 67.
223 In “Obscenity Under Erasure,” Camille writes “the selective obliteration of parts of an image surely constitutes not merely editing and expurgation, as with a text, but an embodied response,” 140.
rather contained a density of information that helped bring to life stories in the minds of readers. Citing Keith Busby, Mark Cruse concludes that this visual evidence “indicates that many verse romance manuscripts were intended as scripts, or platforms for nuanced and expressive vocalization.” In this sense, the narratives had just as much capacity to be experienced aurally as visually. This expressive potential dovetails with the observation that it was not unusual for stories to be read aloud at feasts (such as in the Roman de Rou), where medieval sensory delights were at their peak. Gluttonous, multi-course feasts were spread across long tables decked out in ornate nefs, chalices, and platters; scents wafted through the air and guests dressed in their finest vestments milled about, as immortalized in Jean de Berry’s banquet scene in his own Très Riches Heures. In this boisterous setting, the acoustic aspects of the manuscript would be enhanced by smell and taste. As Cruse notes, “Meals offered a ready aural audience, and discussion of what was read made for a much appreciated postprandial activity; food and text were digested together.” Public reading was a shared experience, stimulating conversation and communal engagement amongst the bodies of the guests gathered in close proximity.

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225 Cruse, “Matter and Meaning in Medieval Books,” 47. Sylvia Huot also discusses the practice of reading romances aloud, noting that both prose and verse romances had potential to be received aurally, see “The Manuscript Context of Medieval Romance, in The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 73.
227 For a discussion of the multi-media performance that was medieval feasting and its social implications, see Christina Normore, A Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance, and the Medieval Banquet (The University of Chicago Press, 2015).
228 Cruse, “Matter and Meaning in Medieval Books,” 52.
physical proximity.\textsuperscript{229} If meals and romance made a natural pairing, perhaps it was because both triggered appetite and stoked desire.

Evelyn Birge Vitz has pushed this idea of romance’s generative potential further to reimagine Guillaume de Lorris’ section of the \textit{Rose} performed at court. Citing the popularity of mimes in vernacular medieval performance and historical precedents for acting out allegorical personifications (namely the vices and virtues in Hildegard of Bingen’s 12\textsuperscript{th} century musical drama \textit{The Ordo Virtutem} and the characters of Nature and Nurture in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century romance \textit{Silence}), she hypothesizes the possibility for a silent actor to perform before a courtly audience as a minstrel narrates, as well as musical accompaniment, and dramatic potential as other characters are introduced and begin to speak.\textsuperscript{230} In addition to sight and sound, Vitz even suggests that the text’s description of the garden’s olfactory scents could have been realized, as in the stage directions for \textit{Jeu d’Adam}.\textsuperscript{231} The multi-media spectacle Vitz describes does not seem completely outside possibility. Wealthy patrons had money to spend on elaborate feasts, performances, and luxury manuscripts; it does not seem a stretch that they would have united these passions. Vitz’s ideas are conjecture, and while she concedes she cannot prove that performances of the \textit{Rose} actually happened, her theatrical explorations point to the work’s latent performativity, placing the romance amidst the rich sensorium that was the medieval court.\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{229} Group reading presents the possibility of touching between the bodies of the readers, in addition to the touching between reader and page; Cruse stresses the importance of this “social touch that made people aware of others’ presence and of their participation in a group,” in “Matter and Meaning in Medieval Books,” 56.


\textsuperscript{231} Vitz, “Le Roman de la rose Performed in Court,” 156.

\textsuperscript{232} Eric Rohmer’s 1978 film, \textit{Perceval le Gallois}, is a modern example, but one that I think taps into the performability of a medieval romance. For more on the multi-sensory aesthetic of the late Middle Ages, see \textit{A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe} ed. Martina Bagnoli (Yale University Press, 2016).
Elsewhere, Vitz proposes other, more intimate responses to romance manuscripts. Looking to literary sources, she considers what she terms erotogenic readings, where hearing about love could inspire young couples to enact the embraces described in the narratives. Vitz points to the thirteenth-century romance *Floris et Liriopé* by Robert de Blois in which the titular couple read from the Ovidian romance of Piramus and Thisbe as they snuggle together in *a locus amoenus*. Identifying with the literary lovers, Floris and Liriopé decide to imitate them immediately and consequently Liriopé becomes pregnant with their son. Similarly, *Floire et Blancheflor* from the early thirteenth century, tells of an existent couple who decides to take further amorous action after studying love in books. The most famous scene in this vein is from Dante’s *Inferno* where Francesca da Rimini explains why she and Paolo Malatesta were sent to hell: reading of Lancelot kissing Guinevere, they themselves were roused to kiss. In her discussion of the *Roman de la rose*, Vitz proposes that the work may have been composed with erotic reading in mind, calling the text “virtually a how-to manual for would-be lovers.” Whether or not the Morgan *Rose* or other extant manuscripts inspired physical entwinement amongst its readers is of course unknowable. But Vitz’s citation of literary culture suggests that erotogenic reading was not outside the medieval imagination: “the Middle Ages certainly understood that stories—whether they be about saints and other heroes, or lovers—inspired

