

When Lovers Recount their Own Stories

Assimilating Text and Image Units in the
Prologue of the *Roman de la Poire*,
ms. Paris BnF 2186¹

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ABSTRACT

The prologue of the *Roman de la Poire* includes speeches from the God of Love, the Goddess Fortune, the poet/narrator of the work, and several protagonists from twelfth-century texts. Ms Paris BnF 2186 (ms. A) includes nine full-page illuminations (very rare in romance) in the prologue that accompany the speeches, forming units of text and image. This article analyzes the speeches by Cligés, Tristan, and Pyramus with their accompanying illuminations. In the speeches, the lovers narrate their own stories (which they did not in the earlier versions), changing them so as to offer a new and substantially different version of a central episode from their narrative that emphasizes how lovers manage appearances, shape perceptions, and respond to various obstacles to love including slanderers and meddling courtiers. Comparisons between the Poire speeches and the twelfth-century texts reveal the extent of the changes and how they respond to the poet/narrator's fear of slanderers. An analysis of the illuminations shows that the illuminator highlighted specific details of the speeches so that through the power of visual representation, the paintings fix in the memory of an observer the lovers' responses to barriers to love. The images and texts work synergistically and have the potential to encourage any lover, including the romance protagonist, who expresses uncertainty and hesitation throughout the text about slanderers and difficulties. The Poire insists on the importance of memory, and the text and image units of the prologue of ms. A establish that importance from the first pages a reader encounters.

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THE THIRTEENTH-CENTURY *ROMAN DE LA POIRE* HAS GARNERED only some attention, yet has aspects that invite a closer look, especially those of the prologue in the extensively decorated ms. Paris BnF fr 2186.² As Christiane Marchello-Nizia, the editor of the modern edition, has pointed out, the text does not follow generic conventions. Despite the word *romance* in the title, the *Poire* lacks the usual adventures or quests of a chivalrous knight. It focuses instead on tropes from troubadour and other love lyric, including a married lady of higher social status, a lover overtaken by the God of Love who beseeches the beloved to grant her love to him and who complains that the potential damages of envious liars and slanderers keep him from approaching the lady (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, xvi–xviii). The body of the text contains lengthy and repetitive descriptions of the lover’s travails and suffering caused by lovesickness (as described to an unnamed interlocutor), his interactions with the God of Love, Amors, and requests for help from characters such as Beauty, Courtesy, and Nobility, messengers sent from Amors, along with issues of loyalty, disloyalty and slander woven throughout.³ The romance concludes with the lover presenting the *Roman de la Poire* to the lady so to impart his message to her, a nod to the envoy of troubadour poetry.⁴ However, the prologue *also* ends with the presentation of the book to the lady. Although the two exchange hearts and the lady invites the suitor to read the book to her at the end of the work, events in the body of the text barely advance beyond where they stood at the end of the prologue.⁵

In contrast to the body of the text, the prologue of the *Poire* (some 280 verses), moves much faster and offers a number of perspectives, enhanced

2. The work is ascribed to Tibaut. Jung summarizes the debate around possible identifications of said “Tibaut”, who remains entirely unknown (JUNG 1971, 311).
3. Sylvia Huot considers the *Poire* in response to the *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris (HUOT 1985, 95–111). Jung analyzes the function of allegory in the work including how it differs from the *Rose* (JUNG 1971, 312–17).
4. For an analysis of the *Poire* and several other thirteenth-century romances that develop the topos of the literary work speaking for the Lover, see Danielle Quérue, (QUÉRUEL 1997, 33–48).
5. Critics have analyzed less-common features of the text and its literary and social context. Marchello-Nizia considers aspects such as the acrostics and musical refrains (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, xxiv–xlvii). Huot shows how the *Poire* functions in the complex evolution from oral performance to written romance, focusing on the poetics of romance composition and how the *Poire* works “as a space in which to project performance” (HUOT 1987, 189).

by rich images.⁶ It alternates between the voice of the poet/narrator and a number of speeches by figures including the God of Love, the Goddess, Fortune, and well-known romance protagonists.⁷ These are clearly indicated by the speaker who says, for example, “I am the god of Love” or “I am Tristan”. I will analyze three speeches by a protagonist/lover from three twelfth-century works in light of those works: Cligés, from Chrétien de Troyes’ eponymous romance; Tristan, as depicted in Bérout’s *Roman de Tristan*; and Pyramus of the anonymous *Pyrame et Thisbé* along with the images that accompany them. In these *Poire* prologue speeches, the lovers narrate their own stories — unlike the recounting in the twelfth-century texts — changing them in the process, to offer a new and substantially different version of a central episode from their love story that emphasizes how lovers can manage appearances, shape perceptions, and respond to various obstacles to love. In ms. Paris BnF 2186, each of the speeches is preceded by a rare and beautiful full-page illumination. Medieval visual culture ascribes to images the capacity to fix the image in the mind of the reader. We will see that the illuminator read and carefully followed the speeches of the lovers, for the illuminations of the *Poire* prologue lock in a specific moment described in the speech that influences the viewer’s understanding. The images and texts work synergistically to secure in the faculty of memory strategies a lover can apply to overcome slanderers and enemies of love for a reader and/or lover who perceives, processes, and assimilates the illuminations alongside the words the lovers speak. The combinations of text and image have the potential to encourage any lover, including the romance protagonist, who expresses uncertainty and hesitation throughout the text due to fear of slanderers.

6. There are a few other prefatory sections in the romance before the action begins (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, x), with the result that various critics break the prologue into sections differently and also count the verses differently. One part describes the lover who observes the lady as she bites into a pear, the episode that inspires the title.
7. Helen Solterer argues that the speakers at the beginning of the poem are giving instruction to the lover who is attempting to master the discourse of women (SOLTERER 1995, 65). Huot contrasts the *Poire*’s prologue speakers with the figures painted on the outside of the wall in the *Rose* and the beautiful dancers inside, noting that the *Poire* separates loyal lovers from the enemies of love (HUOT 1985, 97–98). She also considers how theatricality operates differently in the prologue and the main text (HUOT 1987, 177–82). Marchello-Nizia describes the text and image combinations as scenes (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, xix).

