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### Splitting Hairs: The Creation and Dissolution of Boundaries in Thirteenth-Century French Literature

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Splitting Hairs: The Creation and Dissolution of Boundaries in  
Thirteenth-Century French Literature

by

Cassidy Devon Thompson

A dissertation presented to  
The Graduate School  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Cassidy Devon Thompson

*Washington University in St. Louis*

*May 2018*

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Splitting Hairs: The Creation and Dissolution of Boundaries in

Thirteenth-Century French Literature

by

Cassidy Devon Thompson

Doctor of Philosophy in French Language and Literature

Washington University in St. Louis, 2018

Professor Julie Singer, Chair

Medieval authors often blur the boundaries between humans and animals in their works. In “Splitting Hairs: The Creation and Dissolution of Boundaries in Thirteenth-Century French Literature,” I study how medieval authors dehumanize people by inscribing bestial traits onto the human body via hair and hairiness in order to interrogate acts of self-definition, religious practices, social identity, and gender roles. The work examines a wide variety of literary and nonliterary texts of the thirteenth century including encyclopedias, medical treatises, hagiographies, romances, satirical poetry, and fabliaux. I explore how and why authors use the visibility, malleability, and shared human and animal quality of hair to blur boundaries between species. I argue that because hair encodes social meaning such as adherence to religious orders, marital status, or wealth, examining the context under which such manipulations occur will reveal an interrogation of larger socio-cultural questions of religion, social class, and gender.

Chapter one studies Bartholomaeus Anglicus’ *De proprietatibus rerum* and Aldebrandin de Sienne’s *Regime du corps* to show how medieval intellectuals defined hair in scientific discourse and how it troubled human acts of self-definition. The chapter concludes by illustrating



how these intellectual concerns surrounding hair question the nature of the protagonists as male or female, human or beast, in Heldris de Cornouaille's contemporaneous romance the *Roman de Silence*. The second chapter shows how animal traits can be written on the saint's body through abnormal hair growth in Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* and the anonymous *Robert le Diable*. The animal presence in these texts creates a devotional space for wild saints which questions whether sacred pursuits are compatible with life in society. Chapter three examines how animal hides blur the boundary between humans and animals in *Guillaume de Palerne*, and how the transformation of these hides into clothing via human *engien*, or ingenuity, both reinforces noble identity and sovereignty, and questions the innateness of that identity. Finally, chapter four studies how Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, the anonymous *Dit des cornetes*, and the fabliau *Tresces* inscribe animal traits onto women's styled hair to dehumanize them. Poets use this animal discourse either as a justification for male domination of women, or as a means for women to play a more active role in love pursuits, thereby dominating men.

This work shows that even a subtle, linguistic animal presence in medieval works can reflect a changing society. By studying how thirteenth-century French authors use hair to impose bestial traits on human characters, this work demonstrates how texts which are sometimes dismissed as frivolous, moralistic, or misogynistic, in fact engage deeply in the broader religious, political, and social discourses of the thirteenth century.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between humans and animals is often ambiguous, especially in literature of the Middle Ages. For many medieval thinkers humans were both linked to the animal kingdom as mammals and part of God's terrestrial creation, and separated from the beasts as a result of their intellect and some distinct physical features. Medieval intellectuals occasionally defined humans in relation to animals because it can prove easier to define something by referring to what it is not. This act of self-definition usually involved comparing and contrasting human and animal behavior. Humans moved toward or away from animals depending on the desirability of the behavior or quality in question: positive qualities such as self-control and use of logic distanced humans from animals while negative ones such as violence or lust brought them closer together. Thus, certain characteristics remained "human" and positive, while others, usually considered excessive, became more "animal" and negative. Medieval literature often articulated the human/animal relationship in terms of behavior: antagonists indulge in their bestial qualities while the hero is or becomes a model of self-control and moderation. Some authors, however, manipulated this relationship in more literal ways. Humans may find physical animal features inscribed or merged onto their body: a woman's hair can look like animal horns, clothing can be exchanged for animal hides, and animal fur can cover smooth human flesh.

This dissertation focuses primarily on these physical markers that bring humans into proximity with animals in medieval French literature. Specifically, it explores how medieval authors dehumanize people by inscribing bestial traits onto human hair, or animal hairiness onto the human body, in order to interrogate religious practices, social identity, gender roles, and acts of self-definition in a wide variety of texts, including encyclopedias, saints' lives, romances, and

satirical poetry. All mammals have hair, and since it is visible, malleable, and shared by both humans and animals, thirteenth-century authors manipulate it as a means to bring their protagonists either closer to the human/animal boundary or farther from it. The thirteenth century witnessed radical changes in systems of education, religion, feudal order, and marriage. In this project, I argue that because hair encodes marital, social, and religious status, examining the contexts in which authors use it to blur the human/animal boundary will reveal an interrogation of the period's changing social dynamics.

