# CHAPTER 4

# Sadomasochism and utopia in the *Roman de la Rose*

The purpose of this chapter is to extend and elaborate two closely linked arguments from the previous chapter. The more local of the two arguments concerns a reading of the intellectual tradition within which Chaucer developed his interests in gender and sexuality and his sense of those interests as central to a project of philosophical poetry. The larger of the two arguments concerns the recovery of a medieval idiom for understanding psychological phenomena such as repression, fetishism, narcissism, sadism, and masochism. The two arguments dovetail in a resistance to taking either set of concerns as distinctively modern, or as requiring a modern conceptual apparatus such as psychoanalysis to understand.[1] Rather than turning to speculative biology, traumatic narrative, any of the various developmental models of the psyche, or any of the various psychic topographies advanced by Freud or Lacan, my argument focuses on the perennial link the Christian tradition has made between problems of sexuality and problems of autonomy, a link which, as Peter Brown has argued, was central to Christian thinking about morality and sociality from Paul to Augustine, and which remained so throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Partly to indicate the differences between the place of sexuality in this tradition and in psychoanalysis, in the previous chapter I bracketed sexuality completely, arguing that a sufficiently supple reading of dialectical form in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* both provides a philosophical account of repression and fetishism and leads to the conclusion that agency is constitutively masochistic. The present chapter extends this argument concerning a constitutive masochism to include accounts of sadism and narcissism, while returning the discussion to the territory of erotic life. I do so through a reading of the *Roman*

*de la Rose* that will attend to that text's engagements with Boethian dialectic, Aristotelian psychology, and the conceptions of utopian sociality at work in Cicero's analysis of friendship and in the Christian ideal of *caritas*. The two chapters together thus provide a context for understanding Chaucer's interests in gender and sexuality as thoroughly philosophical and thoroughly medieval. The eroticized punishments that Chaucer's Miller brings on a masculinity he wishes to imagine as a site of pure unimpeded activity; the combination of ethical admiration and voyeuristic, objectifying desire in both the Miller's and the Knight's representations of their tales' central female characters; and the Knight's abjected and ambivalent attempts to imagine a formalized ground for erotic conduct: these and other features of Chaucer's representations of gender and desire repeatedly open into broader considerations in ethics and theory of action because they are such powerful sites for exploring the masochism constitutive of agency.

This chapter's returning of the topic of masochism to a sexual context suggests another way of framing my argument that will help to clarify its historical and theoretical stakes. Both Chaucer and the authors of the *Rose* are deeply interested in a masculine eroticism that simultaneously elevates the feminine love object to sublime status and subjects it to an aestheticizing voyeurism, and that predicates its own desire on an immersion in suffering.[2] This erotic form commonly goes by the name of "courtly love," and as such it has come in for considerable discussion in recent years, most powerfully in the work of psychoanalytic theorists and critics.[3] The thought that courtly love is inherently masochistic is, however, hardly new. To be reminded of its familiarity one need only think of C. S. Lewis's famous description of the lovers in medieval allegory as

> "servants" or "prisoners" . . . who seem to be always weeping and always on their knees before ladies of inflexible cruelty . . . The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady's slightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim.[4]

Here, it seems, we are not far from the masochistic contract. In one of the contracts between Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and "Wanda," for instance, Sacher-Masoch has his mistress declare

> in my hands you are a blind instrument that carries out all my orders without discussion . . . I shall have the right to punish and correct you as I please, without your daring to complain . . . although I may wallow in luxury whilst leaving you in privation and treading you underfoot, you shall kiss the foot that tramples you without a murmur.[5]

However distinct the erotic practices involved may be, courtly love and masochism in its modern form share more than just a lacing of eros with the pleasures of suffering. They also share a peculiar ideological reversal. Both are resolutely masculinist erotic forms, in that it is the man who is "really" in control, insisting on the code of conduct, as it were dressing up his love object in her cruelty; but the masculine fantasy at issue here elevates the feminine love object to the status of a capricious and judgmental tyrant and demands the utmost extremes of abjection in the desiring subject. In both courtly love and masochism, then, the routine pains of romantic love – the delectation of such questions as "Will she love me or not?", "Dare I love her?" and so on – have been elaborated, formalized, and radicalized into something like allegory. The question is how, in each case, we are to read such allegory, and how far each allegorical form can help us understand the other.

Lewis, of course, avoids the term masochism; had he considered the question of its use at all, he would probably have considered it an impediment to recapturing the historical specificity of courtly desire and the poetic forms in which it found its most elaborate expression. On the other hand, for at least some recent critics courtly love is the symptomatic expression of a structure of desire which medieval culture itself had no terms for understanding: as Žižek puts it, "it is only with the emergence of masochism, of the masochist couple, towards the end of the last century that we can now grasp the libidinal economy of courtly love" (*Metastases of Enjoyment*, 89). The apparent contrast between Lewis's careful effort to reconstruct a "long-lost state of mind" (*Allegory of Love*, 1) and Žižek's provocative claim that "history has to be read retroactively" (*Metastases of Enjoyment*, 89) would seem to depend on crucial disagreements concerning historical method and the substance of an account of courtly love. Should we maintain respect for the alterity of the past, or should we dispense with the necessarily limited self-understandings of the past in favor of an analytics for

which we are only now developing the intellectual tools? I do not think we need to choose between these options – and *not* because the truth lies "somewhere in between," in a moderation of both positions. The problem with "careful historicism" is not that it shows an overly pious regard for the self-understandings of the past, but that, insofar as it imagines its task to be separable from that of theoretical speculation, its respect for the past is not radical enough; while the problem with "theory" is not that it courts anachronism and allows itself to play fast and loose with the interpretive object, but rather that, insofar as it imagines its task to be that of deploying an interpretive technology clearly distinct from the self-understandings of the past, it reifies its object and so is not theoretical enough.[6] In saying this, I do not mean to direct a polemic against Lewis and Žižek; these purposely exaggerated characterizations of historicism and theory fit neither. Instead I want to note the way certain features of their rhetoric, to which they may well be deeply committed but on which their deepest insights do not depend, makes it look as though they disagree about some substantive methodological issue, and so contribute to a limiting but widespread view of the interpretive options. In contrast to the idea that we need to choose between historicism and theory, my sense is that in order to do good history, we have to do good theory; and in this case that means neither adapting psychoanalytic categories from the outset nor polemically refusing to think about the topics and problems psychoanalysis engages.

Let us then take as a point of departure a more general narrative on which Lewis, all of the psychoanalytic critics I have cited, and for that matter quite a number of other literary and cultural historians would agree.[7] From roughly the eleventh century on, a rich tradition of literary interest in the sufferings of love developed in Spain and France and then spread throughout western Europe. This tradition came to include both Chaucer and many of the poets of most interest to him, including Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Machaut, Dante, and Petrarch. Further, this tradition helped to produce, and was influenced by, the broader cultural phenomenon of an eroticism that included but was not limited to courtly love, and which bore many of the characteristics of what came to be hegemonic western romantic love. These features include the sweeping up of the erotic subject into a state of utter devotion; the staking of one's life and self on the love

object; the intensification of the couple around the thrills and abjections of enamoration; and the production of a paradoxical erotic structure in which the feminine love object is constituted as a space of contemplation and delectation for the masculine subject and yet elevated to quasidivine status, while the masculine subject finds itself simultaneously in a position of sadistic mastery and lowered to the status of an insignificant worm undeserving of its object's attentions. In what follows I will argue that the *Roman de la Rose*, through its development of a rich allegorical mode of representation and its engagement with Boethian dialectics and philosophical psychology, provides a more powerful analysis of this form of eroticism than we have so far been willing to attribute to medieval culture. I hardly think the *Rose* was alone in this. But I restrict this chapter to a single text because I agree with Lewis that, partly because of our historical distance from allegory, it remains a difficult mode of representation to read; and the effort of historical imagination required here demands the kind of sustained close reading the *Rose* consistently rewards. I focus so tightly on the *Rose* also because it is the text other than the *Consolation* with which Chaucer maintained his most persistent intellectual dialogue, and with its explicit commitment to adapting Boethian dialectic to something like a character-based poetics it offers both Chaucer's closest model for philosophical poetry and a helpfully proximate contrast with his mature poetics. The chapter's larger theoretical-historical argument and its more local literary-historical one converge in a single question, to which I will now turn: how does the *Roman de la Rose* elaborate a Boethian concern with the masochistic constitution of agency into a concern with the sadomasochistic constitution of sexuality?

