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## The Imaginary Self-portrait in the Poem *Roman de la Rose*

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### Introduction

When confronting a work of art, people often wonder which of its elements are true and which fictitious. Among other things, they wonder whether the author can be identified in the character. Regarding this question, some believe that the artist lifts out of himself while creating fictive characters and others believe that he does not. Let us take a look at two examples, one from literature and one from art. It is well known that Agatha Christie felt close to Ariadne Oliver, but disliked Hercule Poirot, even though he is her most popular character. Moreover, Oliver, who is led by woman's intuition while writing her detective stories, is entirely different from Poirot, who solves crimes using his "little grey cells". Apparently, Christie and Poirot had nothing in common and therefore Poirot appears to be an autonomous person. The assumption that every creator produces images of himself only is problematized even more directly by dynamic figures in the Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec paintings, for they were in contrast to the painter's ungainly figure. However, Luc Menaše refers exactly to de Toulouse-Lautrec, when discussing the artist's damnation to his own image, and therefore broadens the concept of self-portraiture importantly. Namely, he points out to the "unintentional self-portrait": in each depiction, there are the soul and the body of the artist reflected, but likeness to the actual appearance is nevertheless rare; the appearance is usually improved, idealized, or even compensated (Menaše, 1962, 28, 29). I agree with the opinion that the artist does not lift out of himself, but rather, in the words of Freud, refers to his subconscious (Freud, 2000). I therefore consider the author's observation of himself, which is comparable to the myth of Narcissus, as introspection. The imitation of the soul is however not narcissism or limitation to oneself, on the contrary, it is an unlimited source of inspiration, because the self has many faces.<sup>1</sup> According to this point of view, the contribution wishes to

1 On the inclusiveness of *Selbst* which is fluid and therefore cannot be captured neither in self-portrait nor in autobiography, see Belting, 2015, 183–211.



argue that the fictive character represents some version of the author's self – usually the idealistic one. On the basis of the findings, I am going to define the kind of self-portrait which is essentially different from the ordinary or actual self-portrait which imitates bodily appearance, represents the individual, and whose function is to appear for the person represented. Namely, the discussed self-portrait does not represent the self but the other self, who is not expressed with the outer appearance, but with the inner image.<sup>2</sup> Since it is not the imitation of the body but of the soul, and since it does not appear for the author, this kind of self-portrait has a surprising quality – it is universal. Its function is to have an effect on the recipient, that is to say, to confront himself or to present the hidden side of the self.

## Roman de la Rose

Self-portrait asserted in the Middle Ages – supposedly, it developed from, at the time essentially important, praxis of self-observation, which was not specific for artists. On the contrary, everyone had to practice it, because self-observation was considered as the starting point of moral progress. Man improved himself while contemplating the ideal, like an artefact is shaped while the artist follows his idea (Hall, 2014, 17–29). The profane equivalent of searching for God was the concept of courtly love or longing for the unreachable lady that makes the lover to be a better man. In the middle of the first half of the thirteenth century, such love or the ideal lover, an echo of the troubadours,<sup>3</sup> and of Andreas Capellanus,<sup>4</sup> was spread by Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1200–c. 1240), who wrote first 4058 lines of the allegorical poem titled *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>5</sup> It was spread successfully indeed, for the medieval audience obviously liked to read the *Roman*; until the end of the Middle Ages, it remained the most well known piece of French literature and is preserved in about 300 manuscripts. The poem is about a dream of a poet in which he, as a young man, comes across the Garden of Love. The Garden is enclosed by the wall with depictions of undesirable characteristics or courtly vices which do not belong to the concept of courtly love.<sup>6</sup> The young man dissuades from these vices, enters, and joins the dancing courtly virtues. When he sees the whole Garden, he bends over the fountain of Narcissus and beholds two crystals in its bottom, which mirror the

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2 I already came across self-portrait of this kind in my dissertation; Peklar, 2016, 94, 95.

3 On the troubadours, see Miha Pintarič and Boris A. Novak.

4 Also André le Chapelain (1150–1220), the author of the treatise *De Amore*.

5 This literary work, concluded or not, was later continued by Jean de Meung or Jean Chopinel (c. 1240–c. 1305) whose attitude to love was different, more realistic, in comparison to de Lorris.