The *Poire* and Related Manuscripts in Context

To mine the depths of how text and image interact on the page, we must recall concepts for engaging with medieval illuminations. Mary Carruthers reminds us that rather than ornamentation functioning as merely a pleasant addition to the manuscripts “the mnemonic role of book decoration was consciously assumed from the beginnings of the book in the West” (CARRUTHERS 2008, 164).⁸ Carruthers points out that the ancients held a similar view of the power of an image to help lock an idea into place; in addition, she quotes Albertus Magnus, who believes that when we only hear an idea, it remains unsure, but “but by seeing it was firmed up” (CARRUTHERS 2008, 19). Carruthers shows then that for medieval consumers of learned culture, the image was intended to define a notion and secure it more precisely in the mind than could be done with words alone. In addition, Loomis and Loomis (and others after them) have pointed out that in the *Bestiare d’amors* or *Bestiary of Love*, by Richard di Fournival (a text roughly contemporaneous to the *Poire*) the prologue underscores the importance of both the ear and the eye for the reader who wants to take in the utmost (Loomis and Loomis 1938, 3).

There are two complete manuscripts of the *Roman de la Poire*—Paris BnF French 2186 (ms. A) and Paris BnF French 12786 (ms. B)—a third with a number of fragments, Paris BnF French 24431 (ms. C), and a fourth in a private collection that has only a single fragment, (ms. D) (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, lxvi–lxx). Manuscript B only has blank spaces for historiated letters and a musical staff (and notes for the refrains in the text), none of which was executed. Manuscript A includes illuminations, numerous historiated letters, rubrication, and musical staves; only the musical notes were never added (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, lxvi–lxx).⁹ The full-page illuminations are found only in the prologue, while the remainder of the manuscript includes other decorative features.¹⁰ Marchello-Nizia dates the composition of the romance and ms. A to around 1250 (MARCHELLO-

8. Although Carruthers writes extensively about *memoria* as system of learning for monks, she nevertheless offers general precepts for engaging with medieval illuminations.
9. My study of the manuscript was funded through faculty development funds from St. Mary’s College of Maryland. The full manuscript can be found at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105065252/f1.image.r=fr%202186>
10. A study of the images as expressions of courtly love that contrasts the full-page illuminations and the historiated initials is Urbanski, 1999.

NIZIA 1984, lxv).¹¹ M. Alison Stones traces the evolution of French secular manuscript decoration from its beginning around the middle of the thirteenth century, arguing for a date of ms. A to “at least a decade later than 1250” (STONES 1976, 97). She notes that the *Poire* stands out, as it is “lavishly illuminated” and “particularly sumptuous” (STONES 1976, 89). Because of the beauty of the manuscript, Stones opines that it was a presentation copy (STONES 1976, 89).¹²

Full-page illuminations are unusual for French secular literature (STONES 1976, 89, 92).¹³ Moreover, the illuminations are rare for the works they illustrate. The Tristan scene with Mark is otherwise found only in German manuscripts and in embroideries, while the illumination of the *Cligés* episode is the only extant miniature of that romance (LOOMIS AND LOOMIS 1938, 90; for *Cligés*: STONES 1993, 8).

Robert Branner’s comprehensive study furnishes extensive detail on manuscript production in thirteenth-century Paris, dividing the manuscripts into numerous workshops (BRANNER 1977). By the second half of the thirteenth century, a “Parisian” style had come into being, and Branner documents how the different workshops depicted bodies, body parts, clothing (folds and draping), details of initials, and other pictorial features that separate one workshop from another (although a single workshop could have different branches within it) (BRANNER 1977, 97–141). Branner places the *Roman de la Poire* in the Bari workshop (named for a Gradual located in that city today), noting that “a Parisian atelier might receive commissions of all sorts, from lay patrons as well as from clerics and religious institutions” (BRANNER 1977, 102–07 esp. 103).

Such an intermixing of sacred and profane appears often in many types of manuscripts. Michael Camille, among others, cautions that the division we easily invoke between religious and secular never operated in medi-

11. Hans Erich Keller argues that the prologue was added later by a different author, in the workshop where the full-page miniatures were made. He asserts that the three couples have nothing to do with the rest of the romance and he dates ms. 2186 later than Marcello-Nizia (KELLER 1994, 213–214).

12. The lady and the lover wear the same heraldic device, but Stones states that no one has been able to identify the coat of arms (STONES 1976, 89). Marchello-Nizia searched other avenues and also turned up nothing (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, xxix).

13. As a result, illuminations have been featured in art exhibits of manuscripts. See, for example, the exhibition catalogue *Art and the Courts*.

eval culture — although it is “a fact of modernity” (CAMILLE 2004, 377).¹⁴ While rare in romance, full-page illuminations were commonly found in highly popular collections of psalms, or Psalters, the most favored devotional text throughout much of the thirteenth-century (BENNETT, 2004, 211–221). Ms. A has been called “a Psalter of Love” (LOOMIS AND LOOMIS 1938, 90) and exhibits stylistic similarities with Old Testament fragments in ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 381 and ms. Oxford, Bodlian Library, Psalter Douce 50 (STONES 1976, 91).¹⁵ While an analysis of the complex interworkings of sacred and secular aspects in the illuminations is beyond the scope of this article, suffice it to say that the similarities with Psalter illumination and the popularity of Psalters at the time of ms. A suggest that these images, like those in a Psalter, are conducive to being assimilated for didactic and moral lessons from which accrete additional layers of meaning.