## EROTIC PATHOLOGY AND THE SCENE OF FANTASY

In claiming that the *Roman de la Rose* is concerned with a sadistic eroticism, I initially mean only to be drawing a fairly straightforward consequence of what has long been seen as the misogyny of the text's dominant erotic representations.[8] Throughout the poem, masculine eroticism is figured in terms of violently appropriative desires to invade or penetrate the desired other, to objectify, commodify, and aestheticize her, to possess her and establish mastery over her. The initial cluster of

figures for male erotic satisfaction allegorize this sadism quite explicitly: to penetrate the rose's enclosure, pluck the rosebud, and hold it in one's hand is to subject it to death, for, as the narrator well knows, a plucked rose will wither in a matter of days: "les roses overtes et lees / sont en un jor toutes alees, / et li bouton durent tuit frois / a tot le moins .II. jors ou trois" (1643–46) ("the broad, open ones are gone in a day, but the buds remain quite fresh at least two or three days [53]).[9] Friend's cynical advice to "cuillez la rose tout a force / et moutrez que vos estes hon" (7660–61) ("cut the rose by force and show that you are a man" [144–45]) links the violence of such desire to the shoring up of a threatened sense of virility in a familiar way, and justifies the violence in an equally familiar way through a supposed feminine desire for it: "il veulent par force doner / ce qu'il n'osent abandoner" (7667–68) ("they want to be forced to give what they do not dare abandon" [145]). And, to skip the many instances in between, the poem concludes with an elaboration of the initial rose-plucking trope into that of a full-bore assault on the "tower" of the woman's body, an assault whose purpose is "por tout prandre et metre par terre" (20680) – a line that hovers between the preparatory mechanics of conventional male-on-top lovemaking ("to take everything and place it on the ground") and, as Dahlberg translates it, a murderous rapaciousness ("to take everything and level it to the earth" [339]). In what follows I will argue that the *Rose* itself, despite what Christine de Pizan and many since have seen as its misogyny, does not endorse such an eroticism; the poem is about misogyny rather than an uncritical instantiation of it, and it casts the eroticization of misogyny as pathological.[10] In making this case, however, I will finally be interested in something a bit more unsettling than a moral evaluation: for, as I will argue, the text also suggests that there are real problems in saying just what is being desired here, as well as in saying how this pathology is distinct from "normal" sexuality.[11] As in the previous chapter, then, my ultimate argument will not concern a distinct, minoritized disposition. Just as masochism there was a name for a structuring feature of agency, so sadism and masochism here will be names for structuring features of normative sexuality, features that derive from the ontology of sexuality, and ultimately from the ontology of agency itself.

One problem in distinguishing the normal from the pathological here emerges from the narrator's desire for an erotic satisfaction that he

knows to involve the imminent death of the precious love object.[12] This desire suggests that implicit in the dreamer's attraction to the erotic object is an equally powerful aversive impulse, a wish for the removal or erasure of the desired one; and if we connect this to the objectification involved in imagining her as a rose, it seems as though both her objectification and the desire for her death point to something unbearable about her considered as an agentive being, something sticking out from the world of natural objects and strictly possessable things. Read allegorically, the beauty of the rose might then be understood as a way of trying to imagine the erotic other as part of a natural world which is itself the object of an instrumentalist fantasy, a dream of perfect manipulability – a way of imagining, in other words, her "death" as an agent and subject of desire. And since the death of the desired object entails its loss for the one who desires it, the wish for that death might also be understood as a wish for the frustration of desire and the suffering of loss. This returns us to the masochism of courtly love, and also helps to make sense of the dreamer's rather peculiar invocation of his own embalmed body just at the moment when he first contemplates plucking the rose: "et bien sachiez, quant je fui pres, / l'odor des roses savoree / m'entra jusques en la coree, / que por noiant fusse enbasmez" (1624–27); "Mark well: when I was near, the delicious odor of the roses penetrated right into my entrails. Indeed, if I had been embalmed, the perfume would have been nothing in comparison with that of the roses" (52). If masochism, so far at least, is less transparently allegorized by the text's dominant representations than is sadism, it is perhaps even more important to our understanding of the desires at issue here, since it would speak to the depth with which aversion and attraction, and suffering and desire, overlap.[13]

The sense of an overlapping or perhaps even mutually constitutive aversion and attraction gains support from reflection on what it means to desire, as the narrator does, the plucking especially of those "boutons petiz et clous" (1637), those small, tight buds, as opposed to the attractive but less hyperbolically pleasing "roses overtes et lees" (1643). Most obviously, this figures the desirability of "deflowering" a virgin; but "plucking the bud" is not just a figure for penetrating the virginal intactness of the love object. The dreamer is devoted to the bud – *that* is what he wants to hold in his hand – and if the bud is a figure for the

virginal love object, then to pluck the bud is also to keep her from growing into that later state of full floral openness, and so to *preserve* her in her unviolated intactness. In this sense, the desire to possess the love object in its self-enclosed, budlike state is a desire to possess her as aseptic and free from change, perhaps even free from death. This desire for a changeless love object circulates in rather unstable form through various sites of erotic objectification in the text, and in ways that give that objectification a particularly aestheticizing valence, as for instance in the earlier figuration of female genitals in the artifactual enclosure of the Garden of Love, or in the later apparent digression on Pygmalion and his fetishized feminine art object. And if this aestheticizing wish to preserve the rosebud's intactness seems distinct from a violating sadism, it does involve its own form of aversion, this time an aversion towards the sexual act altogether, at least in its genital heterosexual form. The elevation of the erotic object into the asepsis of art – and, as both the dreamer and Pygmalion will experience it, into the art object's indifference towards her lover's attentions – suggests, no less thoroughly than the desire for its death, a masochistic wish to keep at a distance, and even to lose, the very thing whose possession it means to guarantee.

Sadism and masochism are of course my terms, not the poem's. The central term the *Rose* provides for the erotic pathology at issue here is narcissism: the dreamer falls in love with the rose while gazing into what the text variously refers to as the Fountain of Love and the Fountain of Narcissus, and an Ovidian interest in narcissism pervades the text well beyond its explicit invocation of the Narcissus and Echo narrative.[14] Let me proceed then by saying what I take narcissism to involve in this text, and how sadomasochism might be understood as essential to it. Minimally, narcissism involves the notion of an erotic withdrawal and self-enclosure: Narcissus falls in love with an image of himself to the exclusion of any other love object.[15] I will elaborate this purposely bare and literal characterization in a moment. But before going too far with the Ovidian story or its specific location in the *Rose*, I want to back up from the figure of Narcissus to suggest how Guillaume provides some terms for understanding it with an already quite elaborate representation of erotic self-enclosure earlier in the poem.

The text's central figure of an erotic enclosure, if not immediately of a self-enclosure, is the Garden of Love itself. But the distinction

between erotic immersion in the *locus amoenus* and erotic withdrawal is blurred by the location of the Fountain of Narcissus at the center of the garden, which suggests that narcissism and love may not be fully distinguishable here. What is more, the notion of erotic enclosure is echoed, less as a danger than as a positive ambition, in the narrator's description of the poem itself as a kind of place "ou l'art d'Amors est tote enclose" (38), which we might translate either as "where the art of love is entirely enclosed," or, as Dahlberg does, "in which the whole art of love is contained" (31). The ideal of a totalized art of love, and of a poem that might fully specify and delimit that art, already implicates the narrator in a kind of narcissistic withdrawal from the erotic other's agency, as though one might guarantee one's possession of a lover through the possession of a complete and perspicuously representable theory of loving.[16] "Allegory" might be thought of as the literary form of such an ambition, and "courtly love" might be thought of as its social form.[17] The *Rose*, however, supports neither a view of allegory as a totalized art, a coherent system of correspondences between literary representations and abstract ideas, nor a view of loving as formalizable within a set of rules. The problems in saying what "plucking the rose" is supposed to "mean" already suggest this, and a close reading of almost any of the poem's central figures produces similar problems.[18]

The case of "Bel Acueil" ("Fair Welcoming") is particularly telling in this respect. At first glance, Fair Welcoming seems to be little more than what Lewis took him to be, one of a group of figures representing the Lady's inner conflict over how to respond to the lover's pursuit of her – in this case, a figure for her disposition to respond favorably. If we read Fair Welcoming strictly in this way, it may seem possible to explain away his masculinity as a grammatical accident, since on such an account it looks merely paradoxical: "acueil" is a masculine noun in Old French, so of course the text refers to the personification of this attribute with the masculine pronoun, even if a woman is doing the welcoming. But if we remember that everything in the narrative is part of the narrator's dream, and so constitutes his representation of the scene of his desire, this grammatical oddity begins to look more significant. For all the violence of the *Roman de la Rose*, it is not supposed to be a rape narrative; it is supposed to be a story that encapsulates the art of love, where it is presumed that that art pertains

to a male lover whose desire is trained on a female object. For such a story to go forward in a way that does not collapse into rape, it has to find space for representing the love object's potential desire as well as the lover's. But according to the story's initial premises, the desirability of the feminine object is predicated on her being just that: an object, passive in the face of the lover's desire, a site on which his desire can work and display itself. The gender ideology in which this story participates – familiar to us from the Chaucerian texts already discussed – is what makes the Lady's representation as a rose appropriate; this ideology is also what makes it so much as possible to imagine that there could *be* an "art of love" that would formalize the male pursuit of an erotic object in such a way as to guarantee its success.[19] But in imagining the scene of his desire in such a way the dreamer now has a problem: if the feminine object is supposed to be a passive site on which he deploys and displays his art, then in order to imagine her activity in returning his desire, he has to imagine her as being "like a man."[20] Moreover, insofar as the dreamer's desire lodges in her *not* merely as a passive object but as an agent capable of desiring and loving him, her masculinity becomes the very target of his desire. In order for this heteronormative and antifeminist dream of desire to give expression to nonnarcissized erotic energies, and to avoid collapsing into pure erotic withdrawal, it must produce a homoeroticism at its very center. The masculinity of Fair Welcoming, then, far from being a minor grammatical embarrassment that both Guillaume and Jean somehow either failed to notice or were incapable of avoiding, is essential to that figure's allegorical function.

I have meant the parallel between this argument concerning Fair Welcoming and the argument I made in chapter one concerning Alisoun in the *Miller's Tale* to be fairly obvious: it is the sign, I think, of a proximity between Chaucer's writing and the *Rose* that extends beyond any moments of direct textual citation to include both broad conceptual purposes and the literary methods for pursuing them. One way of putting this is to say that I was reading Alisoun allegorically, as part of the Miller's dream of desire. But putting the point that way requires noting that when we look closely at more familiar examples of allegorical representation such as those of Fair Welcoming or "plucking the rose," we should dispense with the notion of allegory as a static

mode of representation and see it instead as a remarkably powerful way of representing the mobility of fantasy.