6 This well known gallery of ekphrastic portraits is not going to be discussed further.

Garden (lines 1521–1568)<sup>7</sup> – this study is about to focus on this particular motive.<sup>8</sup> The image in the fountain foretells the love experience which transforms the young man into lover, for at that very moment, *Amans* is hit by Cupid's arrows and falls in love with the bud of a rose bush, *Rose*, and despite many barriers, he finally wins her love.

## Personification

The assumption that the author could be found in the Garden of Love seems probable, because love is a subjective theme and because self-portrait is a kind of declaration.

The *Roman* is inhabited by various personifications. Some of these personifications are one-dimensional characters who represent single aspects of the courtly love, such as *Cortoisie*. It is difficult to imagine the author's self to "squeeze" into that flat character. It follows that self-portrait is unlikely to be found in any of them. There are, however, also more graphic personifications. Especially *Amans*, who, on his way through the Garden, develops into the ideal courtly lover. The fact that he unites all the aspects of the courtly love he meets, is obvious when he reaches the fountain of Narcissus, which can be regarded as the last of the tests that prove *Amans*' ability to become the ideal lover (Hillman, 1980, 236).<sup>9</sup> Two crystals at the bottom, which reflect the Garden, are the pair of eyes of the beloved lady – as convincingly argues Lewis (1959, 125). Considering the eyes of a woman are the mirror of the man who loves her, the Garden, reflected in the crystals in its entirety, must be *Amans*. This means the reflection of the whole Garden refers to *Amans*, and the *Lover* compresses the Garden of Love. Since he includes different elements of the Garden, *Amans* is a complex character, and as such close to the self. The very complexity of the soul,<sup>10</sup> which could only be represented broken up into single qualities, was the reason that in the Middle Ages the allegory (as a combination of more personifications) was considered as an especially suitable kind of self-portrait. René d'Anjou in *Livre du Cœur d'amour épris*, for example, represents himself in such dispersed self-portrait (Bouchet, 2013, 73).

7 In one – as far as I know – of the illustrations from the manuscript of the *Roman*, produced in 1348 in Paris (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Selden Supra 57, 12v), this scene is depicted literally: *Amans* approaches the fountain in the bottom of which the colored stones are seen. <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msseldensupra57> [15. 2. 2017].

8 On possible interpretations of the motive see Hillman, 1980, 225–238. The starting point of the present contribution is Nouvet's point of view (2000, 353–374).

9 For in the reflection of the Garden *Amans* chooses an appropriate love object – the most beautiful bud from the rose bush by the fountain.

10 In the Middle Ages, the soul referred to what nowadays is named self. At least from Prudentius on, the soul was considered the composite entity.

*Amans*, who, inversely, gathers dispersed qualities back together, could therefore be self-portrait as well. The line between personification and the author is disappearing also in other great medieval allegories like *Piers Plowman*, where Will stands not only for *voluntas*, will, but also for the author William Langland, and this is another indirect proof that *Amans* is self-portrait.

In the beginning of the *Roman*, de Lorris writes: “Or veil cel songe rimeer / por vos cuers plus feire agueer, / qu’Amors le me prie et comande. / Et se nule ne nus demande / comant je veil que li romanx / soit apelez que je comanz, / ce est li *Romanz de la Rose*, / ou l’art d’Amors est tote enclose. / La matire est et bone et nueve, / or doint Dex qu’èn gré le receve / cele por qui je l’ai empris: / c’est cele qui tant a de pris / et tan test digne d’estre amee / qu’èl doit estre Rose clamee.”<sup>11</sup> Deep understanding of the whole range of love feelings suggests that the author refers to his personal experiences. Even though this supposition cannot be proved, it is hard to imagine that love is thematized by someone who did not experience it. Such general truth is inventively expressed by Pierre Col (who quarrelled about the *Roman* with theologian Jean Gerson that labelled it as blasphemous): “Whoever does not know love, sees it only as in a mirror, only as an enigma” (Huizinga, 2011, 194–196). Moreover, the supposition is supported by the dedication to the lady (although it seems to be somewhat abstract). And the fact that love has to be felt erases the dividing line between autobiographical and fictional. The author could therefore (more or less) unintentionally appear in a fictional character, and since self-portrait is the most compact kind of autobiography, the character could be his self-portrait. It should be emphasized that such self-portrait is not self-sufficient, but it makes the character universal. Koron (who is otherwise not looking for autobiographical in fiction, but fictional in autobiography) establishes: “It is not really important which and how many elements in autobiography are fictional and factual, true and made up. What is of key importance are the implied potentials, which can, when intersubjectively exchanged, encourage or confirm the knowledge of self and of others within the reality that we share and co-create” (Koron, 2011, 47).

