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Encountering Nature, Experiencing Courtly Love, and Romance of the Rose: Generic Standpoints, Interpretive Practices, and Human Interchange in 12th-13th Century French Poetics

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Abstract Whereas the fields of poetic expression and pragmatist philosophy may seem some distance apart, a closer examination of the poetics literature from the early Greeks onward provides testimony to the more general viability of the pragmatist analysis of community life, particularly as this has come to be associated with pragmatism's sociological derivative, symbolic interaction.

Following a brief overview of the Greek, Roman, and Christian roots of contemporary fictional representations, attention is given to the ways that pragmatist concerns with human activity were addressed within the context of poetic expression in 12th-13th century France. Whereas the pre-Renaissance texts considered here exhibit pronounced attentiveness to Christian theology, they also build heavily on Latin sources (especially Virgil and Ovid [see Prus 2013a]).

Among the early French poets who address the matters of human knowing and acting in more direct and consequential terms are: Alan de Lille (c. 1120-1203) who wrote *The Complaint of Nature* and *Anticlaudianus*; Andreas Capellanus (text, c. 1185) the author of *The Art of Courtly Love*; and Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1212-1237) and Jean de Meun (c. 1235-1305) who, in sequence, co-authored *The Romance of the Rose*.

Given our interest in the ways in which those in the poetic community helped sustain an analytic focus on human lived experience, particular consideration is given to these early French authors' attentiveness to (1) the relationships, identities, activities, and tactical engagements that people develop around romantic relationships; (2) the sense-making activities of those about whom they write, as well as their own interpretive practices as authors and analysts; (3) the ways in which the people within the communities that they portray knowingly grapple with religious and secular morality (and deviance); and (4) more generic features of human standpoints and relationships.

Clearly, the poets referenced here are not the first to pursue matters of these sorts. However, their materials are important not only for their popular intrigues, creativity, and effectiveness in "moving poetics out of the dark ages" but also for encouraging a broader interest in considerations of the human condition than that defined by philosophy and rhetoric.

Keywords Love; *The Romance of the Rose*; French Poets; Sexuality; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interaction; Philosophy; Sociology; Personification; Collective Events

Although pragmatist philosophy and its sociological derivative, symbolic interaction, are often envisioned as products of 20th century democratic scholarship, the roots of pragmatist thought run much deeper and assume much broader dimensions than is commonly supposed.¹ Using contemporary symbolic interaction (Blumer 1969; Lofland

¹ As I started to appreciate some years ago, on becoming more explicitly aware of the roots of what is now termed "American pragmatist philosophy" (i.e., the study of knowing and acting) in classical Greek and Latin scholarship (Prus 2004; 2012), the "pragmatist analysis of human group life" is an extremely significant feature in the development of Western Social Thought. Attending to texts developed by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Lucian, and others from the classical Greek and Roman eras, we may better comprehend the relevance of pragmatist social thought for the analyses of morality, deviance, and regulation (Prus 2007a; 2011b); education, knowing, and scholarship (Prus 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2011a; 2013b; Puddephatt and Prus 2007); rhetoric as persuasive interchange (Prus 2008a; 2010; 2013a); history and ethnography (Prus 2008d; Prus and Burk 2010); poetics and entertainment (Prus 2008b; 2008c; 2009); love and friendship (Prus 2007a; 2009; 2013c; Prus and Camara 2010); and religion (Prus 2011c; 2011d; 2013d).

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1976; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003) as the major analytical standpoint,² this paper considers the roles that four French pre-16th century Renaissance poets assumed in helping to sustain an analytic pragmatist thrust that may be traced back to the classical scholarship of the early Greeks (c. 700-300 BCE).

Pragmatism is only one of several themes (theology, morality, emotionality, structuralism, fatalism, nationalism) to which early Greek, Roman, Christian, and later Latin-European scholars would attend, amidst wide ranges of natural disasters, human-related disruptions, and intellectual and moral cross-currents. However, because of its attentiveness to the humanly known and enacted world, pragmatism is uniquely important for analytical scholarship of a transcontextual and transhistorical nature.

Pragmatist thought is generally envisioned as falling within the domains of philosophy and (more recently) sociology, but some 12th-13th century poets in France

² Briefly expressed, symbolic interactionist theory may be characterized by the following premises: *Human group life is* (1) *intersubjective* (is contingent on community-based, linguistic interchange); (2) *knowingly problematic* (with respect to "the known" and "the unknown"); (3) *object-oriented* (wherein things constitute the contextual and operational essence of the humanly known environment); (4) *multiperspectival* (as in viewpoints, conceptual frameworks, or notions of reality); (5) *reflective* (minded, purposive, deliberative); (6) *sensory/embodied and (knowingly) materialized* (acknowledging human capacities for stimulation and activity, as well as practical [enacted, embodied] human limitations and fragilities); (7) *activity-based* (as implied in the formulative [engaging] process of people doing things with respect to objects); (8) *negotiable* (whereby people may anticipate, influence, and resist others); (9) *relational* (denoting particular bonds or affiliations); (10) *processual* (as in emergent, ongoing, or temporally developed terms); (11) *realized in instances* (attending to the specific "here and now" occasions in which people "do things"); and (12) *historically enabled* (being mindful of the ways that people build on, use, resist, and reconfigure aspects of the "whatness" that they have inherited from their predecessors and learned through their associates).

notably contributed to an interest in the pragmatist analysis of the human condition that went well beyond that achieved by most European philosophers and rhetoricians. Relatedly, in the ensuing centuries, poets (fictionalized verse, prose, and plays) and other literary analysts have helped focus attention on human agency, action, and interchange in the absence of a more explicit social science (such as symbolic interaction) that dealt with human knowing and acting in more direct and explicit terms.

Historical Flows of Scholarly Thought and Poetic Endeavor

Because poetic endeavors revolve around fictional representations and are generally envisioned as realms of expressive entertainment, there is a tendency to separate poetical endeavor from more focused analysis of the human condition. While one can develop arguments both for and against inclusion of poetic endeavor in the realm of serious scholarship, it can be acknowledged that poetic endeavor encompasses extremely wide ranges of subject matters, as well as religious, instructional, and philosophic emphases.

At a more foundational level, it should be appreciated that poetic text (like those on rhetoric, philosophy, and theology) emerged somewhat concurrently in Greece (c. 700-300 BCE) amidst the development of a highly sophisticated language and a systematic, exceptionally precise phonetic alphabet (c. 800 BCE; see: Bernal 1990).³ The subsequent extensions, con-

³ Whereas linguistic fluency appears to have enabled all manners of intellectual endeavor among the early Greeks (and the Babylonians and Egyptians before them), the development of an exceptionally precise, systematic *phonetic* alphabet allowed Greeks to articulate, share, accumulate, and study conceptual materials in much more exacting written and spoken terms.

tinuities, and disjunctures of written materials very much reflect the flow of Western scholarship, from the early Greeks onward.

However, since the flow of literary expression has been far from even or continuous and reflects wide ranges of community arrangement, and emphases over the centuries, it may be useful to provide a rudimentary overview of this larger set of processes.