In saying this I do not mean to appeal to a distinctively psychoanalytic technique for reading that mobility. By fantasy I rather mean something familiar to the Aristotelian tradition of psychological theory which a number of critics have located as essential to medieval allegory.[21] On Aristotle's definition *phantasia* is "that in virtue of which we say that an appearance (*phantasma*) occurs to us."[22] I have translated *phantasma* as "appearance" rather than, as it is sometimes rendered, "image," for two reasons: first, to remain closer to the Greek, in which *phantasma* is a noun related to the verb "appear," *phainesthai*; and second, to help avoid a common modern misconception of *phantasia* as referring fundamentally to the capacity to form mental images, a misconception largely driven by our inheritance of an empiricist psychology quite different from Aristotle's.[23] What Aristotle is after here is the capacity to see something *as* something, to have it appear to you, as it were, under a particular description. In contrast to the faculty of sensation, whose data have not yet been organized into anything perceivable, *phantasia* produces the synthesized appearances that are the proper objects of perception, thought and affect, such as a delicious ice cream cone or a hungry lion, or for that matter a beautiful rose. In a sense, *phantasia* is something that acts on us, and our capacity to be acted on by it is part of what makes us capable of action ourselves. It is an essential feature of the appearance of the hungry lion bearing down on you, for instance, that you fear it and are inclined to run away, and only an animal with sufficiently complex perceptual capacities can be acted on in such a way. As Aristotle puts it, *phantasia* is a "movement . . . enabling its possessor to act and to be affected in many ways."[24] To this extent humans can be said to share the capacity for producing phantasms with many other animals. What makes human *phantasia* constitutively different from that of other animals is its relation to our higher cognitive capacities. This relation has two aspects. On the one hand, in humans *phantasia* never gives a neutral representation of a state of affairs, but is already loaded up with interpretation and desire.[25] On the other hand, as Aristotle puts it, "to the thinking soul phantasms serve as sense-perceptions . . . Hence the soul never thinks without a phantasm."[26] To this Aristotle later adds that we are "not

capable of desire without *phantasia*."[27] In thinking and desiring, then, fantasy continues to be something that acts on us: the things we think about and desire are delivered to us by *phantasia*. But if no thought or desire is ever free of fantasy, *phantasia* is also something we make, since it is itself continually shaped by thought and desire. Fantasy – the faculty by which the creature represents objects of thought and affect to itself – is the interior space in which scenes of belief and desire get made.

The dialectical method of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the allegorical method of the *Roman de la Rose*, and Chaucer's apparently more realist poetics are all predicated on such a psychology.[28] And all of these texts, as I have argued, work both to reveal the essential indeterminacy of scenes of thought and desire and to explore the drive to reify those scenes and declare them determinate. If the desire for totality is never far from view in the *Rose*, then, that text's allegorical method provides a means for examining how the desire for totality and determinacy gets produced within the conditions of its impossibility. Further, if a narcissistic desire for totality cannot be the allegorical "truth" of the text, while narcissism may inflect "normal" sexuality here quite deeply, it cannot do so as the secret truth within the normal. Rather, the narcissistic wish for totality already has the status of an ideological fantasy, an incoherent structure of thought and desire that provides the conditions for the modes of subjectivity represented in the text, but that always does so in relation to something else that it cannot figure.[29]

I will suggest what that something else is, and the form of its relation to narcissistic fantasy, in a moment. But first I want to explore more fully the local texture of the fantasy itself, to see what further terms of analysis it provides. While the opening of the poem announces a narcissistic totality as its ambition, the opening scene of the dream itself seems to be anything but one of enclosure. It is rather a scene of erotic expansiveness, one of the great instances of the familiar medieval literary *topos* of the springtime regeneration of the natural world:

> Avis m'iere qu'il estoit mais,
> il a ja bien .v. anz ou mais,
> qu'en may estoie, ce sonjoie,
> el tens enmoreus, plain de joie,
> el tens ou toute rien s'esgaie,

> que l'en ne voit buisson ne haie
> qui en may parer ne se veille
> et covrir de novele fuelle.
> (45–52)
>
> I became aware that it was May, five years or more ago; I dreamed that I was filled with joy in May, the amorous month, when everything rejoices, when one sees no bush or hedge that does not wish to adorn itself with new leaves. (31)

Far from turning away from this erotically charged landscape, the narrator finds himself moved by the joyful desire of the bushes and hedges for their new growth, by the earth wanting a beautiful new robe of grass and flowers, by birds bursting into song from sheer joy, and by the way young people are enjoined by all this sweet beauty to a kind of mimetic erotic activity.[30] But the notion of enclosure, or anyway of a kind of withdrawal, gets reintroduced when the speaking voice of the poem reintroduces himself as a character inside his dream and the poem begins to shift from sheer lyrical expressiveness towards narrative. Not that the narrator is unattracted to this scene: he is filled with the desire to run out of town to listen to the birdsong, "hors de vile oi talant d'aler / por oïr des oisiaus les sons" (94–95). But this is strikingly unlike the way he has just said that young people tend to be moved by such a scene, when "mout a dur cuer qui en may n'ame / quant il ot chanter sus la raime / as oisiaus les douz chans piteus" (81–83), "he has a very hard heart who does not love in May, when he hears the birds on the branches, singing their heart-sweet songs" (32). For the dreamer is not, apparently, moved to love, or even to sociability, by this sweet piteous birdsong. Instead he runs out "tot sol" (99), all alone, not to be gay and amorous – or at least not directly – but rather to immerse himself in the beautiful expression of an eroticism he will not pursue directly. What we still ought to call his amorousness seems then to be constituted by the pleasures of a contemplative distance on this beautiful expressiveness. And in contemplating this beauty, he has deflected the impulse towards erotic connection which he has just figured as natural and necessary into a peculiarly solitary activity, the reverie of a listening that precludes a fuller form of sexual participation.

This combination of hyperbolic attraction to an erotic scene and contemplative withdrawal from it becomes a kind of running joke on the dreamer throughout the poem. In coming upon the refined courtly

eroticism of the dancing allegorical figures inside the Garden, for instance, the dreamer declares

> Dex! com menoient bone vie!
> Fox est qui n'a de tel envie!
> Qui autel vie avoir porroit,
> de meillor bien se soufreroit,
> qu'il n'est nus graindres paradis
> d'avoir amie a son devis.
> (1293–98)
>
> God! What a good life they led! He who does not long for such a life is a fool. He who could have such a life might dispense with a greater good, since there is no greater paradise than to have one's beloved at one's desire. (48)

Leaving aside for the moment the confusing thought of an unspecified dispensable good that is somehow greater than an erotic repletion which is itself greater than any other paradise, the joke comes with the utter deadpan *non sequitur* of the immediately following lines. It may be utter folly not to long for such a life, but rather than trying to join in it, "D'ileques me parti atant, / si m'en alai seus esbatant / par le vergier de ça en la" (1299–301), "At this point I left there and went off alone to enjoy myself here and there throughout the garden" (48). Perhaps the translation should read: "I went off alone to pleasure myself here and there throughout the garden."

In speaking of a kind of self-enclosure, then, I do not mean to suggest that the dreamer is fundamentally averse or unresponsive to the joyful energy of the season. He is drawn to contemplate an expression of this joy, and he is also moved to a beautifully lyrical expression of it himself in this poem of love. In a sense, then, the production of the text replicates the expansiveness to which he is attracted. But there is a crucial difference between the dreamer and the birds. For his literary activity is born out of his *not* just heeding nature's call as the bushes and the birds do; the full joyfulness of the scene for him can only be captured by his establishing enough distance on it to have something to *say* about it. As the dreamer has already indicated, this will mean more than just engaging in lyrical rhapsody; it will require of him the much greater reflective distance necessary for a total declaration of the

truth of the matter, the linguistic enclosure of the whole art – the craft, but also the artfulness, the artifice – of love. And while this reflective ambition seems to drive the production of the narrative, it is hard to see how he could fulfill it while charging ahead towards some orgasmic goal. The nature of that ambition rather threatens to stall the very narrative it engenders, to transform it into the sheer lyrical reflectiveness of the dream's beginning, or perhaps of Narcissus's enraptured gaze.

Still, as we know, the dreamer will soon get directed upon the narrativized goal of actually being a lover. The moment he faces, then, is in a sense that of any young person in this season, or for that matter of any bird: he wants to *do* something, not just to reflect on it. The problem of the dreamer's ambivalent impulse towards erotic self-enclosure – which is also, as I have been suggesting, the problem of the relation between the normal and the pathological here – can then be reformulated as follows. The opening of the *Rose* poses the problem of how to understand the relations between two desires that seem to drive in different directions but at the same time to inflect each other: the desire to be a lover, to pluck the rose, to possess an erotic object, to practice the art of love; and the desire to contemplate being a lover, to enjoy the birds singing love and the bushes blooming it, to write poetry about it, to theorize that art and to produce it *as* art. The birds become so central to the poem's opening, I would suggest, because they provide an attractive figure for a perfect alignment of these two impulses. Their singing expresses their joy, it can be seen as a kind of aesthetic reflection that produces an excessive, gratuitous beauty; and it also serves quite directly and pragmatically to attract a mate. The human case, however, is more complex. For the reflective or aestheticizing impulse heightens the pleasure of loving, making it into something more refined, more beautiful, more artful, like the caroling the dreamer encounters in the garden; but in doing so it also defers that pleasure, driving a reflective wedge between the desiring creature and the target of desire, and making this reflective wedge central from the very start to the production of desire and to the creature's seducibility by the erotic.