## Performativity

Because the author remains an anonymous “I” and narrates from the first-person perspective, the reader gets an opportunity to become the protagonist (Minet-Mahy, 2007, 193–197). This finding is confirmed by two more facts. Firstly, the term personification comes from the Latin word *persona*, the mask worn by actors, hence it can be concluded that the personification is performative. That is to say, the personification is meant to be interpreted by the reader similarly like an actor performs

11 De Lorris, G., *Le Roman de la Rose* (ed. Lecoy, F.), Paris 1983, lines 31–44.

his role. And secondly, the character of the *Lover* is represented in a way that enables the reader to recreate it – the *Lover* is painted by words.<sup>12</sup> The technique of ekphrasis was taken from Ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians, who used ekphrasis to evoke certain feelings in their audience. Rhetoricians could influence listeners, because they reported on the event so lively that listeners could see the happening. However, rhetoricians probably did not use paintings to illustrate the contents of their speech. They rather made listeners want to see the happening. To satisfy his curiosity, the listener had to turn inwards to his inner images. These images are stored in memory and are coloured with emotions.<sup>13</sup> Since speech evokes such image from the listener's memory, it actually evokes the feeling which is tied to that image. Consequently, listener feels as if the reported event is happening to him.<sup>14</sup> As stated above, love is a universal theme and therefore a common denominator of the author and the reader. To teach the reader the art of love, de Lorris has to trigger the feelings of the lover inside the reader. Lively description of the Garden or *enargeia* conjures up romantic atmosphere, and enables the reader to look through the eyes of the protagonist. That is to say, the reader puts on the mask of the *Lover*. Besides *enargeia* (which is the essence of ekphrasis), two other subspecies of ekphrasis are used in the *Roman*. The description of *Amans* is dynamic, not static, for this character is the artefact in the making and shapes through his action, *energeia*. *Amans* is also a speaking image, *prosopopeia*, which represents the engine of action – emotions that are the core of the ideal courtly lover. *Enargeia*, which turns the reader into the *Lover* or the gazing subject, and *energeia* and *prosopopeia* that both make the reader as the *Lover* the object of the gaze, all intersect into a particular point: the fountain of Narcissus. The fountain frames the reflection of the Garden, and therefore this reflection can be labelled as the ekphrastic image. It should be emphasized that the reflection of the Garden actually represents *Amans* because, as stated above, all the elements of the Garden are compressed in *Amans*. However, this reflection is not to be confused with the mimetic reflection of *Amans*' appearance (which is *not* seen in the fountain of Narcissus), and this is why the reflection of the Garden does not represent *Amans* only, but also the reader or rather the spectator of the ekphrastic image. By the fountain, there are the subject and the object of the gaze confronted, what

12 On painting in words in the Middle Ages, see Haiko Wandhoff. Medieval ekphrasis is also thematized in the miscellany *The Art of Vision* (ed. Johnston, A. J., et al.), Columbus 2015 (which remained inaccessible during the preparation of this study).

13 On memory whose images are the basis for ekphrasis, Augustine writes: "Ibi enim mihi coelum et terra et mare praesto sunt, cum omnibus quae in eis sentire potui, praeter illa quae oblitus sum. Ibi et ipse mihi occuro, meque recolo, quid, quando, et ubi egerim, quoque modo cum agerem affectus fuerim. Ibi sunt omnia quae sive expert a me sive credita memini. Ex eadem copia etiam similitudines rerum vel expertarum, vel ex eis quas expertus sum creditarum, alias atque alias et ipse contexo praeteritis, atque ex his etiam futures actions et eventa et spes, et haec omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor." Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones*, PL 32, col. 785. On memory or mental representation thoroughly Carruthers, 2000.

14 On ekphrasis in its original context of classical antiquity, see Webb, 2009.

can be compared to the painter who is the subject and the object at the same time while painting his self-portrait. Moreover, the reader paints in his mind, and therefore the ekphrastic reflection of the Garden or *Amans*, recreated through the performative act of reading or looking with the inner eye, can be defined as the self-portrait of a reader. Ekphrasis, that makes the reader to project his intimate inner images onto verbally presented character, since these images are the only images available, has a specific purpose, that is, ekphrasis confronts the reader to himself (Barbetti, 2011, 9–11). While fulfilling this purpose, images from the memory are not to be considered as the escape door. On the contrary, these images are of crucial importance, for already Augustine (long before Freud discovered the subconscious) realizes that the landscape of human memory is infinite: “Quis ad fundum eius pervenit? Et vis est haec animi mei, atque ad meam naturam pertinent; nec ego ipse capio totum quod sum.”<sup>15</sup>