Whereas a wide assortment of philosophic themes can be found in both classical Greek (c. 700-300 BCE) and Roman (c. 200 BCE-500 CE) scholarship, an attentiveness to the matters of human knowing and acting would recede dramatically as the Greek and Roman empires fell into disarray and the Christians (c. 300 CE-onward) began to assume more of the intellectual mantle and essentially represented scholarship through the European dark ages (c. 500-1000 CE).⁴

⁴ Following the conversion of Constantine, Christianity was recognized as the state approved religion in Rome in 313 CE. Christianity was declared the official religion of Rome in 391 CE. Still, it is to be understood that Christianity (and scholarship) as it subsequently would take shape in West Rome and Roman Catholic (Latin) Europe would be notably different from that evolving in East Rome (the Byzantium Empire) and the Greek Orthodox (and extensions thereof) church.

To put matters more cryptically, the scholarly oriented Roman Catholic theologians in Western Europe would develop religious emphases that were more attentive to pluralist scholarship (philosophy, analytic logic), whereas theologians in East Rome, with its allegiance to the Greek Orthodox church, would remain much more attentive to religious scriptures and sign-based (versus philosophic) evidence.

Ironically, whereas scholars in East Rome had more continuous access to classical Greek texts, they tended to envision these (especially those associated with Aristotle) as pagan materials and philosophy very much stagnated under Byzantium Christianity. Working their way out of the dark ages, the more scholarly oriented Western European theologians not only were attentive to some pagan Latin scholarship but following their exposure to some classical Greek texts (especially materials from Aristotle), as a consequence of the Crusades, stressed the importance of knowing God and religious scriptures through reason (as in dialectic analysis – as opposed to the heavier emphasis on sign-based evidence and scriptural assertions associated with the Byzantium intelligentsia).

Maintained primarily through some scattered pockets of Catholic literacy, the ensuing Latin scholarship was not only severely limited in scope and depth but it also maintained a precarious existence through the dark ages. Still, this notably weakened base would provide the foundations on which 12th and 13th century Latin-European scholars would begin to appreciate the discovery of various early Greek texts (that in the interim had been preserved by scholars working primarily within Islamic, Jewish, and Greek Orthodox religious arenas).

The rediscovery of these early Greek texts (philosophic, scientific, theological, and explicitly fictional writings), in combination with the reengagement of some comparatively neglected Roman texts, would provide the foundations of the 15th-16th century Western European Renaissance.

As well, while the more popular or expressive-artistic European Renaissance would first become notably prominent in Italy (c. 1400), this would not have been possible except for a more enduring, albeit resurgent, interest in scholarship and artistic expression. Reflecting an earlier educational base fostered through the works of Augustine (c. 354-430), Boethius (c. 480-524), Alcuin (c. 732-804) and his patron Charlemagne (c. 742-814), and others, the intellectual renaissance most singularly may be attributed to the more sustained introduction of Aristotelian scholarship into Latin European thought (and theology). The works of Albert the Great (c. 1200-1280) and especially Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) are particularly consequential in this latter respect.

The pragmatist themes with which we are particularly concerned (via the analytical linkages of speech,

objects, and activity in poetic endeavor) are very much part of this larger set of intellectual and expressive processes. Still, given our more immediate focus on fictionalized representations of the human condition and the implications of these materials for the study of human knowing and acting, it is instructive to go back somewhat further in the history before more directly considering the contributions of 12th-14th century poets to a pragmatist appreciation of the human condition.

Poetic Representations over the Millennia

Although the practices of storytelling and generating fictionalized representation may be almost as old as human speech itself, the roots of contemporary textual Western poetics may be most appropriately linked to Homer's (c. 700 BCE) *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Whereas *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represent enduringly compelling instances of epic or heroic fictionalizations, Homer's characters (humans, superheroes, gods) are presented in dynamic terms, as acting, thinking, strategizing, interacting, and adjustive beings whose pursuits acknowledge wide ranges of human interests, endeavors, weaknesses, and obstacles.

Iliad and *Odyssey* also are presented in ways that foster appreciations of the interlinkages of speech, objects, and activities. Human behavior, as such, is not always wise, but it is represented as purposive and emergent, and subject to community (and theological) concerns with morality, loyalty, courage, and victory, as well as attentive to notions of personal worth and accomplishment.

Although lacking the stature and overall impact of Homer's works, Hesiod's (c. 700 BCE) *Theogony*

or genealogical statement on the emergence of the Greek gods also contributed notably to early Greek poetics. While Homer introduces an assortment of superheroes and gods into his epic or heroic accounts, Hesiod is best known for his mythical anthology of the gods. As with Homer, Hesiod's gods are depicted in anthropomorphic or human-like terms, as knowing, deliberating, acting, and interacting essences.⁵

Greek poetics also were centrally shaped through the works of the tragic playwrights, Aeschylus (c. 525-456 BCE), Sophocles (c. 495-405 BCE), and Euripides (c. 480-406 BCE), as well as the "comedies" of Aristophanes (c. 450-385 BCE) and Menander (c. 344-292 BCE). While these playwrights and their surviving texts represent only a small segment of the theatrical works produced in Greece at the time, these authors (along with Homer and Hesiod) would become major sources of literary inspiration for other poets, not only in Greece but also in Rome and, eventually, the larger Western European theatre.

One finds great variation in the fictional materials developed among the classical Greek authors of record. However, as a set, these authors provide highly articulated, multiple-themed accounts that not only reflect the full range of human capabilities, inclinations, deceptions, emotions, activities, and relation-

ships but that also frequently involve human interchanges with an assortment of gods, fantastic creatures, super-beings, and spirits from the dead. Thus, for instance, even themes that often are touted as uniquely contemporary (e.g., psychological, critical, satirical, and other worldly) can be located as explicit motifs in the classical Greek literature.

As well, those who take the time to read these early Greek texts may be surprised to see how remarkably enduring early Greek plots, characters, and activities are. Readers also may begin to appreciate how comparatively readily these materials may be recast in the garb, technology, and intrigues of "the present day." Such, clearly, was the experience of the Romans (c. 200 BCE-500 CE) and the Western European scholars (c. 1200-1600) who, on discovering various Greek texts, served as conduits for transmitting Greek emphases into much of our current notions of entertainment in literary fiction.⁶

Still, before one draws more direct connections between early Greek poetics and more contemporary renderings, it is important to acknowledge (a) the influence of various Roman (Latin) authors, (b) the comparative disregard of both of scholarly texts and secular poetics during the dark ages (c. 500-1000), and (c) the diversely destructive and censorial, as well as the preservational and enabling practices of differ-

⁵ Despite their apparent popularity among the Greeks generally and subsequent commentators on the classical Greek era, the accounts of the Olympian gods and other representatives of divinity presented by Homer and Hesiod were not so readily accepted by Greek academics. Thus, while Plato (420-348 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) give little credence to these notions, Herodotus (485-425 BCE) had earlier explicitly debunked these beliefs as the artful constructions of Homer and Hesiod, and saw these notions as an extension of Egyptian mythology.

⁶ Among the Roman (Latin and Roman Greek) authors who would develop poetic materials that had considerable importance for the eventual development of Western European scholarship are Plautus (c. 254-184 BCE), Terence (c. 185-159 BCE), Lucretius (c. 99-55 BCE), Virgil (70-19 BCE), Horace (65-8 BCE), Ovid (43 BCE-18 CE), Plutarch (c. 40-125 CE), and Lucian (c. 120-185 CE). For an interactionist consideration of some works of the Roman poets Horace, Longinus, and Plutarch – who address matters pertaining to the production and reading of poetic materials – see: Prus (2008c).

ent representatives (collective and individual) of the Christian community.