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234 Vitz, “Erotic Reading in the Middle Ages,” 75.
235 Vitz, “Erotic Reading in the Middle Ages,” 78.
236 Vitz, “Erotic Reading in the Middle Ages,” 87.
237 This possibility crossed the mind of Christine de Pizan; in her criticism of the *Rose*, she worries the work’s obscenity could lead readers to sin, see Hult, *Debate of the “Romance of the Rose”*, 13. In Hult’s translation, Christine writes, “I say that it is an exhortation to vice that encourages a dissolute life, a doctrine, full of deceit, a path to damnation, a purveyor of public defamation, a cause of suspicion and distrust, a source of shame to many people, and perhaps a seed of heresy,” 62.
imitation by their audience of listeners or readers.” As witnessed in the rubbed pages of the Morgan Rose, images provoked physical action, at the very least between reader and folio.

Whether in groups aloud or silently alone, readers’ corporeal presence could activate the text and images inscribed within the manuscript. The multi-sensory possibilities inherent in the manuscript’s materiality renders the experience of engaging with such an object synesthetic, where one sensory pathway automatically triggers another and multiple senses get compacted. In a culture where seeing and touching could be analogous, and where sumptuous beauty was a pathway to the divine, perception becomes an act that engages body and mind. In the context of romances, this compression and distillation of senses infuses the manuscript with an added erotic charge. Furthermore, reading as a bodily, sensory performance could transport beholders to the realm of the story. The oft-cited quote from Richard de Fournival regarding memory is relevant here:

Memory has two doors: Sight and Hearing…When one sees the depiction of a history of Troy or of some other place, one sees the deeds of those past heroes as if they were present…when one hears a romance read, one hears the adventures as if one saw them in the present.

In this conception, eye and ear have equal capacity to bring a story vividly to life in the reader’s mind. The reader enters the narrative by witnessing its events in the present, but the narrative

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238 Vitz, “Erotic Reading in the Middle Ages,” 87.
239 This is a major point in Desmond’s article, “Visuality of Reading.” On page 223, in comparing reading an illuminated manuscript to film, she writes “the corporeality of the manuscript implicates the medieval reader in a dynamic awareness, not only of the textual body that scripts a rhetorical performance, but also of his or her embodiment as the viewing subject whose presence activates the performative possibilities envisioned within a text.” While I don’t agree with her comparison between film and medieval reading, her categorization of the reading process as performative is evocative.
240 Heather Webb mentions synesthesia in relation to encounters between lovers, but concedes it “is an inadequate term as well; more than a layering of senses as we know them, this encounter between bodies surpasses the visual,” see The Medieval Heart, 69. A modern theorization of sensory comingling is found in Deleuze’s use of the “haptic” to describe the fusion of touch and sight in Francis Bacon’s paintings, see Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon and the Logic of Sensation, trans. Daniel W. Smith (University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
also becomes a part of the individual, lodging itself in one’s memory, just as Bacon conceived the invisible, but material, *species* coming in through the eye.

In the Morgan *Rose*, a probable mistake by the book planner, scribe, or illuminator nonetheless creates a space through which the viewer can imaginatively penetrate the story. On folio 23v (figure 40), the scroll names the characters in the miniature as Friend and the Lover, but only one lone figure resides within the frame. The Lover stands forlorn, hand to heart, during a section in the poem in which Friend comforts him. Posed solitarily in this way, the Lover resembles a stage actor in monologue, during which a spotlight hits and all other characters and scenery are momentarily hidden and inert. Since the Lover only takes up half the composition, the blank void left by the absent *ami* allows an entrance for the reader to envision himself in the role of Friend, the Lover’s confidante and advisor. The lack or loss of the anticipated comfort offered by the presence of Friend also resonates with the narrative’s larger themes of love and endlessly deferred closure. By figuratively entering this empty space, the reader, in a sense, completes the miniature. If vision was understood as an active, reciprocal exchange between viewer and viewed, the medieval reader of the Morgan *Rose* brought to life its pictures each time she or he gazed upon its luminous pages.