## Fiction

What is painted with words that cannot be seen, and this is why ekphrasis can include fictive paintings as well. In the Middle Ages, the concept of ekphrasis was certainly not limited to material or real artefacts.<sup>16</sup> The fictive painting is an extendable concept. Such image is not necessarily just depiction, but it can also become the one who is depicted; in Guillaume de Machaut’s *Voir Dit* the portrait is personified and comes to life as the lady portrayed in person (Kelly, 1978, 51). That is to say, ekphrasis represents all that does not exist in the real world and therefore brings such object into existence (Iser, 2002, 216). In my opinion, this is the function of ekphrasis, and not competing with painting.

If the function of ekphrasis is to be understood clearly, the object of ekphrasis will have to be defined more precisely. According to the general medieval definition of fiction, *fabula* represents the truth. This definition confirms that ekphrasis does not represent reality, since truth is separated from reality instead of fiction, while fiction and truth are not opposite concepts. De Lorris refers to Macrobius<sup>17</sup> and defines his fiction as *somnium* or allegory which represents the true meaning concealed behind the actual appearance. Considering that this allegory is framed in dream, it represents invisible human interior or the soul.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the dichotomy of the appearance and

15 Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones*, PL 32, col. 785.

16 Such simplification appeared after the end of the medieval period. Ekphrasis is defined thoroughly by Webb, 1999, 7–18. See also Barbetti, 2011, 5–11.

17 Macrobius classified dreams and compared them to the corresponding categories of fiction (Kruger, 1994, 131–134).

18 In the language of psychoanalysis or in the words of Jung, the dream and the art both reveal the subconscious (Kincaid Today, 2012).

the essence, the soul is wider concept than personality or self which is represented by the bodily appearance. This is why the medieval concept of the soul can be compared to Freud's concept of the psyche where, besides *ego*, *super ego* and *id* are included. Moreover, the allegory, in the Middle Ages commonly accepted way to make the soul visible, also appears in psychoanalysis, because the application of psychological terms to the unconscious is a species of allegory (Lewis, 1959, 61). Hence it follows, contemporaries of de Lorris thought about themselves and their spiritual lives in visual terms, and were aware of the difference between the appearance and the truth (Denery, 2005, 112), therefore allegory speaks in images that are different from the appearance. This is confirmed by the discussed fountain of Narcissus, a site of metafiction according to Nouvet, who claims that the fountain does not only reflect the Garden, but is the reflection of the allegorical image as well; the fountain does not reflect the appearance – the appearance of the Garden is rearranged (Nouvet, 2000, 353–374). Since the outer appearance represents the self, and since the reflection of the Garden refers to *Amans*, and *Amans* refers to the self, it can be concluded that the reflection is the rearrangement of the actual self. To find out to whom exactly this rearrangement refers, let us take into consideration general explanation on the allegory by Hugh of Saint Victor: “Respice opus caementarii. Collocato fundamento, lineam extendit in directum, perpendicularum demittit, ac deinde lapides diligenter politos in ordinem point. Alios deinde atque alios quaerit, et si forte aliquos primae disposition non respondents invenerit, accipit limam, praeeminentia praecidit, aspera planat, et informia ad formam reducit, sicque demum reliquis in ordinem dispositis adiungit.”<sup>19</sup> If the quoted is applied to the discussed example or to the soul, it can further be assumed that the rearranged appearance is an imitation of the idea of self, and that it represents what the self wishes to be instead of what it actually is.<sup>20</sup> Considering Iser's understanding of fictionalisation, this wish can be explained even more accurately: because the fictive character is only a fictive selection of the characteristics that belong to the actual self of the author (Iser, 1993, 1–21), and since *Amans* is the selection of the ideal characteristics which compose the ideal courtly lover, this fictive character represents the idealistic self.

In contrast to the actual self-portrait, ekphrasis does not imitate the bodily appearance: “Ekphrasis does not construct a rigid body...The ekphrastic body expands...It (ekphrasis) re-sees, re-perceives compositions; it assimilates, restructures, and makes something new, something that shares some of the skins and curves of its 'object' (for lack of a better word) but has stretched them into new shapes and dimensions” (Barbetti, 2011, 27). *Amans* or the imaginary reflection in the fountain of

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19 Hugonis de Sancto Victore, *Didascalicon: De studio legendi*, Ljubljana 2014, 802C–802D.