As a consequence of the educational contributions of Alcuin and Charlemagne and various others, Western Europe had been developing a broader and rather exceptional level of Latin Christian scholarship, the likes of which had not been seen for several centuries. The texts considered here are products of this emerging, broader, and intellectual venture.

While the writings of Homer and the Greek playwrights, along with a few texts of Plato and Aristotle had maintained considerable intrigue and continuities among their more immediate Roman successors, these Greek materials eventually would be overshadowed by the Latin texts produced by Roman and Christian authors. Although Roman poetics were built on Greek models, where Greek materials were not copied more extensively, only some of the broader Greek references were retained.

Even more quality of scholarship was lost in Christian quests for religious purity. Still, despite various Christian purges and other setbacks, some secular texts maintained a presence through the dark ages. These included Cicero's (106-43 BCE) *De Inventione*, Virgil's (70-19 BCE) *Aeneid*, Ovid's (43 BCE-18 CE) *Art of Love* and *Metamorphosis*, and Martianus Capella's (c. 380-440 CE) *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*.

Although poetics and rhetoric may have differing objectives in that poetics is intended to entertain or please audiences, whereas rhetoric is employed more deliberately to influence people's views and

actions, many scholars from the classical Greek era onward have been attentive to the interconnections of these two ventures. Thus, while serving to maintain some conceptual connectedness with the past in the areas of law, politics, and morality, Cicero's *De Inventione* (which also displays an attentiveness to poetical fictions and expressions) was used by 12th-14th century poets both as a subject matter and as a means of presenting materials to readers in more compelling or persuasive terms.

As an engaging epic or heroic account (that incorporated central aspects of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), Virgil's *Aeneid* had particular relevance for subsequent Latin-European poetics. Ovid's satirical representation of love (*The Art of Love*) also maintained a noteworthy presence through the dark ages, as did his more extensively fictionalized *Metamorphosis*. Indeed, Ovid (Prus 2013a) constitutes a particularly important source of inspiration for the materials addressed in the present paper.

Albeit presented as a fictional account between philosophy and one of the Roman gods, Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* also represents an instructional manual on the seven arts (grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Combined with an assortment of religiously justified texts, these secular works provided a valuable source of continuity in Latin thought and constitute a consequential base for the development of 12th-14th century poetics.

Further, whereas the Christians typically were hostile towards all manners of pagan life-worlds, practices, and expressions, some Christian spokespeople (e.g., Ambrose [c. 337-397], Jerome [c. 347-420], Augustine

[c. 354-430], Boethius [c. 480-524], Gregory the Great [c. 540-604]) more explicitly pursued educational (and expressive) emphases. Thus, despite their “grass roots” images, the primary Christian spokespeople were well-educated (more generally as rhetoricians) individuals. Those who defined the doctrine were not without literary resources or an awareness of the fictionalized (inevitably distorted) nature of their representations of God. Likewise, they were notably attentive to the importance of persuasive communication and education for purposes of proselytizing, dedication, or the study of matters divine.⁷

Pragmatist Motifs in 12th-13th Century French Poetics

In what follows, consideration is given to Alan de Lille’s (c. 1120-1203) *The Complaint of Nature* and *Anticlaudianus*; Andreas Capellanus’ (c. 1150-1200) *The Art of Courtly Love*; and Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1212-1237) and Jean de Meun’s (c. 1235-1305) *The Romance of the Rose*.

Attention also will be given to these authors as reflective entities on their own (i.e., attending to authors as actors, communicators, and interactors). Each text will be briefly outlined and considered mindfully of (1) author viewpoints and interests, (2) depictions of participant qualities, activities, and interchanges, (3) author concerns with their audiences (readers), (4) author attentiveness to critics, and (5) author concerns with the problematics of representation.

⁷ In addition to their own narratives of salvation and portrayals of God (depictions of which many early Christian scholars realized were inevitably imperfect or fictionalized), and the production of homilies and other interpretive religious materials, the early Christians also were active in introducing literary condemnations (“apologetics”) of both pagan life-worlds and any who opposed Christian standpoints.

Although I have tried to represent these authors as authentically as possible, I have not been able to convey the remarkably sophisticated, insightful, and detailed ways in which these texts have been developed. Accordingly, readers are encouraged to examine these works on their own.

The first two authors considered here, Alan de Lille and Andreas Capellanus, emerge as consequential groundbreakers in their 12th century emphases on personification and sensate love, respectively. They appear familiar with (the Roman authors) Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, and Capella, as well as an assortment of Christian sources (notably including Augustine and Boethius). Although they do not claim to be particularly novel in their approaches, their works are technically enabling and serve as valuable reference materials for broader considerations of human relations.

Notably, too, whereas Alan de Lille’s texts lack some of the romantic elements associated with *The Art of Courtly Love* and *The Romance of the Rose*, his attentiveness to personifications, moral conflicts, and human interchange helps set the stage for these other texts. Indeed, while often overlooked, Alan de Lille’s texts represent an important, groundbreaking development in the 12th and 13th century pragmatist analysis of interpersonal relations.

Alan de Lille’s *The Complaint of Nature* and *Anticlaudianus*

Like a number of authors who would follow him, Alan de Lille (also Alain the Great, Alanus de Insulis [c. 1120-1203]) invokes dream motifs as a means of

framing his two texts.⁸ As Sheridan (1989:36) observes, the dream motif or trance offers authors considerable latitude and autonomy in the contents of the text being presented.

Still, of much more relevance for the present paper is Alan’s use of personifications or allegories and the generic standpoints that these literary devices allow authors to achieve.⁹ Thus, while some readers may be entertained by the idea that Reason, Justice, or Greed, for example, might assume roles as living, thinking, acting characters, a more basic sociological insight revolves around people’s capacities to envision these matters in more abstract terms – that particular standpoints, activities, and relationships are not tied to specific people (e.g., with particular physiological qualities or appearances), but have a broader relevance across the community.

It is impossible to know how extensively 12th and 13th century readers actually envisioned human conduct in more generic, role-enacted terms, but they certainly would have had the opportunity to do so by the ways in which these texts are developed. Minimally, it is apparent that several 12th-14th century authors were fluent in articulating the ways in which these human essences are interconnected

⁸ The practice of textually recounting one’s experiences from a dream or other dream-like vision encountered by the author can be traced back to Plato’s vision of Er (*Republic*) and Cicero (Latin rendition of Plato’s account in the dream of Scipio in *De Re Publica*), but is re-engaged by Martianus Capella (c. 380-440) in *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury* and Boethius (c. 480-524) in *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

⁹ The 12th-13th century personification of deities, activities, and emotions, amongst other objects, is not a particularly novel practice in Western social thought. Minimally, it dates back to classical Greek and Latin poetics, theology, and rhetoric, for instance. Still, the use of these metaphors by the French poets considered here is to be appreciated for the more extended strategic and interactively adjustable qualities portrayed within.