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242 A parallel might be devotional practices that involved imagining oneself in moments of sacred history or envisioning being in the presence of holy figures in one’s own real space; see Sixten Ringbom, “Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions: Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Piety,” *Gazette de Beaux-Arts* 73 (1969), 159-170 or Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Pilgrim, 1990).

243 Fleming reads “ecce compaigne cy. C’est l’amant.”

244 Fleming discusses how Ami replaces Reason as the Lover’s advisor, *The Roman de la Rose*, 140.

245 Compare this miniature with BnF fr. 19157 (fol. 23r), where one figure places his hand on the other’s heart in empathy.
Chapter 5: Vello-Maniacs

I. Valois Patronage

Who were the bodies responding to and interacting with the Morgan *Rose*? Due to the manuscript’s high quality and decoration consistent with the style associated with Charles VI and the Duc de Berry, the Morgan’s curatorial notes propose that it was created for a member of the court, if not the royal family itself.\(^{246}\) Two crucial themes that characterized Valois rule at the dawn of the fifteenth century will be explored in this chapter before returning to further discussion of the Morgan *Rose*: the surge in the production of manuscripts and the cult of Charlemagne, both against the backdrop of political volatility.

Outpacing previous nobles, the Valois placed significant emphasis and money on the arts, a characterization that Brigitte Buettner identifies as an early instance of cultural policy.\(^{247}\)

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\(^{247}\) Brigitte Buettner, “Profane Illuminations,” 75. Buettner describes the shift in this period where the upper echelon of the nobility became influential patrons, encroaching on the territory previously dominated by ecclesiastical figures and religious orders.
Known for their bibliophilia and “vell-o-mania,” the family amassed expansive libraries. While Charles V favored scientific, legal, and historical works, and Jean de Berry and Philippe le Hardi collected a higher number of romances and poetry, they shared a balance of religious and secular works, texts written or recently translated into French, and most pertinently, a proclivity for lavishly decorated manuscripts. Competition emerged as the brothers sought to employ in-demand artists and writers, sometimes requesting commissions that emulated each other’s manuscripts; further rivalry surfaced in the court’s New Year’s gift exchange, where expensive goldwork was especially fashionable.

The Valois zeal for resplendent manuscripts and art was voracious despite shifts in patronage and political disturbance. While the impressive library established by Charles V formed the basis of his son’s collection, Charles VI did not apparently share his father’s love of books. An account of the little boy describes him infatuated by a sword and helmet and dismissive of precious objects and implements of study, to the disappointment of the elder ruler. Eventually, when Charles VI came into power in 1380 at the age of twelve, this disinterest in books accompanied him. As Sandra Hindman and others have noted, even though he was not a significant patron, the production of manuscripts under the younger king nonetheless accelerated. A shift occurred: during Charles VI’s reign, patronage became more

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248 Buettner uses the term “vell-o-mania,” comparing the Valois to the bibliomania of the 19th century, “Profane Illuminations,” 75.
249 Buettner, “Profane Illuminations,” 75.
252 For more on the history and politics of this era, see R.C. Famiglietti, Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392-1420 (New York: AMS Press, 1986).
253 Sandra Hindman, Christine de Pizan’s “Épistre Othéa”: Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 9.
reflective of individuals and their own private interests. The multiplication of patrons was reflected in the numerous figures that were vying for power, most prominently the dukes of Berry, Burgundy, Orleans, and Bourbon; Charles VI’s wife, Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, and later, their sons, mainly Louis of Guyenne (dauphin from 1401-1415) and Charles VII. Charles VI’s madness, which first struck in 1392, proved ongoing and incurable. The king’s instability and uncertainty regarding the succession of the throne exacerbated antagonisms between the dukes. Under an ordinance passed under Charles V, if the king died without a male heir, the next nearest male would gain the right to rule, which at the time was Charles VI’s younger brother, Louis, Duke of Orléans. Civil war ultimately roiled, worsened by the resumption of the Hundred Years’ War.