20 Let us remind of the Freud's point of view: fiction is correction of reality; in fiction the self is imaginary reshaped in accordance with the wish (Freud, 2000).

Narcissus therefore represents a different self which may be more real, but hasn't got the outer appearance. At this point, it is clear that the function of ekphrasis is to bring into existence the idealistic, i. e. other self.

## Word

In the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon (c. 1214–c. 1293) rethought the classification of signs. In the first of two general classes, i. e. among “natural signs” or among “signs which signify by likeness,” he classified pictures that signify by similar appearance, while in the second (class), among “signs given by a soul,” he classified words which signify with deliberation.<sup>21</sup> Picture and word are thus different kinds of sign. Between picture and pictured there is *identity*, while the relation between word and referent is not as tight. More on this relation can be learned from Augustine's theory of signs, the most cogent one until Bacon. According to Augustine, word, passed to the senses, transfers thought or feeling to the reason, hence between word and referent there is a *difference*. That is to say, word is a sign which refers to what it is not, i. e. to something else.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, word represents differently than picture, namely it substitutes what is not perceivable by senses, for example invisible ideas (Lagerlund, 2007, 25, 26) – and this is the reason why Augustine prefers word from picture. The fact that the word refers to some other thing, gets especially obvious within the fictive text where the literal meaning is surpassed or rearranged into the figuration, therefore the meaning is *not identical* to the verbal image, which is the reason why the verbal image reveals the other self (Iser, 1993, 10, 11, and 2002, 223). Namely, *Amans* as a speaking image does not transfer the statement alone, because in the statement the one who states or the figure is implied. This brings about the split in the reader or points to the otherness:

“Whatever I think is a part of *my* mental world. And yet here I am thinking a thought which manifestly belongs to another mental word, which is being thought in me just as though I did not exist. Already the notion is unconceivable and seems even more so if I reflect that, since every thought must have a subject to think it, this *thought* which is alien to me and yet in me, must also have in me a *subject* which is alien to me...Whenever I read, I mentally pronounce an *I*, and yet the *I* which I pronounce is not myself” (Iser, 1981, 153, 154).

To fulfil the linguistic sign, the reader has to adjust the thought of some other person to himself or give meaning to the given statement. Through giving meaning

21 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/semiotics-medieval/#4.2> [20. 1. 2017].

22 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/semiotics-medieval/#2.1> [20. 1. 2017].



to the statement of some other person, the reader discovers his other self (Iser, 2002, 244), therefore the language – despite the profane context – as the locus of revelation. To sum up, the difference between the picture and the word, wherein the former represents the actual, and the latter spiritual likeness, affirms the supposition of the function of ekphrasis; due to the fact that the verbal image and its meaning are not identical, the verbal self-portrait cannot represent the author's identity (which is represented by the actual self-portrait, since the picture and pictured are identical), but it can reveal the other self.

## Mental Representation

Water surface as one of the reflective surfaces makes the fountain a kind of mirror. However, the fountain of Narcissus does not reflect the appearance of *Amans*, which is especially obvious in some illustrations of the discussed motive.<sup>23</sup> Namely, in the illustration from one of the manuscripts that contains the *Roman*, probably produced at the end of the fourteenth century in Belgium, most likely in Tournai (The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, MS G.32, fol. 11v), the fountain is not interpreted as a water surface, but reminds of an opening. If the reflection of the appearance on the surface is compared to the painting, the motive of the fountain will be the ekphrastic image, which is opening and differs from the painting because it points into the depth – of the soul. Here Mitchell's comparison has to be quoted: "The ekphrastic image acts...like a sort of unapproachable and unrepresentable 'black hole' in the verbal structure, entirely absent from it, but shaping it..." (Mitchell, 1994, 158). This means the ekphrastic image is a site of the imaginary. That is to say, the fountain with the crystals on its bottom is the imaginary mirror, since the crystals can either refer to the mirror, considering that the crystal was a metaphor for clarity, or they refer to the imaginary, considering that supernatural characteristics were ascribed to the crystals (Hillman, 1980, 230, 231). This kind of mirror expands the field of vision (Mikuž, 1997, 54), because it triggers a special kind of image – imaginary or mental representation in the recipient or the reader. According to the ancient rhetoricians, such immaterial image, *phantasiar*, was not differentiated from material painting; both kinds of images were considered to represent the actual appearance (Lagerlund, 2007, 13–15). In the Middle Ages, on the contrary, when the appearance was problematized, the subjective mental representation was the kind of image which is not in opposition to the human