Overview of the Prologue and its Illuminations

The prologue opens on carta 1r with a historiated initial (the only one in the prologue) showing the poet/narrator kneeling before the lady. (See appendix A for a chart containing the layout of the illuminations and text as described here.) We turn the page to 1v and find the first full-page illumination, the God of Love, Amors, with the lovers below, and on the facing carta (2r), the speech by Amors. Next comes the goddess, Fortune, with her wheel, (illumination on 2v with her facing-page speech on 3r), followed by a range of depictions of lover and beloved. These figures include well-known literary couples such as Cligés and Fénice and Tristan and Iseut that are interspersed between illuminations of the *Poire* lover and his sweetheart in

14. Camille finds evidence of the influence of secular literature from genres including romance and fabliaux in Psalters. One example is CAMILLE 2004, 377–86. Sylvia Huot considers aspects of the sacred in the *Poire*, including the role of the pear tree in the work and the iconography of the God of Love depicted as a six-winged seraphim (HUOT 1987, 187).
15. Stones offers others examples of similarities between liturgical and profane manuscripts (STONES 1976, 90–92). Loomis and Loomis long ago indicated that ms. A is somewhat like two well-known Psalters of the thirteenth century, one of Blanche of Castille (ms. Paris Arsenal 1186) and a Psalter of St. Louis (ms. Paris BnF Lat 10525), but their analyses are cursory and without photographs of those manuscripts as seen in Branner and Stones (LOOMIS AND LOOMIS 1938, 90).

actions such as giving a ring and preparing for a tournament. The last full-page illumination contains the *Poire* lover offering the book to his beloved.

The prologue also contains a problematic illumination. Before the final painting in which the poet/narrator presents his book to his lady, we find a full-page illumination whose upper half depicts lovers in a boat and whose lower half portrays them on horseback before a city wall, identified by Marchello-Nizia as Paris and Helen. However, as she points out, a folio has been cut from ms. 2186 so that the manuscript now lacks the accompanying text on this couple, which she took from ms. B (MARCELLO-NIZIA 1984, lxvii). If Marchello-Nizia is correct, the manuscript would have contained the folio at some point and the illumination could also be considered here, were it not for the fact that the twenty lines on Paris and Helen lack the structure found in the three speeches: these verses are almost entirely in the voice of a narrator, and only in the seventeenth line of twenty, does Pyramus say *je* and identify himself (MARCELLO-NIZIA 1984, lviii; HUOT 1985, 104). The fact that the poet/narrator retells most of the story may indicate that he is appropriating it for himself after having heard the speeches by the three figures beforehand. I turn now to the literary couples.

Cligés and Fenice

The reader turns the page from the goddess Fortune and her speech to find a bipartite full-page illumination of Cligés and Fenice.

See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105065252/f10.image.r=fr%202186>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Française, ms. français 2186, carta. 3v: Cligés and Fenice

The upper drawing shows the lovers in conversation on a bench, touching each other, while the lower one depicts two doctors standing over Fenice who lies on a bier with her arms outstretched and her palms facing upwards. A physician has one hand under her neck and the other under her arm, along her ribs. A second one stands beside him, holding a phial from which a silver stream pours into Fenice's palm.¹⁶

16. There are also two smaller quatrefoils whose most extreme lobe is cut off by the page boundary. Within each of these is the silhouette of the phoenix, a bird who

On the facing page, Cligés opens with “Je sui Cligés li amoreus, et vez ci m’amie Fenice”, “I am Cligés the one in love, and see here my friend Fenice” (v. 61).¹⁷ He explains that she has been wounded by Love’s arrows, both painful and sweet (vv. 62–64) and notes: “Le diex d’Amors qui prent les amanz nos a pris”, “The God of Love who takes lovers took us” (v. 65). These lines establish their love and their fealty to Amors as well as the similarity of their situation to that of the *Poire* lover and his lady.

Cligés then describes the doctors and their actions in an episode from Chrétien’s romance:

Li felon *traïtor* vers Amors mesprendront,
de quoi, au chiés del tor, a tart se reprendront.
Par *traïteurs* defaut, ce ne puet nus repondre,
tote amor. Ne lur chaut fors des amanz confondre.
Le plon firent tot chaut es mains Fenice fondre.
Dieu pri de la en haut qu’en enfer les effondre.
Ja es ciex la amont *mesdisant* ne meindra;
ne croi que ja i mont, non, ja n’i ateindra.
Damediex les semont, qui molt les contreindra;
por l’anui que fet m’ont, de douleur les teindra” (vv. 71–80, emphasis mine)

Cruel *traitors* will transgress against Love,
and later they will be blamed for it, when they fall from the tower.
For all love is found wanting by *traitors*, no one can refute this.
They care for nothing except confounding lovers.
They poured molten lead, very hot, into Fenice’s hands.
I pray to God above that he melt them in hell.
No *bad mouth* will ever dwell in heaven above;
I do not believe that one is up there; no, none will ever get there.
God, who will hold them back, will reprimand them
for the trouble that they caused me. He will make them blanch in pain
(emphasis mine).

Before Cligés even states what happens, he twice names these actors *traitors* against Amors, and reminds us of their untimely end as a result of fall-

returns to life from the ashes just as the heroine of *Cligés*, Fenice, (whose name derives from the phoenix) returns to life after her false death.

17. All quotes come from Tibaut, 1984 and all translations are mine.

ing from the tower.¹⁸ In this short speech, they are only called traitors: the word *doctor* never appears. Cligés then explains how they strive to thwart love when they pour molten lead into the palms of the sleeping Fenice in an attempt to wake her.¹⁹ This episode highlights their shocking and cruel actions and the suffering that Fenice must endure for love. Cligés opines that for this treatment they deserve to burn in hell, they will never be admitted to heaven, and that God will punish them for causing him trouble.

Having read Cligés' description in the *Poire*, we understand that the silver liquid in the picture is the molten lead that Cligés describes. Thus, the illuminator depicts the specific details that Cligés describes in his speech, and the physicians are shown in all their evil glory. They carry out a cruel, despicable act, an image that strengthens the case Cligés makes in the *Poire*, that the doctors are vicious and should be punished by God. The upper illumination therefore assures the observer of the loyalty of their love and the lower one depicts Fenice's false death—a complex means of spinning a story, if there ever was one.

