Fortune's Faces is, in some ways, a difficult book to review, because it is not really written by a medievalist. This is in no way a criticism, for Heller-Roazen is in fact a highly skilled comparatist of a kind only rarely seen nowadays: he is comfortable in a range of vernacular and classical languages, and committed to unraveling the tangled relationship of philosophy and poetics rather than simply excavating a dusty corner of medieval culture. Heller-Roazen is probably best known for his intelligent translations of the work of Giorgio Agamben, but he has also written on subjects as diverse as the great library at Alexandria and aphasia in literature. His wide range of expertise, encompassing several languages and humanistic disciplines, truly makes him what used to be called a "Renaissance man," with the added dimension of his engagement with the political as well as the philosophical.

It is necessary to have some sense of Heller-Roazen's scholarly perspective in order to assess the very real merits of Fortune's Faces. If the reader is looking for a reading of the Roman de la Rose in the context of the intellectual history of late thirteenth-century Paris, the book will disappoint. If, however, the reader is looking for a provocative, ambitious study of the very notion of contingency itself, explored through the medium of one of the masterworks of medieval vernacular literature, she will be well rewarded. This distinction helps to explain why, for example, the discussion of contingency in classical philosophy frequently makes recourse to the original Greek vocabulary of Aristotle. If the focus of the study is Jean de Meun's intellectual context, the Greek text is of little importance, since the Physics as it was known in thirteenth-century Paris was a Latin text based on an Arabic intermediary. If the focus of the study is contingency itself, however, explored in a range of cultural milieux, the frequent quotation of Greek texts is perfectly logical.

Heller-Roazen is most successful in his discussion of the personification of Fortune, the "contingent figure" who "embod[i]es the radical indeterminacy and 'in-distinction' that defines the nature of contingency" (63). The third chapter of Fortune's Faces includes close readings of the Roman de la Rose in tandem with Jean de Meun's translation of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. This allows Heller-Roazen to explicate both Jean's rendition of the Boethian philosophy of contingency in his Boccaccio (71-75), and his expression of the poetics of contingency in the Rose. As a study of the manifestation of contingency through personification, the chapter works extremely well; yet one longs to find reference to the rich commentary tradition of the twelfth century, especially the influential glosses on Boethius by William of Conches, rather than the less directly relevant writings of Peter Abelard (75-76). It is sometimes frustrating to see Heller-Roazen's sophisticated understanding of complex developments in philosophical thought devoted to figures whose writings were extremely unlikely to have been known to Jean de Meun, such as (for example) Thomas Aquinas. Heller-Roazen justifies his discussion of contingency in Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's Physics by identifying it as representative of "the academic intellectual life of late-thirteenth-century Paris" (78). Surely more germane to an understanding of Jean de Meun's Paris, however, would be the assessments of Aristotle's Physics found in the writings of Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, both of whom lectured in the arts faculty at Paris in the 1240s.

One of the most provocative consequences of Heller-Roazen's study of contingency is the reassessment it leads him to make of the relationship of the two parts of the Roman de Rose, begun by Guillaume de Lorris in the 1230s and continued by Jean de Meun in the 1260s. Throughout much of the twentieth century, scholars tended to see the two parts of the poem as fundamentally unified in aim and authorial perspective. Beginning in the 1970s, however, readings of the poem began to emerge which emphasized the disjunction between the meditation on narcissism central to Guillaume's poem and the celebratory poetics of fertility--both carnal and literary--which are the thrust of Jean's continuation. Heller-Roazen turns back the clock, as it were, proposing that the narrator of the poem is indeed unified, expressive of the authorial intention of both poets: the speaker is "a poetic self that does not coincide with itself," the "contingent subject" who is always "someone other than himself" (62). This construction of a paradoxical subjectivity allows Heller-Roazen to neatly skirt any apparent contradictions or discrepancies separating the work of Guillaume from that of Jean. He supports this interpretation with an elegant and deft reading of the so-called "mid-point passage" of the Rose where Jean explicitly draws attention to the sutures that link the poem's beginning to its continuation. In Heller-Roazen's words, this passage "stages a double movement in which the speaker 'articulates his infinite noncoincidence with himself'" (53).

The book's final chapter, "The Knowledge of Contingency," focuses on the famously diffuse and digressive discourse of Nature in the Roman de la Rose. Heller-Roazen argues that the "mirouers pardurables" or eternal mirror of God, in which he sees all things in the eternal present of perfect foreknowledge, is "a figural presentation of a classical philosophical metaphor for the relation between divine eternity and human temporality: a circle whose center, God, is equally present in each point of its circumference, time" (128). Heller-Roazen is absolutely right, in my opinion, to see an integral connection between the mirror and the famous trope of the intelligible sphere; he is too quick, however, to represent the relationship between the two as one of equivalence, one a "figural presentation," the other "a philosophical metaphor" (128). What we have here is two figures of speech, two metaphors, whose relationship is less one of equivalence than of intellectual kinship. The precise nature of their relationship might be profitably explicated with reference to the three-
fold mirror held by Reason in the Anticlaudianus of Alanus de Insulis, the same Alanus whose Sermon on the Intelligible Sphere is one of the most important explorations of this "philosophical metaphor" produced during the high Middle Ages. Heller-Roazen makes reference to Jean's use of the Anticlaudianus elsewhere (91), making the neglect of Reason's three-fold mirror all the more surprising.

Fortune's Faces is a slim volume, scrupulously edited and beautifully produced. In it, Heller-Roazen elegantly fulfills his stated purpose: to illustrate, through the case of the Roman de la Rose, "the very accidentality, indeterminacy, and indefiniteness--the contingency--of poetic language as such" (94). This book integrates philosophical and theoretical sophistication of a very high order with sensitive readings of some of the most important poetry of the Middle Ages. Even if Fortune's Faces leaves the reader hungry for a more detailed excavation of the intellectual environment of late thirteenth-century Paris, it nonetheless provides a satisfying taste of a more varied feast of literary and philosophical history.

Daniel Heller-Roazen is a professor of comparative literature whose primary areas of research interest include poetics, medieval studies, and the history of philosophy. Among his scholarly texts is Fortune's Faces: "The Roman de la Rose" and the Poetics of Contingency, in which he examines the philosophical nature of the Roman de la Rose in an attempt to illustrate a form of coherence. "Heller-Roazen rigorously ransacks literature, history, linguistics, theology, and psychoanalytic theory for examples, or echoes as it were, of language: its birth, evolution, destruction, and eventual—and seemingly regenerative—forgetting," according to Alan Sondheim in the American Book Review. Biographical and critical sources: Periodicals. Heller-Roazen, Daniel. Year: 2000. Language: English. The file will be sent to selected email address. It may takes up to 1-5 minutes before you received it. The file will be sent to your Kindle account. It may takes up to 1-5 minutes before you received it. Please note you've to add our email mailer@bookmail.org to approved e-mail addresses. Read more. Ebook Faces Of Fortune 2 Download Rating 4 and suggested Read by user 548 Online last modified December 9, 2018, 1:50 pm find as text or pdf and doc document for Faces Of Fortune 2. by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Difficulties To Modern Critics, Who Have Viewed Its Many Interruptions And Philosophical Discussions As