The infighting amongst the Valois factions reached soap opera-level heights. Not only was Louis of Orléans believed by modern historians to have been the lover of his brother’s wife, Isabeau (possibly in an attempt to position himself to take control), but in the power vacuum left by the absent, mad king, John the Fearless murdered Louis in 1407; John’s death came subsequently as revenge in 1419 at the hands of Charles VII’s companion. The arts, meanwhile, flourished. Amidst bloodshed, adultery, and volatility, there was gold, enamel, and jewels. A new and difficult-to-master technique, émail en rond bosse became à la mode, notably during the étrennes, where Buettner opines sworn enemies continued to exchange lavish gifts.

255 Charles VI’s sons were sickly: his first son, Charles, died soon after birth in 1386; his second (also Charles) died in 1401 at 9; Louis of Guyenne died in 1415 at 18 and John died in 1417 at 17. Charles VII survived, but was disinherited in 1420.
256 M.G.A. Vale, Charles VII (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 21; Hindman, Christine de Pizan’s “Épistre Othéa”, 12. Famiglietti, however, thinks this gossip is a modern postulate; see his discussion of “the adultery myth” in Royal Intrigue, 42-45. The adulterous queen characterization persists regardless in more recent accounts, see Adams, The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria, 258 note 1.
manuscripts, Jacques Krynen has tracked the production of political texts under Charles V and VI. He demonstrates that during the reign of Charles V, the king would commission works to be written by his inner circle, while under Charles VI, the pool broadened to intellectuals outside the court. Remarkably, the literature produced under the latter king remained loyal to the monarchy in the face of the ruler’s mental illness and the divided country.258

Manuscripts, as Krynen highlights, were an important means through which the Valois shaped their image and claimed their legitimacy. One particular obsession was tracing their lineage back to notable rulers. As demonstrated in Anne D. Hedeman’s foundational study, frontspieces to the *Grandes Chroniques* often depict the fall of Troy and the foundation of the kingdom that later became France.259 In one example of circa 1410-12 that breaks free from textual basis (Morgan Library MS M. 536, fol. 2r), a quadripartite miniature is comprised of three scenes of Trojan refugees at sea collocated by a presentation scene of the book to Charles VI, suggesting a direct trajectory from the descendants of Troy to the present king.260 This link is materialized in the book—M. 536 itself and the representation of it being passed into Charles VI’s left hand—which unites legend and history, past and present, in the very tome that justifies his rule.

Hedeman identifies another dynastic theme in the same Morgan *Grandes Chroniques*, that of the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni*, which augured the return of Carolingian rule in France. The prediction stipulated that seven generations after Hugh Capet, the kingship would be restored to the line of Charlemagne. Louis VIII (1223-1226) fulfilled the prophecy since he

could claim Carolingian descent from both his parents. In M. 536, Hedeman observes a connection between the miniatures of the coronations of Charlemagne (fol. 83v) and Louis VIII (fol. 224r), in that their backgrounds feature the same diapered pattern of blue lozenges containing fleur-de-lis that appears nowhere else in the manuscript.²⁶¹

A golden scepter, topped with an enthroned Charlemagne,²⁶² also speaks to the Valois need to legitimize their dynasty. The object’s exact date of creation is debated—whether it was made before its recorded delivery to Saint-Denis in 1380 or if it was already used for the coronation of Charles V in 1364. The latter hypothesis is possibly bolstered by an illumination in the manuscript the king commissioned the following year (British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B. VIII, fol. 64r), in which he holds a similar emblematic staff, although the Coronation Book’s images cannot be trusted as veristic recordings of actual events. More relevant than the precise dating of this work is the distinctive face of Charlemagne (figure 41), which one exhibition catalogue describes as embodying “a rare, expressive vigor.”²⁶³ In this scepter, the great emperor’s strength is literally in the hands of the Valois.

Charlemagne’s visage—with its stoic poise, wavy beard, and gold crown—bears resemblance to the strange personage levitating in the miniature on folio 11r of the Morgan Rose (figure 1). Against the Valois cult of devotion toward the famed Carolingian ruler, Suzanne Lewis’ assumption that the disembodied head is Charlemagne seems less outlandish. Indeed another mark of Valois assertion can be found on the shield of Openness (fol. 111v; figure 35), which carries the arms of France. These potential displays of Valois power could have been

²⁶¹ Hedeman, The Royal Image, 158. While elsewhere (pages 34-35) Hedeman argues that the reditus fell out of favor in manuscripts after the reign of Philip III (1270-1285) and other ideologies surfaced, an overarching desire to concatenate kingship persisted. William Chester Jordan in his review of Royal Image counters that the reditus remained relevant: The Art Bulletin, vol. 75, no. 4 (Dec., 1993), 723-724.
²⁶³ Paris 1400: les arts sous Charles VI, 41.
intended as sincere or mocking, given their residence within a manuscript of a poem known for satire. If manuscripts—especially illuminated ones, as Hedeman demonstrates—could advance ideologies and reflect political realities, they could also have critiqued and poked fun at them.