How does the speech in the *Poire* differ from Chrétien's romance *Cligés*? The reader is immediately thrown far into the story, for in the short *Poire* speech, Cligés provides no context for this scene. The extenuating circumstances that resulted in the actions of the doctors in *Cligés* are not mentioned—neither the fact that Alis, the husband from whom Fenice is attempting to escape by faking her death, had promised never to marry (so that the throne would eventually revert to Cligés, its rightful heir), nor the fact that Fenice was married against her will.²⁰

Further, in Chrétien's romance, the doctors contract a feudal alliance with Fenice's husband, Alis. This transpires when three heretofore unknown doctors arrive at court from Salerno. They hear the story of the current events, and then:

18. For an analysis that considers the speech in the *Poire* and other intertextualities such as the pear tree with *Cligés*, see Mühlethaler (2013, 91–93). He also includes discussion of the sacred and profane.
19. In this case, the Salenitian doctors carry out no medical activities whatsoever, but instead torture the patient in their attempt to prove that she is in fact alive.
20. As Peggy McCracken notes, Cligés in the *Poire* also omits the end of their love story (MCCracken 1998, 49).

Lors lor sovint de Salemon,
 Que sa fame tant le hai
 Que come morte le trahi (vv. 5802–04)²¹

The physicians then recalled Solomon, whose wife hated
 him so much that she deceived him by feigning death
 (158)²²

Thus, here, the *doctors accuse Fenice* of betrayal. In the crowded room where her corpse rests, one of the doctors manages to place his hands on Fenice's chest and side in order to determine that she is still breathing. He then promises that he will restore Fenice alive to Alis and that if he does not, the Emperor can kill or hang him (vv. 5829–30). Alis responds that “Se l'empererriz fet revivre, / Sor lui iert sire et comanderres” (vv. 5836–37), “If he restored the empress to life, he would be lord and commander over him” (159). Thus Alis contracts a feudal alliance with the physician from Salerno if the doctor returns Fenice to him.

Continuing in Chrétien's romance, Alis clears the hall of all those assembled so that the physicians can attempt to force Fenice to speak. In this version, Cligés was not present for most of the episode and is barely mentioned. Instead, a crowd of women who were observing the doctors storm the room and toss them out of the window just as the physicians prepare to ratchet up their torture by roasting Fenice on a spit. The head doctor will go to any length to help Alis in the situation in order to honor the feudal alliance he has made.

In summary then, in Chrétien's *Cligés*, the doctors provide the only interpretation of the situation, according to which *Fenice* is the traitor. In contrast, in the *Poire*, Cligés alone speaks, naming the doctors as traitors to Amors, sovereign lord of love, while his effort and his and Fenice's suffering in love are celebrated. In contrast to Chrétien's romance in which the doctors respond to what they perceive as Fenice's treason, in the *Poire*, Cligés offers a very different perspective on these events. Cligés names the doctors “traïteurs” or traitors who transgress against Amors (v. 71) and *mes-disants* or slanderers who impede love (v. 77). Cligés turns the tables when

21. All quotes come from Chrétien de Troyes, ed. Alexandre MICHA, 1975.

22. All translations from Chrétien de Troyes 1990. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner offers a trenchant analysis of Chrétien's appropriation of biblical, antique and romance sources (2008, 19–32).

he omits that they have accused Fenice of betrayal, while accusing *them* of treason. Cligés also prays to God that the doctors not be allowed in heaven, be burned in hell, and be punished for the pain that they have caused. The illumination crystallizes for the reader the brutal, treacherous behavior of the doctors that Fenice endures, locking it into the memory of the reader. In this case, Fenice's passivity enables her success: because she has been drugged and so does not feel pain, she is able to persevere. Through selective additions and omissions, Cligés manages appearances and foregrounds loyalty in love, while insisting that God will punish traitors in hell for these actions.

After Cligés's speech, we turn to find a full-page illumination showing, above, the *Poire* lover and his lady on a bench, as she places a ring in his hand and, below, the lovers embracing.²³ As with the previous paintings, it is accompanied by a twenty-line speech, this one from the *Poire* lover. He describes his attempts to win his lady: he sits beside her (v. 85), in spite of his enemies (v. 87), and notes that "m'a comme leaus fame cest anelet tranmis" (v. 88), "like a loyal lady, she gave me this ring". He is grateful for the ring, a traditional token of love, but nevertheless remains aware of the danger of the slanderers:

Se medisanz ne puissent mençonges encuidier,
qui les amorex cuisent et font de sens voidier!
Vers Amors ne me nuisent, je sai a souhaidier.
Mes trop nos amenuisent fausse gent par pledier (vv. 93–96)

If slanderers, who torment lovers and render them meaningless,
are unable to dream up lies,
they cannot harm me in the eyes of Love. I know this very well.
But these false people's arguing wearies us so.

Although the slanderers of the *Roman de la Poire* are not as brutal or extreme as those described by Cligés in the *Poire*, the lover of the *Poire* understands how they stymie love by telling lies and making false cases. The *Poire* lover therefore echoes the ideas on true love and loyalty and

23. Marie-Hélène Tesnière briefly analyzes those illuminations and text of the prologue that depict the lady with the lover in gestures of fealty such as the gift of the ring. Based on these, she describes the prologue as "a long oath of fidelity by the lover to his lady", (TESNIÈRE 1995, 67).

applies the lesson from Cligés's speech that the slanderers have the capacity to derail his plans for love, and that one must persevere in love in spite of them. Then the lover requests of his lady: "ne creez mesdisanz ne lor deleauté", (v. 98) "do not believe slanderers or their disloyalty". This brief assertion on the dangers of slanderers is followed by an intervention by none other than Tristan, perhaps the medieval lover *par excellence*.