I would suggest that we read the figure of Narcissus in the *Rose* as a kind of allegorical limiting case of this pleasurable reflective gap. Narcissus is in the position of pure speculation, wanting nothing so much as a look that perpetually frustrates the very desire for erotic

satisfaction that gives rise to it. We should remember who Narcissus is: the one who could not respond to the love of Echo, because he was too enamored of his own beauty. The point of Echo being the one he refuses, in Ovid as well as the *Rose*, is to cast the love Narcissus finds to be too alien as itself something very close to narcissism: hers is a voice that would respond perfectly to his own, never offering resistance or alterity, just "reflecting" his. Or almost: for unlike Narcissus's image in the fountain, Echo is at least another, she is at least *separate* from him. What Echo figures, then, is the voice of the erotic other stripped down to the minimum, made to carry no content except that of her separateness, and of the fact that, as Guillaume puts it, "l'avoit amé plus que rien nee" (1443), she loved him more than anything born. What Narcissus cannot bear is the sheer weight of that love, the demand made on him by the call of another who asks him to speak words of love and offers him nothing but a faithful return. Narcissus's inability to bear this demand is what makes his punishment so appropriate: for he is given a love that does *not* call him, a love that has no other in it, and so one that can never threaten him with the possibility of consummation. In a sense, then, he is not even punished, at least not by any agency external to him. For Narcissus is quite literally given the fulfillment of his desire, and in two seemingly opposite ways. On the one hand, Narcissus is the figure in whom the desire for an impossibly perfect possession of the erotic object has been gratified: there is no chance that the object will move, or even look away from him; it will always remain fixed in and by his gaze. But by the same token he dies of an unanswerable longing for something that can never be possessed, never even touched or heard, since it is only a reflection, a specular image; and this fulfills his desire for a love object that is not so much as an echo. *Narcissism* becomes then Guillaume's term for an eroticism structured by these two interpenetrating longings, for a perfect possession of the erotic object and for an object necessarily removed from any contact with the desiring subject. And in the interpenetration of these longings we can read as well the sadomasochism of the narcissistic subject, the way its hatred of the love object fuses with its wish to destroy the possibility of its own satisfaction, to lace its pleasures with suffering, and, as the allegory of a punishing granting of its wishes suggests, to take vengeance on itself for its perversity.

This form of eroticism, as I have argued, should be understood as an allegorical limiting case of the dreamer's restless and fraught impulses towards violent appropriation of the love object, erotic self-enclosure, and the frustration of desire and the suffering of loss. I have also suggested that what is getting exemplified here is not a distinct, "minority" type of erotic pathology which Narcissus and the narrator happen to share, but rather an understanding of how sexuality is constituted for a reflective creature, a creature for whom desire does not just function, as it does for those birds, as a transparent natural demand. Allegory, in other words, functions here as a mode of literary speculation concerning the ontology of human desire, a way of making the implicit structures of even the most ordinary desire visible in particularly heightened form. But if we are to continue to resist a hasty schematization of this ontology in terms of some supposedly perspicuous theory – theological, psychoanalytic, or otherwise – this suggestion needs further testing, as well as further elaboration, from within the terms the *Rose* gives us.

I will draw those terms from Jean de Meun's continuation of Guillaume's poem, and mainly from the discourse of Reason with which Jean begins. In doing so, I do not mean to deny the much discussed differences between the two parts of the poem. But I think it is a mistake to exaggerate those differences by reading Guillaume as the idealistic (and therefore naïve) adherent of courtly ideology and Jean as the intellectual moralist and realist who exposes courtly love's theological absurdity and the seamy sexual underside of its erotic idealizations.[31] As my argument already indicates, Guillaume is more aware of the problems with courtly desire than any such account acknowledges; and as I will now argue, Jean saw in Guillaume's allegory of the impasse of courtly desire an opportunity not for deflationary irony but for elaboration, first through the form of dialectical philosophy, and then through the production of figures such as Amis, Faux Semblant, and La Vielle, who hover between the status of allegorical figures and something like Chaucerian characters.

In fact, what I have already said concerning the centrality of reflective capacities to an understanding of courtly desire points the way to Jean's Raison. But Raison may seem to be an unpromising place to turn, even if we grant Guillaume's intelligence and self-consciousness concerning

the lover's impasse; for Raison almost entirely devotes herself to an antierotic diagnosis of the lover's errors, with the result that this section of the poem has met with boredom on the part of critics interested in sex, and to critics interested in Raison, it has lent itself to the kind of moralizing reading of perversion I am claiming is misplaced.[32] What is more, Raison has little directly to say about erotic life; she mainly expounds on such matters as economic life, civil conduct, justice, free will, and linguistic meaning, all of which seem far from the focus of the dreamer's interests. But we should not be surprised by this difference from what we might have expected in a figure so clearly meant to carry normative authority in this text. As I will argue, Raison is far from the garrulous figure she is sometimes taken to be, and Jean is not merely taking her discourse as an opportunity to show off his encyclopedic learning. Understanding the precision of Raison's focus is essential to seeing the terms she provides for an analysis of erotic psychology.

## THE CLAIM OF REASON AND THE DEADLOCK OF UTOPIAN DESIRE

Reason, as is well known, is a figure derived from Boethius's Philosophy. In keeping with Philosophy's analysis of the Prisoner's self-frustration, Reason unites the various topics she engages through an analysis of how the human creature incoherently imagines its happiness in terms mediated by the trope of possession. Reason, however, is considerably more interested than Philosophy in the ways persons inhabit specific forms of desire and belief organized around that trope. This impetus towards phenomenological specificity can serve as a helpful bridge between the abstractions of Boethian argument and the case of the dreamer. For the sake of clarity concerning the scope of Reason's concerns, I will leave sex aside for a moment and take the example of money.

According to Reason, the only real value money has lies in its function as a medium of exchange. "L'avoir n'est preuz for por despendre" (5137), "wealth is profit only when spent" (107): money, as Reason will say about words later, is nothing more than a sign for something else, in this case, for its exchange value. But humans, according to Reason, cannot understand this; we reply "qu'avoir n'est

preuz for por repondre" (5140), "wealth is profit only when hidden." In thinking this way we fetishize money, investing the sign with the affect that should be directed on the thing it represents.[33] We think of money as itself the locus of value, and want to secure our possession of it; so we hide it away, creating a territory of secret desire, as in the standard iconography of the miser locked away alone, gleefully counting his gold. To recall one of the core tropes of Guillaumean narcissism, we might say that the miser fantasizes the possibility of a totalized enclosure for the object of his desire, as though he could promise to offer himself the entire art of wealth. But Reason makes it clear that the miser figures a structure of desire to which everyone is subject: "il sunt tuit serf a leur deniers" (5131), "they are all slaves of their money" (107). The upshot of this structure of desire is anything but the repletion it holds out as its aim. For we are unable to bear the thought that money must be spent; its ordinary circulatory properties make it seem as though the object of our desire were perpetually slipping away from our grasp. So, among other things, we come to hate the fact that we have to spend money on such bare necessities as clothing and food. The necessities of survival start to look like terrible impositions – as we imagine, impositions made on us by our bodies. Thus we divide ourselves against our own corporeality, in order to imagine that the impediment to getting what we want is merely some set of external circumstances. At the same time we come to be tormented by what Reason refers to as the "remanant" (5047), the taunting remainder that escapes possession: "donc ja tant boivre ne pourra / que toujors plus en demourra" (5053–54), "he will never be able to drink so much that there will not remain more" (106). But this specter of a limitless remainder in the world which "le destraint en tel defaut" (5059), "torments him in his lack" (106), is really a screen for an interior remainder, an excess in the subject's desire that cannot be figured in terms of the possession of a fetishized object at all.

The psychic structure of an inner division held in place by the trope of possessing a fetishized object suggests a common ground between the miser and the dreamer and helps to clarify the dreamer's relation to the field of his desire. The dreamer wants to pluck the Rose, and he knows this entails the Rose's death. But since the Rose is what he wants, he cannot want it dead: the trope of plucking is not adequate to his desire. So his fantasy of the beloved as a pluckable thing produces the screen

remainder of a bunch of apparently external impediments to his possession of her – Dangiers, Male Bouche, Honte, Peor, and so on – which are analogous to the miser's screen remainder of external impediments, the tormenting sense that there is both never enough money for his needs and, even in the absence of any identifiable need, always more money to be had. While the figures of Dangiers, Male Bouche, and so on most obviously allegorize the beloved's and her society's resistance to her being plucked, when they are considered as features of the dreamer's imagination of the scene of his desire – as figures in the fantasy of desire he is representing – they are more properly understood as signs of his own resistance to plucking, of his repressed and inarticulate knowledge, like that of the miser, that the dream of a perfect possession is inadequate to his own desires and ends.