II. La Querelle

If, as Marilynn Desmond posits, the implication of Paul Zumthor’s famous conception of mouvance is that each manuscript must be approached as an artifact bearing “the authority of its own particular historical moment,” the Morgan *Rose* needs to be viewed not only amidst the era’s sweeping political uncertainty, but also in the context of a coterminal moral debate.

In the century after the *Rose*’s composition, Jean de Meun’s prominence persisted. In a now-lost text by Jean de Montreuil (a secretary of Charles VI), he praised the work and author for forging a new direction in poetry. Christine de Pizan objected to Montreuil’s exaltation in 1401, beginning a literary controversy that over the next couple years expanded to include the theologian and Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, on the side of Pizan; and

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265 Desmond, “The Visuality of Reading,” 220.
267 Hult, writes that Jean de Meun enjoyed “a near-cult following,” see *Debate of the “Romance of the Rose,”* 12.
another secretary of the king, Gontier Col, and his brother, Pierre, canon of Notre-Dame, supporting Montreuil. Pizan’s initial criticism centered around several points: Reason’s indecent language and assertion that it is better to deceive than be deceived, the hypocrisy of Genius’ encouragement of sex as a way to heaven, and the misogynous statements and improper lessons given by the Old Woman and the Jealous Man. 268 Overall, Pizan and Gerson feared the negative moral impact the text could have on readers. The subsequent letters and sermons now referred to as La Querelle de la Rose did not circulate in totality, and David Hult notes it is not until Pizan compiled a selection of documents for Queen Isabeau in 1402 that the debate transformed from a private into a public event. 269

Dated circa 1405, the Morgan Rose not only emerged in the wake of this literary face-off, but for a patron in a court that was active in the poem’s defense. Hult cites the impish tone of Montreuil and his chancery brethren, who “delighted in Jean de Meun’s outrageous misogyny and obscenity, even though they themselves would not have indulged in them.” 270 This stake in the Rose played out against the contemporaneous establishment by Charles VI and his uncles Louis of Bourbon and Philip of Burgundy in 1400 of the vast chivalric order, Cour amoureuse (of which the Cols and Montreuil were a part), to honor women and cultivate poetry. 271 Pizan

268 Baird and Kane, La Querelle de la Rose, 46-56.
269 Hult, Debate of the “Romance of the Rose,” 21. McWebb’s anthology challenges the limited notion of the La Querelle, suggesting that although the epistolary components between 1401 and 1403 were central, the polemic over the Rose was far-reaching in time and form, and it is therefore impossible to pin down definitive start or end points; see her preface in Debating the ‘Roman de la rose’: A Critical Anthology, especially xiii and the introduction by Earl Jeffrey Richards, xxi—xxxvi.
270 Hult, Debate of the “Romance of the Rose,” 18.
responded in her poem, *Dit de la Rose*, dedicated to the king’s brother, Louis of Orléans, in which she envisioned a female-centric movement that defended women, in opposition to the all-male *Cour*. Notions of proper behavior, the status of women, and the role of literature were therefore considered timely issues by the king and his extended circle, and a prominent discourse that was being waged amongst the very people who likely encountered the Morgan *Rose*.

Despite the rumblings of the *Querelle*, and Charles VI’s tutor, Philippe de Mézières, who wrote romances off as deceptions that palled in comparison with the truth of scripture, the Valois were known to be collectors of the amorous genre, especially Jean de Berry who owned several *Rose* manuscripts. The Rouses describe how the royals’ literary taste radiated:

> Creation of vernacular literature in Paris had the crown and the court at its centre, actively as patrons and passively as those to whom books were given or romances dedicated by suitors of all classes. Dissemination of vernacular literature often proceeded outward from the throne in concentric waves.

That the court’s patronage set the tone for the book-buying public is not particularly surprising, but the fact that romances were exchanged as offerings to the monarchy is noteworthy. Perhaps it was well known that the royals enjoyed a good love story, or simply that the genre was fashionable and therefore an obvious choice for a present. Gift giving—especially of a romance, with its themes of desire—also suggests betrothal rituals, where the lover was expected to shower beautiful objects upon his lady. The continuity of behavior also makes sense since courtly love stipulated that a man honor his beloved as he would his lord.