Tristan and Iseut

The *Roman de la Poire* illumination of the Tristan episode has the same bipartite structure found in the two preceding images, one for Cligés (3v) and one for the poet/narrator and his lady (4v).

See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105065252/f14.image.r=fr%202186>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Française, ms. français 2186, carta 5v:
Tristan and Iseut

The painting at the top shows the lovers in conversation on a bench, touching each other, in poses similar to the lovers on benches in 3v (Cligés) and 4v (the poet/narrator). At the bottom, the lovers' eyes are closed, and they lean their heads on their hands; they are fully clothed with a sword between them. A strong ray of sunshine penetrates the foliage under which they sleep, and Mark holds up his glove to block it from reaching Iseut's face.

In the speech that opens on the facing page, Tristan introduces himself and his beloved, Iseut, and then describes their love:

Tele amor ne vit hom com de nos estre seut.
Cele amor a esté entre nos .II. veraie;
c'est bone leauté, ne ge ja senté n'aie
por quoi deslauté vers Yseut la Blonde aie.
Suens sui sanz fausseté, et ele est tote moie (vv. 104–08)

No man has ever seen a love such as the one we had grown used to.
This love between the two of us was true;
I had never before felt such good loyalty,
[but] it is why there was disloyalty towards Iseut la Blonde.
I am hers without falseness, and she is entirely mine.

Tristan claims a singular love apart from all others. He emphasizes that he and Iseut are model lovers: they share a reciprocal, true love and they show only loyalty to each other, never disloyalty. However, others are disloyal to Iseut for her actions. Like Cligés and the poet/narrator, Tristan also points out the challenges to love service that result from the slanderers: “Traître et losengier, qui molt font a blasmer, / devons nos estrangier: ge nes porroie amer” (vv. 117–18) “We should reject traitors and slanderers, who richly deserve blame; I could not love them”. In this way, Tristan explains how lovers should respond to anyone who spreads gossip and rumors against love.

In his speech, Tristan recounts an episode that is pivotal for understanding their love story, the moment when King Mark, Iseut’s husband, finds Tristan and Iseut in the forest, sleeping with a sword between them:

Amant sanz nul pareill summes, de ce me vant.
Bien en vit l'apareill li rois Mars, qui gisant
nos trova el vert fueill, sus l'herbe verdoiant,
quant le rai del soleill estoupa de son gant.
Alez estoit chacier en la forest ramee,
et ge, por solacier avec m'amie amee,
avoie fet drecier ceste loge, et fermee,
por ma dame embracier, qui reïne est clamee.
Seur nos vint, ce m'est vis, li rois, fust joie o dels,
et ge m'espee mis gesir entre nos deus;
puis tornames noz vis ireuz et angoisseus.
Einsi, ce vos plevis, nos vit li rois toz seus.
Grand joie en soi conçut li rois, n'en doutez mie,
quant l'espee aperçut entre moi et m'amie,
et dit trop le deçut celui par sa voidie
cui conseil il reçut par sa losangerie.
Li rois doz et plesanz ne se volt esmaier;
sor noz faces luisanz vit le soleill raier:
el trou qui n'ert pas granz ala son gant plaier,
puis s'en torna joianz sanz plus de delaier” (vv. 141–60, emphasis mine)

We are lovers without equal, I brag of it.
King Mark, who saw the arrangement very well,
found us lying in the green leaves on the verdant grass,
when he blocked the ray of sun with his glove.
He had gone hunting in the dense forest,

and I, in order to take pleasure with my beloved friend,
 had put up this shelter and enclosed it,
 so as to embrace my lady, who is proclaimed a queen.
 In my opinion, the king came upon us either in joy or sorrow,
 and I had placed my sword to lie between the two of us;
then we turned our angry and anguished faces [toward him].
 Like this, I swear to you, the king saw us, all alone.
 The king felt great joy swell in himself, don't doubt it at all,
 when he saw the sword between me and my friend,
 and he said that *he had been totally deceived by the dishonesty of
 the one whose lying, gossipy counsel [the king] had taken.*
 The gentle and charming king did not want to frighten us;
 he saw the sun shining on our faces:
 he placed his folded glove in the hole that wasn't very big,
 and, rejoicing, turned away without delay (emphasis mine).

In this intervention in the *Poire*, Tristan describes the events of Mark's interpretive dilemma upon finding the lovers asleep in the forest bower. Mark reacts with joy when he sees the sword between Tristan and Iseut. As a consequence, he places his glove to block a ray of sunlight that might disturb the sleepers. The illuminator painted the details that Tristan narrates, including the separated lovers appearing to sleep with the sword between them and Mark carefully placing the glove to prevent the ray of sun from shining on Iseut's face.

Tristan's explanation of events here differs greatly from that in the *Roman de Tristan* of Béroul (the only early romance version that still contains this episode in the Morrois Forest).²⁴ Béroul's *Tristan* is considerably longer with details not found in the *Poire*, including Mark's interactions with the forester who informed Mark of the couple's whereabouts (Béroul, 1989, vv. 1856–90). As we see in verses 155–56 above, in the *Poire*, Tristan does not name the individual, but identifies him as one who was dishonest and spoke injurious words.²⁵

24. Marchello-Nizia indicates a number of places where Tibaut differs from several *Tristan* versions including those of Béroul, Bédier's edition of Thomas, Gottfried of Strassburg, the Norse *Saga of Tristram and Isönd*, *Sir Tristrem*, and the *Folie d'Oxford*. She notes that the variations may come from Tibaut or from a lost version of *Tristan*. (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, 132–33).