(as in affinities, relationships, loyalties, alliances, and wide ranges of cooperative and conflictual interchange).¹⁰

Apparently well known as both a philosopher and a poet in his own time, Alan de Lille derives notable inspiration from Martianus Capella and Boethius (who also invoke allegories or personifications on a more sustained basis). However, while Boethius encounters Philosophy as a female form and (reflectively) engages her with respect to matters of happiness, knowledge, good and evil, and determinism and free will, Alan de Lille develops his personifications (especially in *Anticlaudianus*) in more multifaceted, interactive terms that more closely approximate those of Capella.^{11,12} Consistent with his theological and philosophical emphases more generally, Alan de Lille appears to follow Boethius’ version of Christianity, which is also heavily fused with Platonist philosophy.

¹⁰ Clearly, not all personifications are equally instructive in pragmatist terms. Thus, for instance, the personification of nature or death, which assigns rationality to matters that take place without recourse to human agency, assumes quite different dimensions than do personifications of more minded matters, such as philosophy, reason, pride, or anger.

¹¹ In addition to Philology, who is personified in her marriage to Mercury (the Roman god who somewhat approximates the Greek messenger god, Hermes), Capella also presents the seven Arts (Grammar, Dialectics, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Harmony [music]) in allegorical form. Each of the Arts is personified and each, in turn, offers a realm of knowledge as a particular noble and compelling dowry to Philology on behalf of Mercury (see: 1977).

Each of the Arts, in notably eloquent fashion, explains who she is, what her origins are, and the nature (scope and content) of her enabling qualities.

Although set in the form of a marriage ceremony, Capella’s volume also represents an encyclopedia of sorts and appears to have been used as a textbook until the early middle-ages.

¹² For some other texts developed more exclusively around generic standpoints and personifications, see the Greek poet Lucian’s (c. 120-200) “Philosophies for Sale” (Volume II), “The Dead Come to Life or The Fisherman” (Volume III), and “The Double Indictment or Trials by Jury” (Volume III); see: *Lucian* (1913-1967).

The *Plaint of Nature*

The Plaint of Nature is the earlier of the two books of Alan de Lille considered here.¹³ While in a trance, the poet, who is deeply saddened by the evils and vices of the world, encounters a beautiful but continually changing young woman. The female form eventually introduces herself as Nature. Despite her apparent beauty, charm, and powers, the poet observes that Nature is grief ridden. Nature explains that while all other matters of creation accept the laws of nature, people frequently do not.

Ironically, too, Nature observes, of all creatures, it is people who ought to be most grateful for the qualities that God has bestowed on them through the works of Nature. Nature is distraught by several types of human evil, particularly homosexuality. In part, Nature (like Plato, *Republic* [1997]) blames the poets for their generally negative influences but also observes that Venus, whom Nature had appointed to insure appropriate male-female relationships, has been a source of much evil.

Noting that Venus eventually had become bored with her long-standing responsibilities to insure heterosexual love, Nature tells the author that Venus has contributed further to the demise of heterosexual relations through the birth of an illegitimate son, Sport (Jocus), who subsequently fostered a variety of perversions.

Still, Nature's problems are much more extensive. Thus, Nature observes that while justice has been de-

stroyed, fraud, crime, and decadence are rampant everywhere. Instead of becoming more virtuous, Nature finds that people generally have become more vile.

With some encouragement from the poet-dreamer, Nature discusses several vices (also personified), including Gluttony, Idolatry, Lust, Avarice, Arrogance, Envy, and Flattery. Assuming human characters, each of the vices is seen to adopt particular viewpoints, strategize, act, experience emotions, and selectively relate to others in receptive, cooperative, and oppositionary manners. Although Avarice (or Greed) is identified as a major source of personal, interpersonal, and community-wide troubles, Nature vilifies each of the vices (and their kindred associates), in turn.

After listening to Nature's commentary on evil, the poet asks Nature to help him avoid sins of the sort she has described. In response, Nature encourages moderation in consumption while also instructing the poet to practice generosity, resist pride, and maintain a rightful direction in all matters. At this point, Hymenaeus (Venus' honorable but wronged, and long-suffering spouse) appears. At Nature's request, Hymenaeus seeks assistance for Nature from Genius. Appreciating Nature's desperate plight and concurring with Nature's desire to improve the human condition, Genius says he will come to her aid. With Genius (as in knowledge and insight) entering the scene, the poet awakes.

Anticlaudianus

Written after *The Plaint of Nature*, *Anticlaudianus* (or *The Good and Perfect Man*) focuses on Nature's de-

sire for the creation of a perfect man (as a generic or prototypic aspiration).¹⁴ After expressing dissatisfaction with her human creations to date, Nature calls on the Virtues to help her realize her image of a divinely-enabled man. Following some deliberation between Reason and the other virtues, Prudence (judgment or phronesis) is selected to go to Heaven and ask God to provide a soul for what is to be the New Man.

The seven Liberal Arts cooperate to provide Prudence with a vehicle for the voyage. Later, on route, Theology joins Prudence as her guide. Still, finding that even Theology is inadequate to take her all the way to God, Prudence obtains the assistance of Faith. With Faith's help, Prudence eventually is able to explain her mission to God, to ask God to grant a soul to Nature's New Man.

After Prudence returns to earth, Nature physiologically fashions the New Man from earth, water, air, and fire. Concord, Arithmetic, and Music then connect the mortal body with the divinely-enabled soul. The Virtues and the Liberal Arts provide the essential moral and intellectual qualities for the New Man, while Fortune provides nobility.

Thusly enabled, the New Man seems well prepared to meet the world with all of its challenges and evils. Adopting a theologically-guided, but scholarly-informed, philosophic position, the New Man seems eminently equipped to deal with the dark, gloom, and evil of the past and to pursue a new, enlightened vision of human life on earth.

¹⁴ This statement is developed from James J. Sheridan's (1973) translation of *Anticlaudianus* or *The Good and Perfect Man*.

However, not everyone is pleased with what has transpired. While Rumor spreads the news of Nature's latest creation, Gloom assembles the Vices and their evil associates to attack Nature's youthful creation. A fierce battle ensues. With Nature, the Virtues, and the Arts on his side, the New Man eventually prevails. Having defeated the evil characters he encounters, the New Man goes on to assume rule of the earth.

Anticlaudianus introduces a number of potential intriguing themes, including Prudence's adventurous journey to Heaven and an encounter with God, as well as a highly engaging battle between the forces of Good and Evil. However, mindful of our emphasis on human knowing and acting, some other matters are somewhat more pertinent.

In developing his text, Alan de Lille not only appears attentive to Horace's analytical statement "On the Art of Poetry"¹⁵ but also explicitly addresses prospective readers and critics in both his preface to *Anticlaudianus* and in concluding his text. While Alan (Preface) appears to welcome thoughtful commentary, he explicitly dismisses certain people as viable judges of his text. Thus, Alan excludes inexperienced individuals, those who insist on the latest elements of modernity, those who are impatient, or those who pretend to be more knowledgeable than those who preceded them. In concluding his volume,

¹⁵ For those who are not familiar with Horace's short analysis of poetic endeavor, it should be appreciated that Horace's statement is the closest classical Latin approximation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Although Aristotle's *Poetics* (1984) is much more comprehensive and analytically detailed, it appears unknown to 12th-13th century authors. For many pre-Renaissance and later European authors, thus, Horace's "On the art of poetry" constitutes a particularly enabling statement for considering the ways in which knowing and acting is portrayed in fictional representations of the human condition.