While the vicissitudes of the trope of possession suggest a line back to Boethius, I want to focus here on a topic the *Rose* engages much more fully than Boethius does, that of intersubjective relations: this will lead us to the horizon of utopian desire to which my title refers. According to Reason, what really torments both the miser and the dreamer is that their entire picture of possession and lack is itself a diversion from a deeper lack they wish to repress, their lack of that perfection, at once psychic, moral, and social, which is expressed in Reason's ideal of a friendship consisting in "bone volanté conmune / des genz antr'els, sanz descordance, / selonc la Dieu benivolance" (4656–58), "mutual good will among men, without any discord, in accordance with the benevolence of God" (100). This is an adaptation of the Ciceronian formulation of friendship as "omnium . . . rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio", "accord in all things, with mutual good will and benevolence"; and while the differences between the two accounts are important, Cicero's lengthier treatment of the common ground can help us see what is at stake in it.[34] According to Cicero, among true friends there is no space of self-interested privacy within which notions of possession and lack could take hold. Friends have no private property from each other, and can in principle do nothing to incur or impose debts on each other. Nor do they wait on a return for their actions or gifts; in a sense they cannot even give each other gifts, since they already hold everything in common. They have no subjective private property either: friends have no secrets from each other, and can feel no shame before

each other, nor do their fundamental interests, values, or desires diverge. This is because, as Cicero puts it, a friend is like another self, an *alter ego*, by which he quite precisely does not mean that a friend is a narcissized replica of the ego, since the notion of a primary, self-cherishing relation to the ego is completely out of place here. An *alter ego* is rather someone who occupies the most intimate space of your selfhood, someone whose alterity constitutes not a break with your ego but a constitutive extension of it.

The difficulty of giving the notion of an *alter ego* a positive articulation that does not seem to lapse back into the very narcissism with which it is meant to contrast indicates how hard it is to imagine what such a relationship would be like. It would not be like even the most self-sacrificing of relationships, since it could in principle involve no sacrifices: in a state of accord in all things, there is nothing to give up. But neither would it be a gratification of the wish for a relationship in which you would never need to give up anything, for anything and everything might be required of you in it. It is just that, in the case of true friendship, anything and everything would not be a sacrifice, would not register as an imposition: as Cicero puts it, "nullo loco excluditur, numquam intempestiva, numquam molesta est" (132). This would seem to exclude most, if not all, of what we ordinarily call friendship, as Cicero acknowledges in saying that there have probably been only three or four true friendships in history. We might be inclined to say that this involves an overly stringent judgment of ordinary amicable relations. But Cicero's project is less to level a moral accusation than simply to analyze an attitude. In *De Amicitia* Cicero attempts to isolate the conceptual and motivational structure of a notional relationship in which neither party seeks some advantage from the other, nor draws a line at some point when the disadvantages brought by the relationship become too great; and he claims that this is what we mean by the term *friendship*. It is clear from the dialectical structure of Cicero's argument that he thinks it is hard to see what is involved in such a relationship. Any description of it threatens to collapse into sentimental platitude, or to generate misunderstandings that slide back into the view that what we really always want is egoistic gratification, and what we really always have at heart is self-interest. But Cicero argues that in fact the opposite is true. The desire for friendship

underlies every way in which we reach for relational bonds with others, no matter how narrow our purported self-interest may be: insofar as we lapse from the form of relations with an *alter ego* we are betraying our fundamental desire for the other. The point of Cicero's stringency in insisting on the impossibly small number of true historical friendships is to save this claim from the sentimentality it seems to court. For as it happens we always do betray this desire; it remains strange to us, unaccommodatable to the ways we ordinarily have of inhabiting and imagining even our most intimate relations with others, a site of inner alterity as alien as any external "other" could ever be.

By adapting the Ciceronian discourse of friendship to the field of erotic relations – a field not particularly important in *De Amicitia* – Reason in effect suggests that the desire for friendship is what I earlier referred to as the "something other" than the fantasized appropriability of the love object, in relation to which narcissistic desire is always articulated.[35] Friendship in its ideal form is so easy to mistake for narcissism because it answers to so many of the desires narcissism configures. The desire for a relation of perfect resemblance, figured in narcissism as "reflection," is realized in friendship in a way that strips it of any egoistic content: narcissism in effect wants to take the ego as antecedently given, and then find that ego replicated in the world, while in friendship the ego has no primary relationship to itself, but is so fundamentally constituted in the relationship with the other that there is in a sense only one soul there, present in two bodies.[36] The desire for unbreakable contact with the other, figured in narcissism as a perfect possession, is also realized in the extended interiority of friendship, although in a way free of any reification of the love object, since the other in friendship is no more a static object than is the ego. And friendship also answers to the desire for an intimacy that reaches all the way through the other, leaving nothing in them that establishes a secret reserve or that turns away from the desiring subject, a desire figured in narcissism by the reduction of the other to a pure surface that cannot look away. Friendship, in other words, is the truth of narcissism, the realization of narcissism's aim, even as it is also that which narcissism definitively refuses.

To say that the dreamer's sadomasochistic sexuality is a perverse expression of the desire for friendship might seem strange enough – and it certainly seems strange to the dreamer, since it dispenses with so

much of what constitutes his desire as he lives it. But Reason does not stop there, and the further trajectory of her analysis breaks from Cicero in a way that establishes the properly utopian horizon in relation to which all desire in the *Rose* is articulated. When Reason diagnoses in the dreamer a "fainte volenté d'amer / en queurs malades du mahaing / de couvoitise de gaaing" (4742–44), a "simulated desire of loving in hearts sick with the disease of coveting gain" (101), she further remarks that "ne peut bien estre amoreus / queurs qui n'aime les gens por eus" (4749–50), "the heart which does not love people for themselves can never be a loving one" (102). This follows straightforwardly enough both from Reason's discourse on friendship and from the poem's earlier representation of the dreamer's sexuality. It also leads Reason directly to her discussion of money. But Reason aims at more than an account of how the trope of possession structures economic life and erotic love. While living in a world of money means that we inevitably fail to love people for themselves, turning them into opportunities for our diseased gain-seeking, Reason also wants to picture an alternative: if "bone amor par tout resnast . . . el monde nul povre n'eüst / ne nul avoir n'en i deüst" (5109–18), "if right love reigned everywhere . . . then there would be no poor man in the world, nor ought there to be any" (107). Here we are catapulted far away from the local problem of objectifying an erotic other or the goal of loving a friend in a way that frees love of its self-seeking tendencies. Friendship, like the erotic desire for something other than a merely possessable object, demands that we love some specific other "for themselves" in a context of intimate desire, which means not treating them as a utilitarian means for some sort of gain. The turn to money radicalizes this analysis. Now the dreamer's erotic pathology turns out to be just one instance of narcissized utilitarian relations which take many forms, and which obtain not just in concrete interactions among persons but also systematically, in the structure of a society that builds the prosperity of some on the poverty of others. And desire will remain hostage to this systemic drive to victimization until love of all kinds – erotic love, love of money, love of the usefulness of others – is transformed into *caritas*, in which we love with "l'amor dou conmun" (5420) – the love, that is, of only those goods that all hold in common, and the love of that in each person which is common to everyone, the bare fact of their humanity.

According to Reason, then, the final truth of love's desire is not just friendship but *caritas*; that is what the dreamer has been aiming at all along, and it is what he would in fact pursue if his will were purged of the repressions, self-deceptions, and self-punishments that characterize its dominant dispositions. Again, this is a claim that threatens to slide into facile moralism, partly because it is in fact the subject of much moralizing in medieval culture, and partly because modern western culture has tended to replace the muscularity of the patristic notion of *caritas* with the moral sentimentalism of "charity."[37] But what makes this claim hard to swallow, and what no platitudinous expression of it can capture, is the way *caritas*, much more than friendship, involves a massive refiguration of the desire that so evidently continues to motivate the dreamer. For, as the formula "l'amour dou conmun" suggests, everyone is a proper object of *caritas* regardless of the particular relations in which one stands to them; as Reason says, the dreamer must love "en generalité / et lest especialité" (5413–14), "love generally and leave particular loves" (111). *Caritas* thus involves the utter disappearance of an erotic object, and even more – and here it contrasts strikingly with friendship – the utter disappearance of any desire that picks out persons as the particular ones they are. To respond fully to the claim of *caritas* one could have no bonds with others that would make of them privileged loci of value and would therefore encourage the preferential treatment and concern that allow for erotic or amicable intimacies, for this very "especialité" also lays the groundwork for inequitable social relations. Nor could one love in others anything that makes them something other than an instance of "the common." Reason's appeals to friendship and to *caritas* may work together to problematize the dreamer's fantasy of a narcissized kernel to his own subjectivity, but *caritas* is finally unamicable, for it requires the erosion of much of what binds us to the particular others we care about and much of what constitutes us as creatures that care about anyone at all.[38] To return to the language of the previous chapter, the desire for *caritas* involves a desire that both its subject and its objects be characterless: in aiming at *caritas*, the identity towards which one aims and that which one loves in others is the "characterless moral self."