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23 See *Amans* by the fountain of Narcissus, around 1390, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, MS G.32, fol. 11v. [Http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/10/76943](http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/10/76943) [24. 2. 2017]. There are also illustrations that deviate from the contents and are repetition of the motive of Narcissus by the fountain. More illustrations of the scene with *Amans* by the fountain of Narcissus are accessible on the following web page: [http://romandelarose.org/#search;ILLUSTRATION\\_TITLE;%22L%E2%80%99Amans%20at%20the%20Fountain%20of%20Narcissus%22;0](http://romandelarose.org/#search;ILLUSTRATION_TITLE;%22L%E2%80%99Amans%20at%20the%20Fountain%20of%20Narcissus%22;0) [3. 2. 2017].

inside, and therefore does not conceal, but reveals it. “Les choses qui sont a l'encontre / et i voit l'en sanz couverture / et lor color et lor figure, / tot autresi vos di por voir / que li cristaus sanz decevoir / tot l'estre dou vergier encuse / a celui qui en l'ève muse / [...] / si n'i a si petite chose, / tant soit reposte ne enclouse, / dont demonstrence ne soit faite / con s'èle ert ou cristal portrete.”<sup>24</sup>

The point here is that the reflection of the Garden in the crystals is not imitation of its actual but restructured appearance: “Si est cil cristaus merueilleus, / une tel force a que li leus, / arbres et flors, et quan qu'aorne / le vergier, i pert tot a orne.”<sup>25</sup> This means the mental representation is an image that is composed, which is the first of its two features that need to be exposed here. Ekphrasis (or the author) that triggers such image, does not imitate the actual condition or appearance of the outer world. Actually, ekphrasis only makes an impression as if it imitates the outer appearance. Moreover, due to the absence of the “imitated” ekphrastic object in the outer world, ekphrasis is free to rearrange the facts in accordance with the statements, that is, to manipulate the appearance. Rearranging in line with the statement is rearranging of the appearance, which is important because only rearranged appearance can reveal what is concealed by the actual appearance (Iser, 2002, 222). The fact that the ekphrastic image shows through the actual appearance, becomes obvious when we try to explain how such image is to be looked at. Since it cannot be seen, but looked at indirectly only, to look at the ekphrastic image means to overlook the appearance or to see the meaning through it.<sup>26</sup> In other words, if a man is listening to someone who is out of his sight, the listener will imagine what the appearance of the speaker should be according to the contents of his statements. To put it more precisely, the listener composes mental image considering what the (contents of the) statements mean to him. Since the visual shape of the speaker is determined by his statements, the composed mental representation fits into the contents of the statements or expresses its meaning, while it has nothing in common with the actual appearance (of the speaker). For the mental representation is a visual image which does not highlight the figure as an object, the figure is rather highlighted as the carrier of the subjective meaning (Iser, 2002, 213–219). The imaginary reflection of the Garden or the *Lover* therefore reveals the emotion that is the core of the represented ideal. Representing emotion is the second of exposed features of the mental representation. For the appearance of the Garden, reflected in the crystals, is not only restructured, but also colored (Nouvet, 2000, 368): “Mes une chose vos dirai / qu'a merueille, ce cuit, tendroiz / maintenant que vos l'entendroiz. / Quant li solaus, qui tot aguiete, / ses rais en la fontaine giete /