Alan states that his goal has not been to rival his predecessors, but instead has tried to follow the classical authors with care. He hopes that he will not be the object of undue spite or slander for his efforts.

In yet more generic, pragmatist terms, Alan de Lille directs explicit attention to reason, learning, deliberation, and judgment as fundamental features of the human condition. Likewise, while attending to morality and vice in central terms, Alan depicts people as active, reflective, and interacting essences. By presenting the forces of Good and Evil in personified terms, Alan also draws people's attention to the more generic features of these matters for human group life. His presentation may be skewed in terms of his more specific, theologically inspired notions of Good and Evil, but in using allegorical figures or personifications, Alan de Lille contributes notably to a fuller appreciation of the generic standpoints that people (as living representations of the New Man) may develop through education in virtues and the arts.

Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*

It is not known if Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* (c. 1150-1200) constitutes a comparatively accurate depiction of more broadly practiced extramarital relations among men and women of the nobility or represents a more idealized form of romantic involvement that intrigued Capellanus' courtly contemporaries.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Capellanus (a Christian brother) who builds astutely on Ovid's *The Art of Love* (1957) not only provides a remarkably focused and articulate statement on erotic love but does so in

¹⁶ I worked with John Jay Parry's (1941) translation of Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love*.

a way that addresses the wider range of generic social processes associated with subcultural life.

Using courtly love as his primary reference point, Andreas (a) defines love as a humanly experienced essence, (b) indicates who the participants may be, (c) describes the nature of the attractions and effects (as in emotional states, inclinations, disruptions) of these involvements, (d) discusses the ways that people may tactically pursue objects of their affection, and (e) articulates an extended assortment of rules (as in practices, cautions, observations, outcomes) pertinent to this phenomenon.

Although acknowledging only limited personal experience in these matters, Andreas Capellanus says that he has been requested to develop this statement by a younger associate, Walter, who has been smitten by love's intrigues. Still, Andreas' works appear particularly indebted to the patronage of Marie, the Countess of Champagne.

While Book III of Andreas' text is an extended denunciation of erotic love (and a caution about the failings of women more generally) as an activity fostering disregard for other worthwhile matters, as well as encouraging involvements in vices of various sorts, Capellanus approaches his primary subject matter (Books I and II) in a more secular, advisory fashion, comparatively unencumbered by theological matters and virtuous concerns.

In spite of his condemnation of erotic love and female love partners in Book III, Andreas' volume represents a valuable source of continuity in the conceptual analysis of love from Plato (*Symposium*, *Lysis* [1997])

to Ovid to subsequent authors. As well, Andreas provides another highly articulated perspective on "the nature of love" amidst an explicit appreciation of love as a tactically engaged (and rhetorically-enabled) realm of human knowing and acting.

Thus, despite the highly unpredictable, clandestine, and romantic-emotional qualities associated with courtly love, Capellanus not only approaches love as something that can be analyzed in meaningful and adjustive process terms but also presents courtly love as a realm of community morality, intrigue, emotional involvement, entertainment, instruction, anticipation, and strategic interchange (as in images, discretion, impression management, deception).

Andreas does not achieve or maintain a consistent interactionist viewpoint, but his depiction of courtly love as a realm of meaningful enterprise and interchange is much more consistent with a pragmatist emphasis than are most of the analyses of interpersonal attraction that one finds in the contemporary (structuralist) social sciences.

Further, Andreas Capellanus not only acknowledges the discrepancies between sensate and religious life-worlds but also explicates the rules of courtly love and the conditions of their application. Thus, Andreas indicates just how extensively particular sensate life-worlds may be articulated as group practices (with their own moralities, justifications, and regulatory practices) within more extended religious communities (i.e., Christianity in this case).

Relatedly, despite Andreas' explicit and extended denouncement of sensate courtly love and his sharp

depreciation of women as objects of love in Book III, the predominant interest in the book for most readers is apt to have been in Books I and II. Thus, whether people practiced the art of courtly love in more direct and sustained terms, did so only in more transitory, voyeuristic, and fanciful terms, or approached the matter more entirely in condemnatory, righteous, and gossipy manners, much recreational consideration and conversation seems likely to have been directed to the ways in which love may be acquired and retained – as well as the rules of love and their possible circumvention.

The Art of Courtly Love appears to have helped sustain interest in romantic relationships as focal points of popular thought, fictional representations, and some scholarly analyses of love as an aspect of ongoing community life over the following centuries. Still, for those interested in pursuing a comparative analysis of affective relationships, there is much material to be appreciated mindful of subcultural involvements (as in people's perspectives, linguistic fluency, negotiated interchange, and the like; see: Prus 1997)

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *The Romance of the Rose*

While Andreas Capellanus provides an analysis of courtly love amidst an instructional commentary and condemnation of erotic love, *The Romance of the Rose* (hereafter, *The Rose*) is presented more entirely as a love story among the French gentry.¹⁷ Still, in ways that resonate with Alan de Lille, *The Rose* also

¹⁷ I found the translations of both Frederick S. Ellis (1900) and Harry W. Robbins (1962) very helpful for engaging *The Romance of the Rose*. I also was grateful to the materials provided by Maxwell Luria (1982) *A Reader's Guide to the Roman de la Rose*.

is developed as an account of the author's dream and relies heavily on personifications and the interchanges of the characters thusly portrayed.

Like Alan de Lille, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun present the central characters as developing standpoints, deliberating, acting, suggesting, and engaging in collectively coordinated activity. However, whereas Alan de Lille focuses more directly on the interchanges of Good and Evil as these center around the New Man, Guillaume and Jean developed two interrelated versions of a love story. The authors remain attentive to notions of community morality in *The Rose*, but this assumes a somewhat secondary emphasis to the human (albeit primarily male) quest for sensual, romantic love.

Although *The Romance of the Rose* is presently read as one volume, it consists of two parts, developed sequentially, by two different authors. Thus, while Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1212-1237) developed the original text, it was substantially extended by Jean de Meun (c. 1235-1305). Separated by a period of over 30 years, the authors also pursue somewhat different emphases in developing their sections of *The Rose*. Thus, while Jean de Meun continues *The Rose* in a synthetic flow, his approach also is notably more philosophic and intendedly instructional. Still, Jean has blended the two segments in ways that achieve a viable, exceptionally smooth transition.

Depicting the experiences of the dreamer or lover who inadvertently fell under Love's influence when attending to a particular Rose in a garden, *The Rose* assumes a great many theatrical qualities as an assortment of characters enter the story in the forms

of allegories or personifications. In addition to the Lover (Dreamer), Love, and the Rose (object of desire), other participants include Friend, Reason, Jealousy, Fair-Welcome (Receptivity), Hope, Dangier (Danger; as in obstacles, villainy), Hypocrisy, Evil Tongue, Shame, Fear, Nature, Old Woman, and False Seeming (sympathetic skill).