25. In Béroul's text, the narrator curses the forester and foreshadows his death in vv. 1916–20.

Continuing in Bérout's text, Mark enters the bower intending to kill Tristan and Iseut, but he stops short when he sees their state. He speaks his interpretation out loud:

Bien puis croire, se je ai sens,
Se il s'amaset folement,
Ja n'i eüsent vestement,
Entré eus deus n'eüst espee,
Autrement fust cest' asenblee (vv. 2006–10)

It is reasonable to conclude that,
if they loved each other sinfully,
they would not be dressed,
and there would not be a sword between them.
They would be together in quite a different way!²⁶

Mark points out that they are clothed and that Tristan's sword lies between them. Bérout thus gives us not Tristan's but Mark's understanding of what he finds in the forest bower in contrast to the *Poire* where Tristan recounts the events from his perspective. In both versions, Mark's realization that the couple must be innocent leads him to spare their lives; he does no harm and then leaves. Tristan claims in verses 155–56 of the *Poire* that after Mark saw the sword and the clothed lovers and interprets these phenomena, he considers the information he had earlier received about Tristan and Iseut from an unnamed person to be lies (*voidie*) and slander (*losangerie*).²⁷ In contrast to the slanderer, Tristan says that King Mark is gentle and charming (v. 157).

Another crucial difference between the two versions is what the audience learns about how the scene comes about. In Bérout's work, Mark enters the bower, registers the vital details, and draws the conclusion we saw above; there is no mention of the placement of the sword or the arrangement of the sleepers. However, in the *Poire*, Tristan says he placed the sword between their bodies (vv. 149–50). In the following verse (151), Tristan explains that he and Iseut turned their angry and anguished faces toward Mark, or, in another possible translation, that they turned their

26. All quotes and translations from this work from Bérout 1989.

27. Marchello-Nizia reads this as Mark repenting from having believed slander, an example of the *Poire*'s overall emphasis on slander (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, 133).

faces to anger and anguish.²⁸ Tristan suggests not that they *were* angry and anguished, but that they wanted to appear that way to Mark. In other words, Tristan implies that he and Iseut carefully staged this scene; they managed appearances and influenced perceptions in order to shape Mark's reaction. Such an explanation never appears in Bérout's text.²⁹ In the *Poire*, therefore, Tristan admits openly that he manipulated Mark's interpretation of Tristan's relationship with Iseut in the service of love. Tristan states plainly that he built the forest bower to have a place to embrace Iseut. Thus he is betraying Mark: Tristan's allegiance is to Iseut and to Amors, and Tristan claims that God himself will side with the lovers.³⁰

In the *Roman de la Poire* then Tristan provides his own interpretations of events and in so doing, substantially changes the love story to reveal how he worked around the slanderers and gossips and shaped the perceptions of King Mark to ward off Mark's anger and accusations and enable Tristan to continue to love Iseut. He clearly explains how he set the scene to give the impressions he wanted; he therefore proffers an excellent model for how to work around slanderers and counter their claims. The lower illumination cements in the memory of the reader who fully engages with it Mark's action of placing the glove to block the ray of sun, an action that results from Tristan having carefully arranged the details in the scene to give the appearance that he and Iseut are not treasonous lovers. It is worth noting that the twelfth-century versions of the narratives of Cligés and Tristan already depend heavily on the management of appearances and swaying opinion of those around them; in the *Poire*, the characters who speak build upon and enhance the actions that contribute to forming observers' perceptions, intensifying a central theme of the earlier texts. After Tristan's speech, the reader turns the page to Pyramus and Thisbe in a full-page illumination.

28. Bérout's text is utterly silent about sleep or the possibility of bluffing at the point when Mark is the bower, although they are said to be asleep much earlier when the forester finds them.
29. Bérout does say that Tristan placed his sword between the two of them some two thousand verses earlier, when Tristan returns from hunting and they lie down to sleep (vv. 1805–06). The text contains different perspectives from the narrator, the forester, and King Mark in this episode and so generates its own multiple ambiguities.
30. This seems to happen later in Bérout's text when Iseut goes unpunished for swearing an oath about Tristan that follows the letter of the law completely but mocks its spirit.

Pyramus and Thisbe

Unlike the other two illuminations we have examined, the bipartite image with Pyramus and Thisbe does not include the lovers seated on a bench, but two images containing events from their story.

See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105065252/f18.image.r=fr%202186>

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Française, ms. français 2186, carta 7v:
Pyramus and Thisbe

The upper miniature depicts the lovers using a straw to communicate through a wall. The lower one contains the dead bodies of the lovers, pierced by Pyramus' sword, with a lion behind them, grasping a scarf in its mouth as it leaves the scene. The lion, the dead bodies, and the couple separated by the wall are the unmistakable clues that the images depict Pyramus and Thisbe, and the speech on the facing page confirms this interpretation: "Je qui sui Piramus por Tysbé me dement" (v 161). "I am Pyramus, who agonizes for Thisbe". He tells us that his youth has been devoted to love and then recounts part of their love story:

Noz peres, noz amis ce vilenie semble,
nos ont en cez tors mis, que ne parlons ensemble;
bien sunt nos *animis*, que ne sumes enseuple.
De fin corroz fremis quant a Tysbé n'assemble.
Li murs est granz et forz de cez tors, et fetiz;
ce n'est pas mes conforz que li arc sont voutiz.
Au percier granz efforz mis d'un cisel tretiz:
de c'est mes desconforz, que li tros est petiz.
Dedenz aboëter poons a molt grant peine,
ne n'i poons bouter fors ce tuël d'aveine (vv. 165–74, emphasis mine)

Our fathers, our friends—this seems discourteous—put us in this tower, so that we could not talk to each other. They are really our *enemies*, since we are not together. I tremble with righteous anger when I am not together with Thisbe. The wall of this tower is great, strong, and well made. It gives me no comfort that the arches are vaulted. I put great effort into piercing it with well-forged scissors. It grieves me that the hole is small. We can see each other through it only with great trouble. We can't push [anything] through except for this oat straw (emphasis mine).