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273 Including BnF fr. 380 & fr. 12595, which have been linked to him.
275 This was part of advice given by Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 176. Capellanus’ treaty has been interpreted by modern scholars as satire, yet its status as satire suggests it is parodying a system (some) people at the time took seriously; for humor in Capellanus, see Betsy Bowden, “The Art of Courtly Copulation,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 9 (1979): 67-85.
That romances were “dedicated by suitors of all classes” speaks to their relative accessibility, but also that presenting books of this genre was a meaningful way for a subject to express his reverence. A high profile instance is that of Jean Froissart, who described giving a manuscript of his love poems to King Richard II:

He opened and looked into it with much pleasure. He ought to have been pleased, for it was handsomely written and illuminated, and bound in crimson-velvet, with ten silver gilt studs, and roses of the same in the middle, with two large clasps of silver-gilt, richly worked with roses in the center. The king asked me what the book treated of: I replied, “Of love!” He was pleased with the answer, and dipped into several places, reading parts aloud, for he read and spoke French perfectly well, and then gave it to one of his knights, called Sir Richard Credon, to carry to his oratory and made me many acknowledgements for it.

Above all, Froissart’s account emphasizes the manuscript’s exquisite materiality and therefore its status as a luxury object worthy of a king. That Richard II read aloud and then had his knight deliver the volume to the personal space of his chambre de retraite—presumably so he could continue in private—suggests both the specialness and intimacy of such a gift. The request also speaks to the increasing intimacy of reading on the rise in the later Middle Ages, in which public, oral transmission of texts was supplanted by a private, silent reception. Finally, in receiving the book as gift and bringing it into his personal space, the king claims ownership of the object; he’s now free to read (and perhaps rub out the illuminations) as he pleases.

In its subsequent provenance in the early modern period, the Morgan Rose itself is a witness to this practice of manuscript as offering between writer and royal. A dedicatory poem

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276 Authors frequently presented royalty with copies of their own writing, another famous example being Christine de Pizan, who dedicated works to Charles VI, Queen Isabeau, Louis of Guyenne, and Jean de Berry. See Hindman, Christine de Pizan’s “Epistre Othéa”; on page 12 she notes that Christine was rewarded in turn, with Isabeau giving her gilded silver goblets.


278 A compacted version of this arc from aloud to silent is implied in the above anecdote; Richard II first reads to his guest, then ostensibly continues in private.
inserted at the beginning of the manuscript in the 16th century testifies that it was given by the poet Jean-Antoine de Baif to King Charles IX on April 7, 1571 (figure 42). It reads:

Sire, sous le discours d’un songe imagé,  
   Dedans ce vieil Roman vous trouverez deduite  
D’un Amant desireus la plaisante poursuite.  
   Contre mille refus en sa flamme obstiné.  
Paravant que venir à son bien destiné,  
   Faussemblant l’abuzeur tasche le mettre en fuite  
A la fin Belacueil en prenant la conduite  
Le loge aprés avoir longuemement cheminé.  
L’Amant dans le Vergier, pour loier des traverses  
   Qu’il passe constamment souffrant peines diverses,  
Cueult du Rosier flori le bouton precieux.  
Sire, c’est le suget du Roman de la Rose,  
   Ou d’Amour espineux la poursuite est encoele.  
La Rose c’est d’Amour le guerdon gracieux.

[Sire, under the speech of a dream imagined / Within this old Romance you will find pleasure / Of a lover desirous (of) the pleasant pursuit / Against a thousand refusals in his persistent passion. / But before coming to his good destiny / False Seeming the abuser tries to put him to flight / At the end taking protection in Fair Welcoming / The shelter after having a long walk. / The Lover in the Orchard, to admire some traverses / That he passes constantly suffering diverse abuses / To acquire the precious bud of the blossoming Rosebush. / Sire, this is the subject of the Romance of the Rose, / Where the pursuit of thorny love is enclosed. / The Rose is the graceful reward of love.]\(^{279}\)

De Baif’s verse invokes the *Rose*’s general plot, pitting False Seeming against Fair Welcoming in revealing terms. The former causes the protagonist to flee (“mettre en fuite”) while the latter plays a protective, guiding role, whom de Baif likens to sheltered respite after a long trip. The use of the word “deduite” (which has connotations of a pleasurable or delightful diversion) in the second line expresses the poet’s hope that the king will discover pleasure in the gift, just as the Lover finds pleasure in the garden, but the word also recalls the character of Deduit\(^{280}\) who owns