I initially turned to narcissism as the term the *Rose* proposes for a sexuality constituted by sadomasochistic wishes for the destruction and

loss of the love object, and for its transformation into something necessarily removed from the desiring subject – an unapproachable Lady, a virginally intact bud, a perfect aesthetic object, an insubstantial specular image. I then suggested that, far from being a specific pathology local to the psyche of the dreamer and anyone else unfortunate enough to suffer from it, narcissism is this text's way of figuring the ontology of erotic desire for a reflective creature. The discourse of Reason has now allowed some specification of this ontology. Being a reflective creature means being a creature of instrumentalist fantasy, for whom a reflective distance on the world allows for the positing of an ego ontologically distinct from the objects it possesses and manipulates; it means, as Aristotle puts it, being a creature of the hand, "the instrument of instruments."[39] But it also means being a creature for whom a reflective distance on itself makes it, to recall Augustine's phrase once more, "a problem to itself." The nature of this problem in the context of erotic life emerges from the utopian drive in Reason's claim. Given that in order to follow through on this claim it would be necessary to undertake a fundamental reconstruction of the dreamer's motivational structure, a reconstruction that would make him unrecognizable to himself and perhaps unrecognizable as a human, it is no wonder that the dreamer asks Reason to be silent and turns to the more amenable advice of Amis. What brought the dreamer to the point of listening to Reason, after all, was not the ambition of a sociability cleansed of all self-interest, but the more local and obvious frustrations of his erotic project. Here we return to the kind of dialectical *aporia* we saw in the *Consolation of Philosophy*. For the claim Reason exerts on the dreamer emerges from nothing more than his desire to rid himself of the sufferings and incoherences that beset him. Reason herself, for that matter, is nothing more than the allegorical embodiment of the dreamer's own capacity to reason about his desire, to ask what might be the conditions under which it would be free of the lack that torments it. It is clear from the dreamer's whole way of configuring the scene of his desire that simply succeeding in "plucking the rose" would not do the trick; otherwise there would be no place in the poem prior to Reason's appearance for the dreamer's aversion to sexuality or his desire to lose the love object, each of which challenges the dreamer's sadistic picture of erotic satisfaction, if rather more implicitly than Reason does.

Reason's claim is thus already there in the dreamer well before her appearance as an independently represented figure. If following through on Reason's claim would make the dreamer unrecognizable to himself, that unrecognizability has already been internal to every way the dreamer has of understanding himself and his projects. The discourse of Reason thus serves to make explicit an ontological deadlock that has always been at the heart of the dreamer's desire. The conditions of love's possibility – what it would take to realize it fully, to purge it of its self-ravishment – coincide perfectly with the conditions of its impossibility, for they are conditions in which love can no longer specify either its object or anything like its libidinal bond to that object.[40]

While the *Roman de la Rose* endorses a set of Boethian doctrines and adapts the figure of Philosophy in that of Reason, then, the text's Boethianness does not reduce to any such local resemblances. What finally makes the *Rose* Boethian is the way it extends the aporetic structures of the *Consolation* into territory Boethius himself had little to say about; for the *Rose* represents sexuality as a "sadness without an object," a form of desire that, for reasons internal to its own structure, has always already forgone the possibility of its own fulfillment. Sexuality in the *Rose* is constituted at the intersection of incompatible normative demands, none of which the erotic subject can simply forgo: the demand to reify sadistic desires and fetishize the possessable object, a demand to which the dreamer gives voice when, dismissing Reason, he plaintively confesses "ne peut autre estre" (6871), "I can be nothing other than I am" (132); the demand to transform a narcissized sexuality into the friendship-like loving it both expresses and represses; and the demand to realize the utopian horizon of a loving which transcends all pathological attachments and dissolves anything in the erotic subject and its objects that particularizes them. As was the case with the antinomy of the will exhibited in the *Consolation*, a sense of authenticity and freedom attaches to each of these imperatives. Each promises to reveal the truth of desire; and each in its conflict with the others brings with it an inevitable loss of that which also seems to constitute the truth of desire. The desire for each is therefore inflected by a desire for loss, and for the dissolution of the identity bound up with the others.

What would it mean for such a creature to be normal? This is a question in which both Guillaume and Jean were deeply interested:

most of the *Rose* is devoted not to articulating an ontological deadlock, but to exploring the ways agents constitute their wills by occluding that deadlock, and even by mobilizing it as a source of erotic energy. And for Jean in particular, this is an interest best pursued by investigating the specificities of cases. I think that Chaucer found the most important model for his own poetic practice in Jean's devotion to case studies that always refer back to an ontological argument they never explicitly make. Arguments about degrees of literary realism have mostly derailed our efforts to understand Chaucer's indebtedness on this score, or for that matter our efforts to understand the relations between Jean's and Guillaume's sections of the *Rose*. There is, to be sure, something like a scale of realism in literary portraiture, on which Jean occupies a middle position between Guillaume and Geoffrey. But the analytical mode with which both Jean and Geoffrey engage "the real" remains considerably closer to allegory than we have generally supposed. The rest of this chapter will suggest how this is so by examining two instances of Jean's case study mode which themselves occupy rather different places on the realist continuum, and by placing those case studies back in the context of Guillaume's allegorical mode.

## BEING NORMAL

I begin with the discourse of Amis, a figure who is clearly in some sense a personification of an abstraction, yet to whom Jean also gives a biography, if a somewhat more truncated one than the one he will give to La Vielle. At first glance, Amis seems to be a figure diametrically opposed to that of Reason, a mouthpiece for views utterly incompatible with hers. In this, Amis resembles somewhat Chaucer's Miller, as a figure for the turn away from philosophy; and in fact I think that when Chaucer began the *Canterbury Tales* with the Knight and the Miller, he had in mind a rather loose association with the way Jean began his part of the *Rose* with Reason and Amis. If the *Rose* investigates the deadlock of desire even in the absence of a philosophical interlocutor, then, Amis will provide a good test case for examining how this is so, as well as a helpful comparison with Chaucer's own representation of a "normal" masculine subject.

Amis seems so thoroughly to refuse Reason's claim because he assumes from the start that there is no question concerning the nature

of the dreamer's desire. It is obvious that the dreamer wants to pluck the rose, and Amis promises to help him attain this eminently practical goal. What is more, the cynical advice Amis offers for manipulating social appearances and the beloved's desire takes the discussion back into the territory of the instrumentalist egoism that dominates both the poem's central cluster of tropes and Reason's diagnoses. The dreamer is to avoid his beloved, and if he sees her he is to pretend that her attentions mean nothing to him; he is to buy off all of those allegorical representatives of the beloved's and her society's resistance to him with false praise, gifts, and promises of service, creating a sense of obligation within a network of exchange; and finally, these psychological machinations are supposed to pave the way for a display of force:

> Tout voiez vos Poor trembler,
> Honte rogir, Dangier fremir,
> ou tretoz .III. pleindre et gemir,
> ne prisiez tretout une escorce,
> cuillez la rose tout a force
> et moutrez que vos estes hon,
> quant leus iert et tens et seson,
> car riens ne leur porroit tant plere
> con tel force, qui la set fere.
> (7656–64)

> Although you see Fear and Shame blush, and Resistance become agitated, or all three lament and groan, count the whole thing as not worth a husk. When place and time and season occur, cut the rose by force and show that you are a man, for, as long as someone knows how to exercise it, nothing could please them so much as such force. (144–45)

The beloved's interiority seems now to be of interest solely for the purposes of calculation and self-justification. Her agency and desire matter, that is, insofar as they provide the dreamer with potential mechanisms for advancing his project of erotic possession, or insofar as they provide a screen on to which he can project her receptivity to the most violently objectifying of his intentions. At the same time, masculine violence gets reimagined as technical expertise: the successful lover is the one who knows how to exercise force correctly and at the right time, that is, in a way designed to produce the apposite feminine desire

that licenses it. In any case the other's desire and agency do not exert the claim on the subject's sense of what he wants, or his sense of what it would mean to get it, which was so central to Reason's attempted redirection of the dreamer's will.

That, at least, is how Amis seems to understand the erotic agenda to which he subscribes and which he offers in answer to the dreamer's dilemma. That this agenda hardly rests on a stable package of beliefs and desires becomes clear, however, when we notice how much of Reason's utopian agenda remains alive, if in peripheral or hybridized form, in Amis's discourse. Amis's utopianism appears quite clearly, for instance, in his nostalgia for the Golden Age when "furent amors leaus et fines, / sanz covoitise et sanz rapines" (8329–30), "loves were loyal and pure, without greed or rapine" (154). The digression into Golden Age talk emerges, predictably enough, out of a lament over the difficulties men have in keeping hold of their women: Amis tells the dreamer that "quant l'en a la chose aquise, / si recovient il grant mestrise / au bien garder" (8227–29); "when one has acquired something, he must exercise great mastery in keeping it well" (153). The difficulty in keeping women immediately expands into the difficulty of satisfying the ravenous feminine appetite: "sunt eles voir pres que toutes / covoiteuses de prendre, et gloutes / de ravir et de devorer" (8251–53); "women are nearly all eager to take and greedy to ravish and devour" (153). This ravenous appetite turns out to be directed not just towards the goods women want from their men, but towards the men themselves: for this nightmare of the devouring female is exemplified for Amis by Hibernia, who "nus seus n'i peüs soffire, / tant estoit de chaude matire" (8261–62), "was of such hot matter that no one man could satisfy her" (153). Amis's slide from women as hard-to-keep possessions to women as ravenous devourers of possessions to women as oversexed devourers of men indicates that he is less in the business of offering practical advice about a specific danger than in recoil from a more general anxiety concerning the place of feminine desire in a project of masculine mastery. Whatever it is one has to be on guard against here, the obvious undesirability for a man bent on erotic possession of a world filled with women "like that" suggests that nostalgia for a time when "sanz rapine et sanz covoitise, / s'entracoloient et besoient / cil cui li jeu d'amors plesoient" (8402–04), "those who were pleased by Love's games would

embrace and kiss each other without rapine or covetousness" (155), is in some sense continuous with Amis's masculinist fantasy. But it is also a violation of that fantasy's basic premises. For the Golden Age is a time of a sexuality clear of the cunning manipulativeness that dominates Amis's advice, and more than that, a time of pure egalitarianism in all social relations, with no private property of any kind and nothing resembling a narrow self-interest in anyone's motive. This structure of an ideological continuity that overlaps with a conceptual violation is present as well in Amis's segue out of nostalgic fantasy. He concludes his discussion of the Golden Age with the slogan, "onques amor et seigneurie / ne s'entrefirent compaignie / ne ne demorerent ensemble" (8421–23), "love and lordship never kept each other company or dwelt together" (156), and offers as an example the self-defeating and self-consuming obsessions of a jealous husband. But the speech of the *mari jaloux* so overwhelms Amis's voice, continuing uninterrupted for almost a thousand lines of verse and replicating so nearly the terms of Amis's own announced understanding of gender and sexuality, that it is almost impossible to remember that he is supposed to be an example of something Amis is warning against.