Pyramus states that their parents, who ought to favor them, are enemies to love who prevent them from speaking to each other. Although this causes him great suffering, and the wall is a formidable obstacle, he nevertheless takes actions such as piercing the wall so that the lovers can communicate. Ovid includes this narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, and an anonymous tale appears in the twelfth century that more than doubles the length of Ovid's story though the addition of the God of Love, his interactions with the lovers and their interactions with each other.³¹ As with Cligés and Tristan, Pyramus of the *Poire* has changed his story in several ways.³²

The physical situation is the first difference one encounters between the twelfth-century anonymous *Pyrame et Thisbé* and the *Poire*. In *Pyrame et Thisbé*, the narrator describes the great suffering of Pyramus and Thisbe in love and explains that Thisbe (upon awaking from a dead faint caused by her pain) prays to God to grant them the ability to talk to each other. What separates them?

Prochain furent li dui palais
 Et en tele maniere fais
 C'une paroiz et uns murs seulz
 Estoit divise d'ambedeus (vv. 313–16)

The two palaces were adjoining, and made in such a way
 that a wall, and only one wall, divided the two of them.

They live in adjoining palaces with a common wall between them. In contrast, we saw in the quote above that Pyramus in the *Poire* claims that their fathers *imprisoned* them in a tower with a wall between them—a much more extreme measure than leaving them alone in their rooms. Like Cligés and Tristan, Pyramus in the *Poire* shapes perceptions, in this case by presenting a more difficult situation than the one in the twelfth-century text, and one that portrays the parents as more villainous. Turning to the illumina-

31. *Pyrame et Thisbé: Texte normand du XIIe siècle*. Ed., C. DE BOER 1968. See the discussion on the date (*Pyrame et Thisbé* 1968, 19–25). De Boer notes that the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was well known in the second half of the twelfth century (*Pyrame et Thisbé* 1968, 23). Jung points out similar lines between the twelfth-century version and the *Poire*, but also considers Ovidian influences (JUNG 1971, 314).
32. Marchello-Nizia lists these and, as with the Tristan versions, posits that the changes may either come from Tibaut or from another version (MARCHELLO-NIZIA 1984, 135–36).

tion again, we see that while a cursory observation suggested simply a *wall* between the two lovers, it is more likely a *tower* due to the round, crenellated top. Thus, it appears that the illuminator followed the words of the *Poire* exactly, depicting the tower of this more severe version instead of an ordinary wall.

Returning to *Pyrame et Thisbé*, the narrator describes their exploration of the wall:

La crevace n'ert gaires grans
Et fu celee par mout d'ans,
De ci qu'Amours la fist trouver,
Vers qui riens ne se puet celer.
Quel chose est ce qu'Amours ne sent?
Li dui amant premierement
Aperçurent icel pertus:
Primes Tisbé, puis Piramus (vv. 321–28)

The cleft wasn't big at all and had been hidden for many years, but even so, Love, from whom nothing can hide, made her find it. Is there anything that Love isn't aware of? The two lovers spied this little chink very fast, first Thisbe, then Pyramus.

The couple finds a hole in the wall that had been long hidden because Love inspires them to go beyond the obvious and then to use the crack in the wall to their advantage. In the *Poire*, on the other hand, Pyramus continues in his extreme vein when he declares that he used heavy-duty scissors to bore a hole through the wall. Again, he changes the story, adding details that mean he must expend great effort to overcome the physical obstacle that separates them.

Lastly, in *Pyrame et Thisbé*, the couple speaks to each other through the crack in the wall, while in the *Poire*, Pyramus explains that they used an oat straw. Once Pyramus has pierced the wall he says that nothing will go through the small hole, “for ce tuël d'aveine” (v. 174) “except this oat straw”. Pyramus concludes the *Poire* speech by explaining several benefits of the straw:

Molt m'en doi conforter, car la tres douce aleine
de Tysbé, sanz douter, en reçoif et aleine.
Tysbé tient l'un des chief del tuël en sa bouche;
ce n'est mie meschief, l'autre a la moie touche.

De ce vient le besiers qui les cuers nos entouche;
gries est li desirriers, que l'un l'autre n'aproe» (vv. 175–80)

I must take great comfort from it, because without a doubt
I receive and breathe the sweet breath of Thisbe.
Thisbe holds one end of the straw in her mouth;
this isn't misfortune, and the other touches mine.
From it come kisses that consume our hearts;
our desire is painful since we cannot approach one another.”

Not only does the straw link the two together, through it Pyramus can breathe Thisbe's breath and feel her kisses so that they have multiple means of connection despite all the attempts to ensure they have none.³³ This straw plays an important role in the *Poire*, but does not appear in *Pyrame et Thisbé*.

Further, the illustrator of the *Poire* emphasizes the straw in the upper drawing. The lovers each hold an end of the straw in their mouths and the illustrator highlights it in the illumination: he outlines a straw on either side of the tower crenellations, providing symmetry to the composition that is vividly split by the tower wall, and replicating the two bodies with the tower between them. Pyramus and the illustrator focus on the straw, each in his own medium: Pyramus uses words to describe how it enables them to connect while the artist draws the straw in multiple places. Thus the observer takes it in repeatedly, and so it sticks in one's memory. Pyramus's speech and the image work synergistically, combining to produce a whole greater than the sum of the parts that fixes in the mind of the reader how Pyramus and Thisbe do not waver or give up, but take resourceful action to express their love. In line with what we saw for the two earlier pairs of lovers, the reader sees immediately not only the obstacles to love that their enemies put in place, but how they prevail against those obstacles.