\(^{279}\) Translation my own.  
\(^{280}\) The character is called “Diversion” in Dahlberg’s translation; he notes the “two senses of diversion, ‘having a good time’ and ‘turning away from a (right) course’ are implicit.” *The Romance of the Rose*, 361, note for line 590. Akbari observes the word “deduit” was used in medieval understandings of optical refraction, see *Seeing Through the Veil*, 61-64.
the very vergier in which the whole story takes place. De Baif also comments on the nonlinear path of the Lover; it is obstructed by False Seeming and studded with pain, but there is also a positive association. The Lover is in the garden “pour loier des traverses,” implying an admiration and enjoyment of the journey itself, marred as it may be by suffering—the Rose, de Baif insists, hovers as reward throughout. The brief poem lauds the Morgan Rose as an engrossing, escapist experience, one that is very much in line with Richard de Fournival’s conception of interacting with romances, as well as Froissart’s vignette of King Richard II approaching his book of love poems as a physical object to “dip into.”²⁸¹ The Morgan Rose, through its sumptuous materiality and absorbingly twisting plot, is capable of transporting the beholder to a pleasantly private realm, not unlike the garden of Deduit itself.²⁸²

This gift of the Morgan Rose to Charles IX in the sixteenth century returns the manuscript to Valois hands.²⁸³ Charles IX was the great-great-great grandson of Louis I of Orléans (brother of Charles VI).²⁸⁴ Charles IX is best remembered for ordering the massacre of Protestants on St. Bartholomew’s day in 1572 at the bequest of his mother, Catherine de’ Medici.²⁸⁵ The Morgan Rose was presented to him by de Baif just over a year before the slaughter. The manuscript next surfaced in the library of the poet Philippe Desportes (1546-1606), whose signature appears on folio 1r. Presumably Desportes received it from his patron,

²⁸¹ The original French edition renders this as “regarda dedens le livre en plusiers lieux,” see Oeuvres de Froissart: Chroniques, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1867-1877), tome 15, 167.
²⁸² Stephen J. Barney compares the circular structure of Guillaume de Lorris’ Rose narrative to loci amoeni, see Allegories of History, Allegories of Love (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979), 184.
²⁸³ Another instance of a romance manuscript passing between Valois hands is the three-volume Vulgate Cycle (BnF fr. 117-120) originally made for Jean de Berry and partially repainted for his great-grandson, Jacques d’Armagnac. This set of manuscripts is discussed in Stones, “Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere,” 132-136, 142.
²⁸⁴ It should be noted that Louis, unlike his older brother, followed in the footsteps of their father’s literary patronage, partially to position himself as a logical successor since Charles VI’s illness clearly made him unfit to rule, see Hedeman, The Royal Image, 138.
²⁸⁵ In addition to authorizing mass murder, Charles IX also dabbled in writing, through that too continued in a violent milieu. He penned La chasse royale, a book on his favorite pastime of hunting, which was published fifty years after his death.
Henry III, who became king of France after his brother Charles IX’s death in 1574, and was known to shower the writer with gifts and praise. The appearance of the Morgan Rose in the Valois sphere on the cusp of two counts of civil war in France separated by five generations (Armagnacs vs. Burgundians and later Catholics vs. Protestants), as well the manuscript’s role in exchange between Valois and poets, provides circuitous, but satisfying symmetry.

This subtle balance in pattern of provenance brings to mind the girded structure of the Rose narrative itself. The nesting doll layers never actually reveal the initial promise that the art of love is entirely enclosed. A nod to the poem’s annular pathway is camouflaged in the Morgan Rose’s pictorial program from the very start. In circling back to the opening miniature (figure 2), in which an unidentified couple is fervidly entwined, we can read the woman being embraced from behind as a personification of the Rose herself. In this interpretation, the commencement of the manuscript neatly foreshadows the poem’s denouement in which the Lover ultimately reaches his goal. For now, the two phantom lovers, confined between the bed curtains, are very much in the space of sleep; they share the left-hand side with the snoozing Lover, while Reason stands just beyond the foot of the bed, outside the wall of cascading fabric. Green grass sprouts beneath instead of floor. It’s as if the Lover’s reverie roused the bed to take flight, carrying off and landing gently in the realm of the dream. The lower third of the

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286 The comment about Henry III favoring Desportes comes from Encyclopedia Brittanica, entry for “Philippe Desportes,” vol. 8 (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 102–103.

composition is bounded by crenelated walls that surround a garden populated by five figures and a blossoming rosebush. One stands off to the side to admire the vibrant red flowers. The space of the miniature is at once unnaturally compacted and thematically expansive, encompassing salient elements of the story—an entire universe within a gold-lined rectangle. The looming pink castle, with a door ajar, is an invitation for the reader to dip in, and like Charles IX and his earlier, medieval analogues, to discover delight within its pages.