The reason the contradiction between utopian idealism and cynical realism can seem to Amis like a noncontradiction is that he manages to narrativize it: the Golden Age is past, and now we have to make do in a world where everyone is out for their own. But the problem with a narrativized disposition of the contradiction is that the *desire* for non-instrumentalized relations is what gives Golden Age fantasy its appeal, while Amis's erotic program is predicated on that *not* being anyone's desire – not his, not that of men in general, nor for that matter that of the rapacious women men must constrain or the passive women longing to be forced. Amis's desire to narrativize a contradiction that remains internal to him thus allows us to see the ideological function of Golden Age fantasy here. Amis produces nostalgia as a necessary reservoir for the utopianism that the ideology of purely instrumentalized relations with others requires him to disavow: the desiring subject can thus give expression to the utopian drive while performing an act of segregation whereby that drive is not allowed to infect the agenda he sets for himself. In this way, nostalgic idealism and cynical realism, far from being irreconcilable opposites, function to sustain each other.

Besides nostalgia, how does an unassimilable utopian drive get articulated within the terms of Amis's ideological settlement? One way appears in the figure of the devouring female from which Amis recoils. That such a figure should appear here is, if unsurprising, nevertheless a sign of ideological strain: "woman" was supposed to be just a beautiful passive object, a rose. To risk then an obvious question: where does the figure of the devouring female come from? That feminine agency and desire enter into the picture at all, even in a calculative way, already violates the integrity of the central trope of thought that binds Amis and the dreamer together. That trope is strained further by Amis's insistence that women really want the show of force he urges; for why, if plucking is sufficient to masculine desire, should it even matter that women want it? The fantasy of women who want to be forced is, like nostalgia, a reservoir for the occluded claim of the other's agency and desire, a way of trying to give voice to that claim safely, without challenging the basic structure of a project of erotic conquest. In the female who would devour partner after partner both economically and sexually, we see the necessity for this reservoir to be continually expanded. If she wants to be plucked, that means that she wants something after all. And if she wants something, she might want anything: perhaps she wants to be plucked by many, and perhaps she wants to pluck many as well. The nightmare image of a rapacious and unsatisfiable feminine desire, as inimical as it is to the fantasy of masculine possession, is the price the masculine subject has to pay to keep that fantasy from collapsing completely. But it is a price that can never be adequately paid, for the fear of an insatiable feminine desire is partly the sign of a recognition, however repressed, that feminine desire cannot be satisfied by the terms the fantasy of plucking offers it.

While Amis's nostalgia and his various figurations of feminine desire function as reservoirs for the unassimilable claim of the other on his picture of masculine sexuality, they also give expression to a sense of that picture's injustice, its production of the feminine as a site of victimization. And they give expression as well to a sense that his picture normalizes a disposition of the will within the masculine subject which falls short of the subject's own desires and hopes for itself. This suggests that the sexuality given voice in Amis's advice is suffused with guilt and shame; and since this sexuality is supposed to answer to the dreamer's

desire to get back on track in his pursuit of the rose, it suggests that what I have been calling the dreamer's sadomasochism is suffused with guilt and shame as well. It should not be surprising that Amis never overtly voices this guilt and shame with respect to his agenda. If he were to acknowledge it, he would have to direct his cynicism much more bluntly towards himself, and see his ideological compromises as precisely that. But the last thing Amis wants is to declare himself a hypocrite; he wants his story to be that of a wounded heart seeking self-protection in a hostile world.[41] So his guilt and shame must be displaced on to the longing for a lost utopia, the condemnation of a jealous husband who is little more than an exaggeration of his own views, and the nightmarish resurgence of a feminine interiority he both desires and wishes to imagine away.

What makes Amis a case study of the deadlock of desire is the way his discourse exhibits conceptual incoherences and psychological conflicts which overlap with practical functionality. However incoherent and strained his occupation of his views may be, they do serve to provide him with a way of recognizing himself and of moving forward in a recognizable social world. They serve, that is, as the basis for his constitution of a will; they are what gives him a characteristic *habitus*. Jean de Meun's interest in case studies of this kind, as exemplified also in the discourses of Faux Semblant and La Vielle, has for some time been seen as a literary model for Chaucer, who developed the investigation of *habitus* into something more like our modern conception of literary "character" in the *Canterbury Tales* by providing the pilgrims with concretely realized social locations and elaborate and distinctive psychological dimensions.[42] I think that some such account is right. But I also think that such an account tempts a false equation of the kind of analytical interest I have attributed to Chaucer and Jean with an interest in something like psychological realism, with the result that our sense of the representational means available for pursuing such an interest becomes unnecessarily restricted, as does our sense of what Chaucer might have found compelling in the *Rose*. This leads, among other things, to misplaced attempts to evaluate both the *Rose* and the *Canterbury Tales* in terms of criteria more suited to a nineteenth-century novel: so it is often suggested that the discourse of La Vielle is the best section of Jean's *Rose* because it gives such a compelling picture

of a life, and some of Chaucer's more experimental tales, such as those of the Physician and the Manciple, get called failures because they do not. This entire book is, among other things, an attempt to suggest how misplaced this kind of evaluation is, and how deep the similarity is between something that looks to us like a familiar literary interest in character and something that looks like an unfamiliar allegorical mode of representation; for my whole way of proceeding interpretively with Chaucer's texts has been in effect to read them as allegorical *phantasia*, built around tropes that function as meditative sites in much the way the tropes of the *Rose* do. I will continue with such reading in the next two chapters. To conclude my discussion here I will turn to two obvious cases of allegory in the *Rose*, neither of which exhibits either biographical complexity or a highly individuated psychology, but both of which contribute to the text's exploration of how a normalized sexual subject gets made.

The first is one that has already served as a touchstone throughout this book, the apparent digression on Pygmalion that occupies the bulk of the poem's closing sequence. The context for the poem's turn to Pygmalion is the moment when the dreamer, after more than 20,000 lines of poetry, finally gets himself to the point of having sex. What makes the *Rose* such a searching exploration of sexuality is that it makes the apparently easy question of how the dreamer does this – a question that may seem to be answered by referring to the nearly irresistible force of a biological drive or a cultural norm – seem worth puzzling over. For the entire poem has been devoted to the exploration of a "blocked" sexuality, the sexuality of a creature that cannot distinguish love from narcissistic self-enclosure, and feels its desire to be a Fall from a utopian sociality it longs for but cannot imagine inhabiting. Under these circumstances, it is far from obvious that anything resembling an erotic encounter will happen. The question of how it does happen is only made more perplexing by the vicissitudes in the dreamer's imagination of a love object. If she is a reflection, a rose, or a rosebud, then one can gaze on her or pluck her. If, as in the poem's late phantasmagoric proliferation of tropes, she is a tablet, an anvil, a field, a tower, a shrine, or an enshrined image, then one can write on her, or hammer her, or plow her, or raze her to the ground, or enter her sanctuary, or fall on one's knees before her. But, as obvious as the applicability of all of these

tropes is, one thing one cannot quite do in any of these cases is make love to her. This is where Pygmalion comes in. For the dreamer, right at the point of doing – we do not know quite what, but *something* – declares that his image is like Pygmalion's, and proceeds to discuss Pygmalion's case for 400 lines, after which he declares mysteriously "Mes c'est trop loign de ma matire, / por c'est bien droiz qu'arriers m'an tire. / Bien orroiz que ce senefie / ainz que ceste euvre soit fenie" (21181–84), "But this is all very far from my matter, and I must draw back from it. By the time you have finished this work you will know what it means" (346). What could this mean?

One obvious relevance of Pygmalion is that he allegorizes the problem of the dreamer's blocked "courtly" sexuality. If the erotic object is Pygmalion's perfect statue, more beautiful than Helen or Lavinia and the sign of her maker's artistic powers, then the erotic subject can admire his handiwork, kiss her and fondle her, dress her up and stage a mock wedding and even take her to bed, but her kisses, not to mention everything else about her, will always remain cold. And, as Pygmalion well knows, the source of this dilemma lies in the masculine subject who, in desiring this way, feels himself to be an apostate from nature: "ceste amour est si horrible / qu'el ne vient mie de Nature . . . Nature en moi mauvés fill a . . . Si ne l'an doi je pas blamer / se je veill folement amer; / ne m'an doi prandre s'a moi non" (20832–39), "this love is so horrible that it doesn't come from Nature . . . Nature has a bad son in me . . . But I should not blame her because I love insanely, nor should I put the blame anywhere but on myself" (341). What is being represented in all of the poem's figures for the love object, after all, are not literal attributes of women, but a masculine fantasy that places a bar on the consummation for which it constantly fuels the desire. The mutually productive relation between desire and its prohibition in this fantasy emerges clearly in Pygmalion's response to his frustration. Comparing himself to Narcissus, he declares that he is better off, "car, quant je veill, a ceste vois / et la praign et l'acole et bese, / s'an puis mieuz souffrir ma mesese" (20854–56), "for, when I wish, I go to this image and take it, embrace it, and kiss it; I can thus better endure my torment" (341). But given the cold unresponsiveness of his statue, what enables his endurance is more the enjoyment of a masochistic suspension in torment than anything that provides him with real relief.