The lower image for Pyramus and Thisbe stands out from all the others in the prologue by showing the lovers' dead bodies. Pyramus says nothing of their fate in the twenty line speech. However, unlike with the other love stories that are barely mentioned in the remainder of the text, the poet/narrator returns to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the main body of the *Poire*. Sylvia Huot's analysis shows that this story in the prologue functions

33. Allen studies this sharing as an aspect of orality in the *Poire*, but also considers intertextualities such as from St. Augustine of Hippo (ALLEN 1998, 77–94).

as a performance of the narrative, while in the later verses (vv. 717–41), the poet/narrator identifies with their suffering (HUOT 1985, 104–05).³⁴

Following Pyramus and Thisbe come miniatures of preparation for a tournament, a discussion between the lover and the lady of this tournament against slanderers, and then a miniature of Paris and Helen. As discussed above, ms. A appears to have a cut leaf at this point (since it contains no lines on Paris and Helen) and ms. B has a different order for these sections. In spite of the fact that the verses appear in different arrangements in these manuscripts, they nevertheless link to the themes we have already observed. If the lovers from *Cligés* and the *Roman de Tristan* enhance acts that manage appearances and intervene to shape the perceptions they desire in the *Poire* prologue, Pyramus emphasizes his refusal to be stopped by obstacles and increases the effort and work he puts forth to respond to them. Pyramus thus counters his enemies with bold action, and Paris does this as well when he kidnaps Helen (v. 221 and v. 231). These last two examples emphasize taking action, responding, not giving up despite the difficulties, as the poet/narrator often hints that he might in the body of the text.

Yet, in the prologue, the poet/narrator does participate in the tournament against the slanderers—and he says that he defeats them: “Destruit sont mesdisant et veincu en l’estor”, (v. 217) “The slanderers are destroyed and vanquished in the battle”. Or perhaps not: for the slanderers and the dangers they represent reappear numerous times in the remainder of the text, another instance where more action seems to take place in the prologue than in the main body. The poet/narrator issues a final warning to his lady against slanderers just before the end of the work, calling them harmful and envious. One could argue that the poet/narrator’s inability to act on his love in the body of the text due to fear of slanderers (despite all the examples of lovers in the prologue who take action) indicates that the prologue was added later.³⁵ However, it is equally plausible that, although the poet/narrator receives encouragement and specific exempla he could use, he simply remains unable to apply the advice offered to him.

34. Huot also contrasts the images of Tristan and Iseut to that of Pyramus and Thisbe (HUOT 1987, 179–80).

35. Keller claims that the prologue speeches and the full-page miniatures were added later than the original composition of the romance (KELLER 1994, 213).

Conclusion

The *Poire* speeches of Cligés, Tristan and Pyramus focus on and respond to events in the romances about them that they never addressed in the texts from a century earlier. Tristan and Cligés highlight crucial moments of slanderers' attempts to thwart the lovers' desires that they deftly handled, while Pyramus describes the terrible situation of being imprisoned by one's parents and the great effort he undertook so as to communicate with Thisbe. Therefore, in the *Poire* romance, Cligés, Tristan and Pyramus offer new interpretations of the twelfth-century versions of their stories from their own perspectives, including changes that emphasize the actions against love by traitors, slanderers and enemies and how they responded by taking control of the situation and acting.

The full-page illuminations function as a laser, focusing the reader on a precise moment of a long narrative with specific details from the lover's speech. The illustrator (or perhaps the compiler who told him what to draw) clearly read and followed the speeches portraying the following: lovers on a bench (for both Cligés and Tristan); the doctors' cruel act of pouring molten lead into Fenice's palm; Mark placing his glove in the hole in the foliage through which the sun is shining, indicating that Mark rejects the gossip told him by a deceitful, dishonest courtier; Pyramus and Thisbe communicating through a straw; and the straw highlighted by the tower crenellations. The visuals serve as mnemonic aids to fix the protagonist's choice of episode from his love story and interpretation of it in the mind of the reader.

The illuminations combine synergistically with the facing-page speech of the protagonist/lover in order to provide models for responses to barriers to love, including slanderers, enemies and obstacles. By itself, neither image nor text would have the cumulative effect of the combination of the two to rework the story and to cement it in the mind of the reader as only a visual can; they form a rare combination in romance whose sum is greater than its parts. In each case, the lovers provide an object lesson in managing appearances and shaping influences in situations of gossip, slander or physical obstacles to love that the full-page illuminations of the prologue lock into the reader's memory. The notion of fixing the ideas from the *Poire* also ends the romance, for the last words of the poet/narrator before the explicit of the text are:

Saches, tant com durra cist mondes
 sera en bouche et en memore
 toz jors li *Romanz de la Poire* (vv. 3024–26)

Know that as long as this world endures
 in the mouth and in the memory always
 will be the *Romance of the Pear*.

These words conclude the work and simultaneously return us to the prologue, as they recall the prologue's special capacity to fix the stories told in the mind of an observer who hears the text and absorbs the images.

Appendix A: Contents of Prologue

↔ indicates facing pages

	1r: Historiated letter, poet/narrator tells of love, 20 verses
1v: Illumination: God Love, Amors, above ↔ shooting couple, below, with arrow	2r: Speech of Amors, 20 verses
2v: Illumination: Fortune and wheel ↔	3r: Speech of Fortune, 20 verses
3v: Illumination: Cligés and Fenice on bench, ↔ above, Fenice and physicians, below	4r: Speech of Cligés, 20 verses
4v: Illumination: Beloved gives ring above, ↔ couple embraces below	5r: Poet/narrator on love and ring, 20 verses
5v: Illumination: Tristan and Iseut on bench above, ↔ discovered by Mark in the forest, below	6r: Tristan begins speech, 20 verses
6v: Tristan continues speech, 20 verses ↔	7r: Tristan completes speech, 20 verses
7v: Illumination: Pyramus and Thisbe ↔ communicating with a straw above; dead bodies of Pyramus and Thisbe with lion, below	8r: Speech of Pyramus, 20 verses
8v: Illumination: Beloved gives lover a scarf ↔ above; lover prepares for tournament, below	9r: Poet/narrator on tournament, 20 verses
9v: Illumination: Paris and Helen in boat above, ↔ outside city below	10r: Poet/narrator more on tournament, 20 verses (Omitted: Paris and Helen story)
10v: Last full-page illumination: Poet/narrator ↔ presents the romance to the beloved	11r: Other prefatory remarks begin

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