**Conclusion**

The relative diversity of *Rose* imagery mentioned in the introduction to this thesis is amplified in the range of each reader’s response, each manuscript its own unique entity, an artifact of each turn of the page and vehement rub of pigment. As Sylvia Huot argued, “The evidence of the manuscripts shows, then, that the medieval reception of the Rose was pluralistic rather than monolithic.” This project, though small in scope, was to tap into the sensorial and interpretative possibilities bound up in a single work, to survey its idiosyncrasies and revel in its myriad paths to meaning.

In its marks of erosion, the Morgan *Rose* as a material object becomes a very literal site of physical contact between reader and the page. Even the manuscript’s layout (which is standard for the *Rose*) speaks to a kind of embrace between image and text since the former is embedded within the latter. This format, as Suzanne Lewis has observed, “disrupts the very process of reading, interjecting another semiotic system that demands pause, even if momentarily, in

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scanning a column of words.”²⁸⁹ While the images interrupt the flow of text, they simultaneously add a new layer of meaning, or “openings” to use Lewis’ terminology. Stephen G. Nichols has noted that, “by translating the descriptions of gazing into the act of gazing, the illuminations oblige the reader to perform the actions of the Lover.”²⁹⁰ Not only are we mimicking the Lover’s visual behavior—as Lewis writes, “we see Narcissus before his image, as the viewer is before the painting and the reader before the text”²⁹¹—but we also caress the pages as the characters in the story and the figures in the miniatures touch and embrace one another. After all, the reader’s hand against the vellum folio is a kind of skin on skin contact.

The dual forces of vision and touch are united, of course, in the optical wound that occurs at the beginning of the Rose, and motivates the actions of the subsequent narrative. The puncture caused by the God of Love’s arrow striking the Lover forms a swift circuit running from eye, inward to heart, rousing desire, which radiates outward from the Lover’s body back into the external world.²⁹² As I have shown, the images in the Morgan Rose precipitated a similar trajectory—once viewed, they provoked a response in the reader(s), one that often resulted in the rubbing of miniatures. Perhaps somewhat anachronistically, Roland Barthes’ famous theorization of a photograph’s punctum comes to mind here: “this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me…that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).”²⁹³ For Barthes, the punctum in a photograph that wounds the viewer is necessarily personal; two people can look upon the same picture at the same time and have

²⁹⁰ Nichols, “Ekphrasis,” 151.
²⁹² This circuit is not unlike the circulation of the heart described by Heather Webb, although she argues for a system that bypasses the eye, in which flow directly emanates in and out of the heart; see The Medieval Heart, especially the chapter entitled “The Porous Heart,” 50-95.
²⁹³ Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26-27. I am struck by how the metaphor of an arrow piercing skin underscores a physical aspect to the punctum, that it reorders the viewer on a physical, as well as emotional, level.
divergently different experiences. It cannot be predicted what detail will move someone within their core or why, but Barthes’ theory insists that images have an innate potential to profoundly affect the beholder.

Abrasion of painted surfaces—prompted by loving devotion, spiteful iconoclasm, or some seemingly ambiguous feeling that lays beyond the modern observer’s comprehension—is nonetheless an externalized testament to an intimate, emotional reaction, a mark that long outlives the individual who made it. Like the fast-moving shutter of the camera, the reader’s corporeal response of rubbing miniatures happened, as John Fleming observed, in an instant. This precise moment remains preserved in the erasures, which forge a direct link across hundreds of years through the very material of the folio. In the Morgan Rose’s pictorial program that emphasizes bodily union, we as readers are complicit in its exploration of power, desire, and deceit. The physical touch of the reader bears the same pleasure, ambivalence, voyeurism, and anxiety that are the themes of the miniatures. In turning its pages, we embrace the Rose, with all its contradictions and multivalency of meaning.
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