Given the depth of this fixation, it is unsurprising that it takes divine intervention to free Pygmalion of his blocked sexuality. Venus hears his entreaties and brings the statue to life, after which both Pygmalion and his newly living "sweetheart" offer each other love, pleasure, companionship, and friendship, and, in the kind of symmetrical formulation to which Chaucer has the Wife of Bath and the Franklin appeal, neither refuses anything the other might desire. But if Venus provides a miraculous transformation in the love object, the real miracle happens before the goddess appears, and is in fact the reason she is willing to intervene. In praying to Venus for her aid, Pygmalion asks that his statue "devieigne ma leaus amie, / qui de fame ait cors, ame et vie" (21069–70), "become my loyal friend and may have the body, the soul, and the life of a woman" (344). Venus's transformation of the statue does no more than literalize the prior transformation in Pygmalion's phantasmatic image of the love object, by which he becomes capable of imagining his desire as targeting a creature with a soul, who might be his friend. But how does this prior transformation happen? What makes this miracle possible?

The text gives us no answer; indeed, that is the very point of having the apparent cause of transformation follow the real change. This unanswerability marks the Pygmalion episode as rather less of a redemptive fantasy than at first it seems; for it leaves us with exactly the same question we had before, that of how the masculine desire under investigation here could ever get past the barriers it erects to its own consummation. But the episode's function in the poem's closing sequence does help us answer this question. The narrator is drawn to the Pygmalion story because it seems in some sense "like" his own. In pursuing that likeness, he finds himself giving voice once again to the desire for a utopian mutuality cleansed of any self-interest. But as soon as he does so, he recoils: "this is all very far from my matter, and I must draw back from it." And draw back he does: the love object is just a rose once more, and the dreamer is bent on poring over its petals and plucking a flower. The placement of the Pygmalion episode suggests, then, that in order to produce the erotic energy necessary to move towards consummation, the masculine subject must mobilize both the desire for utopian intimacy and the desire for its rejection. To see how this is possible, we must return to the poem's central erotic trope, and in so doing return squarely to the meditative function of allegory.

How can the inescapable and unrealizable utopian horizon of desire that keeps emerging in this text help us understand more fully the psychic work involved in imagining the erotic goal as that of plucking a beautiful rose? We can take our start from the way the *Rose* represents that goal as involving a narcissistic aversion to the subjectivity and agency of the love object. In the context of Reason's argument, this aversion with respect to the object emerges as an expression of the dreamer's aversion to the utopian aspect of his own desire. A deadlock in the structure of a desire that both cannot and must be figured in terms of violent appropriation thus gets projected vengefully on to the love object, which must be destroyed for the desiring subject to maintain its phantasmatic integrity, its pretence of freedom from the mutilation it suffers and visits on itself. Sadism, for all its perversity, functions in this way as a mode of normalization, a way of declaring an ideological settlement that regularizes the subject's desire by occluding the deadlock that motivates it. But, as Reason has argued, any such normalization is inherently unstable, since it replicates the move by which the dreamer entrenches himself in narcissistic fantasy and so places his utopian desire under prohibition.

The depth of this instability begins to emerge if we return to the thought, expressed in the dreamer's knowledge that a plucked rose will soon wither, that a sadistic aversion to the other involves a wish for losing the love object. For now we should also be able to see in sadism, not just a digging in of the heels against utopianism, but a peculiar wish for release from the fantasy of erotic possession. Insofar as desire is stuck in the trope of possession, it might look as though the only way to escape a compulsion by the urge to possess is to put an end to the possibility of desire; and one way to do that is to ensure the death of the love object, thereby leaving the desiring subject with nothing to possess. But even this peculiar expression of the utopian drive within a sadism that prohibits it does not leave us with the truth of the dreamer's desire. Reason declares that it does, and the *Rose* goes some way towards suggesting that the normative authority of Reason cannot successfully be denied. But, successfully or not, the dreamer does deny it. The normative authority of the reified desires he most readily calls his own is itself undeniable: that is what makes the dreamer's deadlock a version of the Boethian antinomy discussed in the previous chapter.

As the dreamer tells Reason in dismissing her advice, "Et se je sui fols, ne vos chaille: / je veill amer, conment qu'il aille, / la rose ou je me sui voez, / ja n'iert mes queurs d'autre doez" (7181–84), "It makes no difference to you if I am a fool. However it goes, I want to love the rose to which I am pledged; no other will ever fill my heart" (137). The dreamer's urge to pluck the rose and hold it in his hand clearly expresses an urge to hold on to *this* particular object, to attach himself to the only one that will ever fill his heart. As the dreamer also tells Reason in rejecting her argument, "ne peut autre estre" (6871), "I can be nothing other than I am" (132); this is the desire that seems, to him, to make him who he is. The particularizing force of sadism suggests that, however death-dealing, such a desire should also be read as part of the dreamer's effort to secure an object that can withstand the utopian dissolution of preferential attachments, and around which he can secure a sense of the identity that goes with those attachments. If the dreamer can force the love object to yield itself up to him in all its particularity, perhaps the very violence and suffering that attends such force can establish an erotic bond that his own yearning for *caritas* could never break.

The dreamer's investment in the abjections of *fin'amors* suggests that the suffering by which a specific love bond gets established runs in both directions, towards the erotic object and the desiring subject. This brings us back to the masochism which I have been suggesting underlies the more obvious sadism in the *Rose*. Now we ought to be in a better position to understand why the *Rose* simultaneously represents love as involving the armored integrity of a narcissized self-interest and the humiliation of the courtly lover undeserving of his beloved's attentions. If a desire to suffer the loss of the love object involves a desire for something more than the object's fantasized appropriability – a desire, that is, for the other *qua* subject and agent – then the desire for that loss also involves a longing for a wounding opening in the hyperbolically self-enclosed sadistic subject, through which the otherness of the desired one could find entry. In the wish for a narcissistic wound the sense of guilt and shame accompanying sadism finds expression: masochism in effect becomes a name for the punishment the sadistic subject visits on itself for its betrayal of the other it so resolutely objectifies.

The text's investment in courtly love ideology – expressed, for instance, in the God of Love's advice to the dreamer in the garden – suggests that

the inflection of a sadomasochistic eroticism by a sense of the guiltiness and shamefulness of sex is hardly local in the *Rose* to the trope of plucking. Perhaps the most widespread locus of such a psychic bar to the free enjoyment of a simple eroticism can be found in the text's imagination of the beloved as a kind of perfect aesthetic object. In the formalist aestheticism of the Garden of Love, of the aseptically closed rosebud, and of Pygmalion's statue, the beloved – like the "Unapproachable Lady" of *fin'amors* – is preserved from the impurity of the Lover's appropriating desire, uncontaminated by his guilt. She is also unable or unwilling to reach back to him with desire. It is as though, in imagining the desired other as aseptic art object, the lover wishes to preserve her not only from the impurity of his desire, but from what he cannot help thinking of as the impurity of her own desire, which would contaminate him if it touched him. The desire for her death in this respect expresses a wish to preserve her in her asepsis, to imagine her as a being that could neither receive nor offer love.[43] And, to return to the notion of sadism as a projection on to the love object of a deadlock in the lover's desire, the violence of the lover's need to "show he is a man," to tear down the embattled edifice or sanctuary of the beloved's body, emerges as well as a desire for revenge on her for this very asepsis – and even for her not being aseptic enough, that is, for her continued "invitation" of the desire she repels and the danger that she might cease to repel it. The instability of the desires swirling around the formal beauty of the love object are captured as well in Pygmalion's desperately apologetic entreaties of his beloved statue. As in the abject appeals to the beloved in *fin'amors*, this form of projection has as an essential component a desire for the very love it figures as polluting, together with a humiliating sense that one is not even worthy of being polluted.

The masochism of courtly love, with its attention to the claim of the other in the form of a wounding opening in the narcissistic subject, involves less of a frontal denial of the deadlock of desire than does sadism. But the example of Pygmalion and the text's intimations of a sexuality tinged with guilt, shame, and pollution are meant to suggest that this hardly locates courtly masochism as a site of the redemption of sexuality from its narcissistic tendencies. Masochism is as fully complicit in normalizing the deadlock of desire as is its cousin sadism, and this

is particularly clear in the *Rose*, where sadism and masochism are less distinct modes of desire than mutually reinforcing components of a more general narcissized sexuality. Masochism's role in the process of normalization, as I have been suggesting, is closely tied to the production of sexual guilt and shame. By figuring the desire for the other *qua* agent and subject as a desire for being wounded or polluted, masochism reinforces the thought that the "normal" subject is the one for whom the other's agency and subjectivity just are fundamentally a wound and a pollution. Masochism thus endows the normalization of a sadistic narcissism with the pathos and dignity of ontological tragedy, the sense that the very essence of selfhood is violated by the self's need to turn to the other. This in turn ensures that sex will provide ample nourishment to masochism's appetite for guilty suffering. But it also produces the sense of thrilling mobility in the self necessary for the narcissistically fixed subject on display throughout this text to set itself in motion.