As the story unfolds, the characters enter, engage the Lover and/or one another, depart, and sometimes re-enter the story. While developing their roles in manners consistent with the characters they represent, the participants portray an intriguing set of *generic viewpoints*. Thus, in contrast to particular individuals, Friend could represent anyone who attempts to act in the Lover's interests, Jealousy could be anyone who wishes to keep the Lover apart from the Rose, while Reason might be anyone (including oneself) who cautions the Lover about the limitations and follies of romantic love, and Foul Mouth could be anyone who sees advantages or takes delight in soiling people's reputations or creating other difficulties for specific individuals.

In addition to acknowledging the wide assortment of others who constitute *the collectively-enacted community* in which the Lover attempts to pursue the Rose, the authors not only depict the varying interests and practices of many of those taking more active roles in the venture but also indicate the ways in which the participants may align themselves with others – both in support of and in opposition to the Lover's activities. Well, there is an appreciation of the ways in which people may engage other matters, such as resistance, fear, and shame, as these enter into the emergent love drama.

Although *The Rose* acquires some additional intrigues as a love story, pragmatist social scientists are apt to appreciate the extended discourses of Reason, Friend, and Nature (on necessity and freedom). Also consequential as a more scholarly matter is Jean de Meun's (second author) explicit attempt to defend their text, *The Romance of the Rose*, against prospective moral and literary critics. This especially includes the deployment and presentation of the various tactically engaged characters (and generic standpoints) that de Lorris and de Meun develop therein.

Much more than a love story, thus, *The Rose* is a consideration of people's (reflective and interpersonal) struggles with love and reason. It is a portrayal of their attempts to deal with sensate and romantic desires amidst conventional moralities and the presence of those who might facilitate, as well as frustrate, their endeavors. *The Romance of the Rose* may have been developed as a vehicle for entertainment and as an instructional manual (on the art of love), as well as an exercise in literary criticism (and satire), but more than that, *The Rose* may be seen as a sociological depiction of community life.

The Rose begins (R:1-7) with with the first author [Guillaume de Lorris] recounting a dream in which he enters the Garden of Mirth.¹⁸ After encountering the companions of Sir Mirth, the Dreamer (also the Lover) is emotionally wounded by the God of Love as the Dreamer sets eyes on one of the Roses in the garden.

¹⁸ The references to the sections of *The Rose* referenced here are developed mindfully of the sections in *The Romance of the Rose* translated by Harry W. Robbins (1962). As will become readily apparent, I have maintained the overall flow of this volume.

With the God of Love now as his companion and master, the Lover not only is instructed in the commandments of love (R:9) but also informed about the agonies of love (R:10), as well as told about remedies for the pains of love (R:11).

While sensing receptivity on the part of the Rose through the person of Fair Welcome (R:12), the Lover also encounters Dangier (obstacles, resistances) and the related noteworthy characters of Evil Tongue, Shame, and Fear (R:13).

Mindful of Lover's hesitations, Reason appears and counsels Lover to forgo loyalties to the God of Love, from which Reason claims only foolishness and misfortune are apt to follow (R:14).

Possessed with desire for the Rose, the Lover dismisses Reason. Lover then encounters Friend who will try to help Lover deal with his predicament (R:15). The ladies Franchise (as in openness, frankness) and Pity subsequently intervene on Lover's behalf, quelling Dangier by justifying Lover's plight, on the one hand, and arousing sympathy, on the other (R:16). With Fair Welcome's receptive assistance, the Lover eventually kisses the Rose, finding himself in totalizing bliss (R:17).

Still, Lover's happiness is sharply punctured by Evil Tongue and Jealousy who, subsequently accompanied by Shame and Fear, soon combine to spoil the romance, disparage Lover, and isolate the Rose (and Fair Welcome) in a seemingly impenetrable castle (R:18-20).

[Encountering the Lover in this state of despair, **Jean de Meun** (the second author) resurrects the love affair.]

Lamenting the deep sense of loss he has suffered at the hands of Jealousy, Evil Tongue, Shame, and Fear, the Lover beckons back to Reason's warnings (R:20).

Sensing the Lover's grief, Reason again appears and encourages the Lover to forego love. Reason directs a sustained verbal attack against sensate ventures of these sorts (R:21), followed by considerations of youth and old age (R:22) and the virtues of higher love in the form of genuine friendship as defined by Cicero (R:23).

Then, following a commentary on the fickle nature of Fortune and the value of true friendship (R:24), Reason defines true happiness in terms of a virtuous life-style (as exemplified by Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* [1962]) in preparation for life in the next world (R:25). After discussing the evils of riches and the importance of justice for the (troubled) human community (R:26), Reason informs the Lover of the many intellectual resources she can provide, followed by some illustrative cases for the lover to contemplate (R:28-32).

The Lover becomes impatient with Reason, indicating that he prefers riches to Socrates and remains single-mindedly focused on his quest for the Rose. Exercising great prudence, Reason insists that she is only concerned with the Lover's best interests and encourages him to attend to Plato's *Timaeus* and to the field of philosophy. The Lover again dismisses Reason, saying that he will be a fool of his own accord and has desire only for the Rose (R:33).

Still feeling despondent, Lover encounters Friend. After reassuring Lover that Fair Welcome's receptivity is most consequential in his quest for the

Rose, Friend cautions Lover about Evil Tongue at some length. Friend emphasizes the advantages of maintaining congenial relations with troublesome people no matter how despicable they may be (R:34), Friend offers further advice on securing the Rose's affection. He tells Lover not to be overtly concerned about securing his lady's love but rather to act with bravado, to assume a willingness to risk her scorn. Still, Friend also encourages Lover to be attentive to the Rose's moods, and to adjust accordingly. Friend advises Lover not to fear Shame and Dangier, but to deal with them strategically.

More importantly, though, Friend instructs Lover to be particularly mindful of Fair Welcome (as in variable notions, styles, areas, and depths of receptivity). Friend tells Lover to adjust his style so that he will appear to be what the Rose wants him to be. Thus, Lover's goal will be secured through deception, impression management, and ingratiation (R:35).

Lover resents Friend's advice, saying that he cannot treat the Rose in this insincere fashion, that such deception would be an act of treachery. Moreover, Lover insists on forcefully disposing of Evil Tongue. In the ensuing interchange, Friend again cautions Lover about the risks of attacking Evil Tongue, and points out Lover's vulnerability to the slippery evasions of Evil Tongue (R:36).

Friend also addresses the tactic of attracting love by extensive gifting, as may be practiced by the rich. Friend cautions the Lover that those with limited funds can soon spend themselves into poverty. In doing so, poverty-stricken lovers (as with Friend himself) will find themselves in more desperate

circumstances yet, and can expect to be deserted by their (materialistic) object of affection (R:37).

After expounding on the disastrous pains of poverty (R:36), Friend instructs Lover on the importance of gifting. Where money is not plentiful, Friend suggests that Lover be resourceful in the items given, noting as well that gifts may overcome the effects of gossip and other negative dispositions. Poetry, however, is generally not worth the effort and offers little hope against those with wealth (R:39).

In the ensuing dialogue, Friend also compares the current era with the golden past (R:40) and provides an extended dialogue on jealousy. Friend discusses the dilemmas and counterproductive practices of the jealous husband (R:41-45), and then (R:46) considers the broader decline in human happiness (attributable to envy, anger, avarice, slander).