24 De Lorrís, G., *Le Roman de la Rose* (ed. Lecoy, F.), Paris 1983, lines 1554–1560, 1565–1568.

25 De Lorrís, G., *Le Roman de la Rose* (ed. Lecoy, F.), Paris 1983, lines 1547–1550.

26 This is why Mitchell compares ekphrasis to the radio show (Mitchell, 1994, 151–165).

et la clarté aval descent, / lors perent colors plus de cent / ou cristal, qui par le soleil / devient inde, jaune et vermeil.”<sup>27</sup> Within the late medieval aesthetic the color is – contrary to the line – the irrational element of the image which expresses the emotion. Moreover, only because mental representation is not defined by rigid contour, i. e. is optically scanty image, it is able to represent *color*, atmosphere, which cannot be seen directly. Namely, in the Middle Ages, looking at the shining objects, such as crystal mirror, was considered to be a psychological experience, since the shine obscures the appearance and evokes the emotion, hence looking at the imaginary reflection or mental representation is not perception. This means the reader, while looking at such image, does not see, but feels. To sum up, the composed mental image represents in a special way – the emotion is not shown, but evoked, and therefore revealed. and therefore revealed. Consequently, the reader feels the *Amans*’ feeling. Considering *Amans* is the reader’s other, and considering that the appearance of *Amans* is not reflected in the fountain, it can be concluded that ekphrasis conceals the appearance of some other person to trigger mental representation, which evokes the emotion of the other inside the reader, and therefore reveals the other self to the reader. This is further explained by Iser: when constructing the mental representation, the reader puts his mind at disposal of some other person, and this is why the reader’s other self is expressed through his act of construction. That is to say, because the reader’s imaginary is defined by the author’s text, in the consciousness of the former can express the thoughts of the latter, and this is how the other side of the self is disclosed to the reader (Iser, 2002, 236–246). Access to this side is enabled by the act of constructing the mental or imaginary image which is evoked from the depth by the ekphrastic image or the fountain, for this act surpasses the reader’s consciousness: conditions of the construction are given by the text, i. e. are out of the consciousness of the reader because they spring from the consciousness of the author, and constructing mental image is happening under the verge of the consciousness (Iser, 2002, 214). “Here, the construction of meaning not only implies the creation of a totality emerging from interacting textual perspectives...but also, through formulating this totality, it enables us to formulate ourselves and thus discover an inner world of which we had hitherto not been conscious” (Iser, 1981, 158).

The self is thus transformed because of the background, namely crystal mirror or ekphrastic image whose function is not only to trigger mental representation, but especially to shape the image of the self. As stated, *Amans* beholds two crystals in the fountain, which are interpreted as the eyes of the lady he falls in love with. According to Plinius, the eyes of the other are a kind of mirror, because the pupil reflects the human figure (since this tiny image is reflected in it, the dark circular opening in the centre of

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27 De Lorris, G., *Le Roman de la Rose* (ed. Lecoy, F.), Paris 1983, lines 1538–1546.

the eye is named the pupil, which comes from the Latin word *pūpilla*, diminutive form of *pūppa*, girl). Such minimized double was among other things considered a human soul (Mikuž, 1997, 1–4). The lady's eyes are therefore the mirror of the soul, however they do not reflect the self, for the lady is not just any other, from whom the identity of the lover would deviate as different and thus assert – the lady is the background with a different function. Within akin courtly literature, the lady is often represented by the abstract description of her characteristics. This opposite of the sensual description of the body exposes inner beauty of the lady. Ekphrastic portrait of the lady therefore represents the ideal that is carried in the heart of the lover. And every time he looks into this portrait, the lover is encouraged to act in a way that he will become worthy of the lady's love, i. e. better than he actually is (Kelly, 1978, 45–56). This means that the lady is the moral mirror and encourages the lover to improve or to change himself (which is the opposite of the ordinary mirror where the identity of the gazing subject is confirmed). In the *Roman*, the lady is also the mirror which shows what *Amans* or the reader is not. Since the lady is reduced to the pair of eyes, the transformation of the *Lover* is centered; when the *Lover* is gazing at the eyes of the lady, he sees the transformed self in them. For the radiant crystals or eyes illustrate the power of loving gaze, which steals the lover's identity: "The power of love transforms the lover into the beloved and the beloved into the lover. A transformation takes place, demolishing all boundaries between loving subject and beloved object. The two entities become blurred through this process. Self is lost; the beloved too has been described as turned into the lover" (Wilhite, 2010, 152). The appearance, which is returned by the ordinary mirror, is therefore not reflected in the eyes of the ideal lady, because the lover's identity does not differ from her otherness, but unites with it. This is why the otherness of the lady influences the lover's self or transforms it. Since being the ideal, the lady idealizes his actual self or shapes the ideal lover. Hence it follows; the reflection in the pair of crystals is *yimage*, the imaginary or mental image of self which represents the idealistic self. The fact that in the fountain of Narcissus *Amans* or the reader does not behold his own appearance but its altered self, proves that the power of love transforms him radically, i. e. it converts selfishness into selflessness. At this very point, the ideal lover is essentially different from Narcissus (Wilhite, 2010, 107).