Friend then instructs Lover on the artful practice of love. In addition to exercising caution and diplomacy, Friend stresses the importance of the Lover attending to ingratiation, blaming others for one's own indiscretions, and praising his beloved (irrespective of her actual qualities). These things, especially tolerance and flattery, Friend says, will engender loyalty (R:47).

Reaffirming his resolve in pursuing the Rose, the Lover seeks out Fair Welcome. Lover also hopes to obtain some assistance from Wealth but is abruptly refused and told that he should listen to Reason.

Still, Lover remains mindful of Friend's advice regarding the importance of maintaining congenial

relations with Evil Tongue and other difficult characters (R:48). At this point, the God of Love re-enters the scene and promises to aid Lover. Observing that the Lover is intent on avoiding villainy while exercising civil decorum, pleasantry, and congeniality, as well as modesty, happiness, and generosity, the God of Love notes that Lover is attentive to the precepts of love (R:49).

In a scene reminiscent of Alan de Lille's *Anticlaudianus* and Nature's attempt to help the New Man, the God of Love begins to assemble his forces to help the (deserving) Lover. These include Idleness, Nobility of Heart, Generosity, Pity, Fond Delight, Gladness, and Beauty, as well as Forced Abstinence and False Seeming (i.e., deception) (R:50).

Attending to the collective nature of their venture, Love's barons work out a strategy for disposing of the enemies of love (Evil Tongue, Shame, Fear, and the Old Woman [guardian]). Venus (the mother of the God of Love) also appears to aid the Lover who Wealth has treated so poorly (R:51).

The God of Love also enlists the services of False Seeming, who specializes in deceit. Following an extended discussion of the hypocrisy of many of those who pretend to be servants of God (R:52-55), False Seeming and Forced Abstinence prevail on Evil Tongue to make a confession to God about Evil Tongue's own activities, the purpose of which is to ensure Evil Tongue's silence.

After disposing of Evil Tongue's capacity for malicious speech, False Seeming and Constrained Abstinence accompanied by Courtesy and Generosity approach the

Old Woman (who controls access to the Rose). Once she is assured that Evil Tongue no longer represents a direct threat to her, the Old Woman is much more receptive to the benefits of Generosity and can be more sympathetic to the Lover's predicament and desires. Still, the Old Woman intends to instruct Fair Welcome on the ways of love and life. Thus, after telling Fair Welcome about her own experiences in these matters (R:59), the Old Woman proceeds to provide her theory of love (R:60), complete with observations, generalizations, strategies, cautions, and misadventures (R:61).

After putting these matters in historical context, the Old Woman tells Fair Welcome how women can gain men's love. Her instructions are explicit, detailed, and strategically calculating (R:62). She follows this with a story of the Roman gods, before concluding her statement on life and love (R:63-64).

Fair Welcome thanks the Old Woman for her advice and agrees to accept the Lover (R:65). However, even though the Lover gains access to the castle of Jealousy, he is rudely confronted with Dangier, Fear, and Shame. Fair Welcome is imprisoned and the Lover is thrown out by the enemies of love (R:67).

[In the midst of this account, the author, Jean de Meun, apologizes for his text. He says he will attempt to defend himself against evil-minded people. He asks that his text be viewed in instructional rather than malicious terms and that his criticisms of religion are directed towards hypocrites rather than sincerely devout Christians (R:70).]

Recognizing Lover's plight, the forces of the God of Love resume the attack, only to be forcefully re-

pelled by Dangier, Shame, and Fear (R:1-73). Lover is forced to accept a general truce (R:74).

However, when Venus, the mother of Love, intervenes. A new assault is begun and the treaty broken (R:75-76).

Nature also becomes involved in the conflict. While acknowledging her unpleasant role in bringing about death, Nature also plays an essential role in procreation and is relieved to see Venus enter the scene (R:77).

Then, following an extended denouncement of women by Genius (Nature's chaplain), Nature is encouraged to make a confession to Genius. Nature's confession is quite lengthy, covering God's creation, the celestial bodies, a philosophic consideration of predestination and free will (R:82), the weather, illusions and dreams, premonitions, and nobility (as in virtue vs. birth [R:86]), and the disregard of Nature's laws by man (especially the law of procreation [R:88]). Nature then asks for Genius' help in encouraging the God of Love (R:89).

After revealing Nature's sympathy towards the Lover to Cupid, Genius (R:90-95) embarks on a sermon wherein he stresses the importance of human procreation, amidst a virtuous, religious life-style. He also emphasizes the desirable and enduring qualities of Heaven as opposed to the dangers of the flesh and the related follies of the Garden of Mirth.

When Genius has finished his sermon and departs from the scene, Venus begins a highly concerted assault on the castle of Jealousy. Making all of the roses in the garden available for the plucking, Venus

diffuses Jealousy's focus and, likewise, neutralizes Shame and Fear (R:95-96).

Recounting the story of Pygmalion and his total enchantment with the feminine marble form he had generated, the poet addresses the collectively-enabled nature of love. Thus, once Venus strategically had prepared the way, Courtesy, Pity, and Openness urged Fair Welcome to receive the Lover – the effect of which was even more compelling than that experienced by Pygmalion (R:98). Making his way into the ivory tower, the formerly frustrated but now grateful Lover obtains the Rose (R:99-100). Then, with the morning on its way, the poet awakes from his dream.

Conclusion

As should be apparent from the preceding discussion, the French poets considered here merit much closer attention on the part of social scientists than can be given in the present statement. Still, before addressing their contributions in more singular terms, it is important to establish their (pragmatist) attentiveness to human knowing and acting. Thus, rather than view their texts as isolated instances of literature, the works of these early French poets attest to a more generic appreciation of human lived experience.

In considering whether these texts may represent genuine contributions to the social science enterprise it is necessary to establish some criteria of viability. To this end, one may ask how these texts compare with 20th and 21st century symbolic interactionist thought and research with respect to (1) baseline premises, (2) conceptual attentiveness to gener-

ic social processes, (3) methodological practices, and (4) analytical emphases.

It may seem inappropriate to expect that the works of these pre-Renaissance poets would closely match these criteria. However, their utility as instructional sources within the interactionist paradigm is contingent on these affinities. Thus, it is important to know where and in what ways these materials are consistent with the interactionist enterprise.

First, neither Alan de Lille, Andreas Capellanus, nor Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun articulate *the premises* pertaining to human knowing and acting in ways that approximate the texts developed by Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), Lofland (1976), Strauss (1993), and Prus (1996; 1997), for instance. Nevertheless, these 12th-13th century poets are attentive to broader pragmatist notions of multiple viewpoints, linguistically-achieved meanings, reflectivity, activity, influence and resistance, relationships, and process.

Moreover, while astutely addressing the viewpoints and activities of the most central participants in love's ventures, these French poets are notably mindful of amorous relationships as more extensive, collectively articulated events – as matters best understood within the context of ongoing interactional community life.

The French poets considered here may have been notably constrained by the religious contexts in which they lived and wrote, but once readers approach these texts in more neutral (atheological) ways, it becomes apparent that these poets engage human group life in terms that are notably pluralist

and pragmatist in emphases. This includes a particular attentiveness to people's struggles with affection, sexuality, and morality. These authors may encourage theological and secular morality (i.e., broader societal and more particular group-based virtues) at times but they also are mindful of people's personal intrigues, dilemmas, activities, and interchanges.