The way the ekphrastic image effects the reader can be summarized by the following finding: the *Lover* does not actually fall in love with the beautiful eyes of the lady, but with the embellished version of the self, reflected in these eyes. Such imaginary self-portrait functions as the antipode of the actual self-portrait or of the actual self, whom it represents, for the imaginary self-portrait shows what the self could be. That is to say, the actual appearance is the starting point, and the idealistic mental image of the self – engraved into the soul of the lover either by the power of love or by the power

of imagination evoked by the *Roman* – is the goal that sets an example to everyman and regulates his action or searching for perfection. “That distance is what much late medieval literature is about. A perfect human is a fascinating subject for speculation and invention, whether imitable or not” (Kelly, 1978, 37).

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Barbara Peklar

## Imaginarna lastna podoba v pesnitvi *Roman o Roži*

**Ključne besede:** ekfrazna, *Roman de la Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris, motiv Narcisovega tolmana, poosebitev, performativnost, fikcija, imaginarni avtoportret, beseda in podoba, teorija estetskega učinka

»Vsak portret, ki ga slikáš z občutkom, je portret umetnika, ne modela ... Slikar ne odkriva njega, temveč na poslikanem platnu razkriva sebe,«<sup>28</sup> razloži tisti slikar, ki je naslikal spremenljiv portret Doriana Graya. Tudi Guillaume de Lorris, avtor srednjeveške pesnitve *Roman de la Rose*, skozi lik idealnega ljubimca predstavi svojo dušo, zato je *Amant* svojevrsten avtoportret. Vendar v nasprotju z običajnim avtoportretom ne zastopa avtorjeve osebnosti. Naslikan je namreč z besedami, taka ekfrazna podoba pa je univerzalna in ima na bralca poseben učinek, ki ga lahko bolje razumemo z Iserjevo teorijo estetskega učinka. Bralcu omogoča občutiti ljubezen ter tako njega samega preoblikuje v ideal dvornega ljubimca. Za razliko od slike nevidna ekfrazna podoba videz preseže in bralcu predoči skrito plat njegove duše. Natančneje, objekt, ki ga predstavlja ekfrazna, v zunanjem svetu ne obstaja, torej v obstoj priključuje bralčev drugi jaz. V nasprotju z naslikanim avtoportretom, ki predstavlja (avtorjevo) identiteto, ker sta si slika in upodobljenec istovetna, je namreč beseda znak, ki se nanaša na nekaj drugega, zato se verbalni avtoportret, ki izraža avtorjeva čustva, odpira bralcu, da ga izpolni s svojo predstavo. Predstava, ki se od videza razlikuje po tem, da čustvo razkriva, bralcu omogoči začutiti avtorjeva čustva in mu tako predoči drugi jaz. To pomeni, da imaginarni avtoportret ne predstavlja dejanskega jaza, pač pa jaz, kot ga preoblikuje oziroma izpopolni umetnost ljubezni.

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28 Wilde, O., *Slika Doriana Graya* (prev. Šuklje, R.), Ljubljana 1986, 49.

Barbara Pekar

## **The Imaginary Self-portrait in the Poem *Roman de la Rose***

**Keywords:** ekphrasis, *Roman de la Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris, the Fountain of Narcissus, personification, performativity, fiction, the imaginary self-portrait, word and image, reader-response theory

“Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter...It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself,”<sup>29</sup> explains the painter who created the evolving portrait of Dorian Gray. Guillaume de Lorris, the author of the medieval poem *Roman de la Rose*, also presents his soul through the character of the ideal lover, so *Amans* is a kind of self-portrait. But unlike an ordinary self-portrait, this one does not present the author’s personality. It is painted with words, and such an ekphrastic image is universal or influences the reader in ways that can be explained by the Iser’s reader-response theory. The poem enables the reader to feel love, and transforms him into the ideal courtly lover. As distinct from a painting, the invisible ekphrastic image in this text surpasses appearances and presents the reader with a hidden side of his soul. The object represented by ekphrasis does not exist in the outer world, therefore in the example examined here the reader’s other self is brought into existence. In contrast to a painted self-portrait, which represents the identity of the author, since the picture and the pictured are identical, a word is a sign which refers to something else. A verbal self-portrait which expresses the author’s feelings opens itself up to the reader, who has to complete the image with his imagination. This imaginary image then differs from the external appearance, because it reveals the associated feelings, enables the reader to feel what the author feels, and presents the reader with his other self. The imaginary self-portrait thus does not represent the actual self, but the self that is transformed or improved by the art of love.

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29 Wilde, O., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, New York 1993, 4.