When one turns to a more explicit elaboration of the basic or generic *conceptual themes* that characterize interactionism more generally (e.g., Blumer 1969; Prus 1996; 1997), somewhat similar conclusions may be drawn. Thus, when one considers the matters of acquiring perspectives, achieving identity, developing relationship, doing activity, making commitments, achieving linguistic fluency, expressing emotionality, and forming and coordinating associations, one finds that the French poets are quite attentive to these basic features of human group life.

These sorts of emphases on the enacted features of human group life are perhaps more evident in Andreas Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *The Romance of the Rose*, but Alan de Lille's *The Complaint of Nature* and *Anticlaudianus* also attest to matters of this sort.

Not unexpectedly, the French poets fare much more poorly when assessed on the *methodological criterion* of symbolic interactionism. Whereas the poets clearly work with reference points pertinent to their own time and place – as they consider the experiences of their contemporaries, as well as provide some exceptionally detailed analytic accounts of human

knowing and acting – they do not offer data of more directly situated and sustained sorts.

Further, although these authors are highly astute observers in many respects, they present their materials in more distinctively entertaining ways. Thus, many readers may lose sight of the sociological representativeness of their observations. This is not to dismiss the value of these generic representations of human lived experiences, but to suggest that readers be mindful of these limitations.

However, before we judge the French poets too harshly on this methodological criterion, it might be appreciated that it has not been until the last century that social scientists have become more attentive to the importance of pursuing ethnographic research in more sustained terms.¹⁹

Moreover, a great many social scientists (researchers and theorists) still give little importance to the matter of attending to people's lived experiences in more direct methodological and conceptual-analytic terms. In this sense, the 12th and 13th century French poets considered here seem much more mindful of the actualities of human interchange than are a great many of those in sociology and psychology who presently claim status as "social scientists."

This brings us to the fourth criterion. What is the nature of *analysis* that the 12th-13th century French

¹⁹ For more extended critiques of the positivist tradition, with its emphasis on factors and variables rather than an attentiveness to human knowing and acting, see Blumer (1969), Prus (1996; 1999), Prus and Grills (2003), Grills and Prus (2008).

authors present in the texts featured here? Are their materials largely expressive and playful or does this literature have consequential transsituational and/or transhistorical analytic relevance? Relatedly, do these statements offer any sustained frames for examining human knowing and acting beyond some more situated sociological insights? More minimally, do the materials contained in these texts provide resources for more sustained comparative analysis?

While it might be appreciated that none of these poets achieve the highly analytical scope and depth that one finds in the broader philosophic works of Plato, Aristotle, or (their own 13th century contemporary) Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the French poets considered here all have attended to people's encounters with morality (i.e., engaging community notions of good and evil) and theology (defining and attending to divinity), as well as matters (albeit less evenly) of knowledge (as wisdom, philosophy, scholarship), love (romantic, sexual, and friendship), identities and reputations, and influence work.

Clearly, none of these authors has developed a more comprehensive philosophy of human relations. Still, as is particularly evident in Capellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* and de Lorris and de Meun's *The Romance of the Rose*, these authors provide insightful and comparatively sustained analyses of interpersonal relations. More generally, the poets considered here are very capable analysts. They have not embarked on a more explicit and systematic comparative and abstract analyses of a sort characterizing interactionist agendas (Blumer 1969; Lofland 1976; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996; 1997; Prus

and Grills 2003), but the work of these French poets is notably sophisticated in related ways.

As well, because these poets deal with matters of human relations, identities, influence work, morality, and religion in fairly explicit and detailed ways, contemporary social scientists would likely find it productive to examine these materials in more direct, analytically comparative terms (possibly using interactionist conceptualizations of generic social processes as particular comparison points).

Quite directly, even though these statements are fictionalized in certain regards,²⁰ they were prepared by very capable scholars who are (pragmatically) attentive to a great many of the enacted features of human group life. Thus, for those pursuing cross-cultural analyses, the French poets considered here provide materials from another place and time that compare notably with the cross-cultural ethnographic materials developed by contemporary anthropologists.

In addition to the conceptual continuities that they provide in the development of Western social thought (from Christian, Roman, and yet earlier Greek sources to subsequent developments in Western European poetics and broader scholarly understandings of human relations), these statements also represent

²⁰ Materials presented in fictionalized manners (as in fabrications, expressive emphases, allegories, and misrepresented content) and subscribing to a specific poetic form (as in preset formats, rhymes, and tempos) may pose additional challenges for those questing for authenticity in the social sciences. As well, these renditions also are apt to be more difficult to translate directly than prose (particularly of an intendedly direct and overt sort). However, because of their comparatively strong pragmatist emphasis, and highly detailed text and self-reflective presentations, these 12th-13th century French poets provide some particularly valuable resources from the past.

reference points that would strengthen contemporary comparative analysis of human knowing and acting. In that sense, these early French materials represent part of a highly instructive but much neglected intellectual treasure chest from the past.

Moreover, beyond the significance of these texts for considerations of community life in their own time, it also might be appreciated that these French materials, in conjunction with earlier Roman texts and the subsequent rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics*, contributed notably to what would become 13th and 14th century Italian humanism.

Indeed, these French authors appear to have provided considerable inspiration for Brunetto Latini's (1220-1294) *The Little Treasure* and *The Book of Treasures*; Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) *The Divine Comedy*, *The New Life*, and *The Banquet*; and Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) *Decameron* and other works on interpersonal relations.²¹ Denoting highly competent precursors to the 15th-19th century European theater (via playwrights, critics, and analysts), there is much emphasis in the works of Latini, Dante, and Boccaccio in establishing contexts, defining roles and characters, portraying human activity and tactical interchange, attending to sensate intrigues and community morality, and achieving authenticity and other audience connections in the midst of elaborately-developed fantasy.²²

²¹ Along with Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) whose poetical emphases are of a very different quality, Latini, (and especially) Dante and Boccaccio represent central participants in the 14th century "humanist movement" (in which classical Greek and Latin scholarship were given priority in matters of intellectual development).

²² For a more detailed account of the poetic productions of Brunetto Latini, Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio and the relevance of their work for the study of community life, see: Prus (2014 [forthcoming in *QSR*]).

The 12th-13th century French poets considered here are much more idiosyncratic in their presentations and analyses than those pursuing Chicago-style interactionism. However, because of the broader base of premises, concepts, and studies associated with Chicago-style interactionism and the careful attention that these early French poets have given to pragmatic matters of human knowing and acting, contemporary scholars can employ these texts in comparative-analytic terms to assess and extend interactionist conceptualizations (especially generic social processes) of human group life.²³

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²³ In drawing attention to the considerable value of these texts for comparative transhistorical and transcultural analyses, it is not proposed (also see: Prus 2008d) that contemporary social scientists strive to be poets or poetical in their representations of the human condition. Indeed, had these French authors been more attentive to the social science venture, their materials likely would have been yet more valuable as instances of scholarship. Still, these texts (along with Part II of the three part *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas [1981]) appear to be among the very best material on human knowing and acting that is available from this era. Thus, we can be particularly grateful to these French poets. Perhaps, as well, it may be because of their entertaining qualities that these literary materials have been preserved over the intervening century.

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