Throughout this dissertation I ask when human hair becomes animal-like, and conversely, when and how wearing animal fur becomes human. I will look at how authors write animal characteristics onto human hair when it grows too long or when women excessively manipulate it. In this project, though I study human/animal interactions, I do not examine tales of metamorphosis. For the most part, the humans in these stories never turn into animals; though they begin to look and sometimes act like animals, they remain unquestionably human. Unlike the growth of wings, snouts, or fangs, authors can manipulate the growth and styling of hair in order to bring humans to the edge of humanity without pushing them over it. This insistence on the human carries over into an exploration of the social, economic, and religious contexts which provoke this boundary blurring. Though this work studies humans and animals, it is primarily concerned with what the relationships among the species can teach modern readers about medieval people because, often, when humans begin to look and act like animals in these thirteenth-century texts, the context can be traced to a significant change in a contemporaneous socio-economic boundary. The boundaries studied in this project, those between humans and animals or social classes, for example, resemble the boundaries examined by Jacques Derrida in

*L'Animal que donc je suis*.<sup>1</sup> That is, they are rarely stable and are indefinable. Such boundaries should be approached from a variety of angles. Some thirteenth-century authors use hair and hairiness, objects or concepts that likewise possess an ambiguous and unstable meaning, to connect the human to the animal, in order to insert their texts in larger discourses of women's sexuality, noble sovereignty, religious practices of devotion, and self-definition.

## **A Hairy Discourse**

Hair has a marginal status: it is both dead and alive, and a detachable part of the normally indivisible body. Using hair as a starting point for an exploration of the superficiality of cultural normativity, the novelist Siri Hustvedt notes that "hair is not a body part so much as a lifeless extension of a body. Although the bulb of the follicle is alive, the hair shaft is dead and insensible, which allows for its multiple manipulations."<sup>2</sup> The marginality of hair becomes evident most especially once removed from the body. Attached to the head, hair is attractive and can be fashioned. Found in a bathroom drain or on a piece of food, however, hair becomes refuse and a source of disgust, while wigs, off the wearer, seem uncanny or objectionable. Hair occupies a space both inside and outside the body. Although manifest on the exterior, hair follicles grow beneath the epidermis of the skin and carry our mitochondrial DNA. Hair thus becomes a tool rendering visible part of our internal makeup. Since it can be painlessly removed, hair possesses an object-like quality that makes it similar to finger or toenails. Unlike nails, however, hair is generally considered more intimate and personal. Lovers may exchange locks of hair before a period of separation, causing it to function as an extension or substitute of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, *L'Animal que donc je suis*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilee, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Siri Hustvedt, *Women Looking at Men Looking at Women: Essays on Art, Sex, and the Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 52.

beloved. The voluntary and sometimes forceful removal of hair also emphasizes its replaceability. Anyone who has fallen victim to a bad haircut has undoubtedly been reassured that it will grow back.

Hair grows most visibly on the human head and frames the face, the most expressive part of the body, which often determines the way we interact with others. For Hustvedt, hair becomes a “speechless social messenger.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, anyone preparing for a date or an interview becomes all too aware of the subtle messages hair can send, how it can affect interactions with others, and its power to make a lasting impression. Hair is easily manipulated and can function as a defining feature of one’s identity. Long, flowing hair and beards in the 1960s, for example, signified adherence to the countercultural hippie movement, and a rebellion against the clean-cut working men or soldiers of contemporaneous and previous generations.<sup>4</sup> The social meaning assigned to hair in that context, however, was arbitrary because long hair has possessed a variety of meanings at different times and in different places throughout history. The Merovingian kings of the early Middle Ages, for example, wore their hair long as a symbol of their nobility, authority, and elite status in opposition to their short-haired subjects.<sup>5</sup>

An essential aspect of the marginality of hair lies in its connection with animals. Hair is part of the definition of a mammal, but differences nonetheless exist between humans and other mammals. On humans, hair primarily grows on the head and face, while on other mammals a comparatively thick coat of hair covers most of the body. Animal hair serves a purpose in keeping them warm and protecting them from the elements. By the Middle Ages, hair had

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<sup>3</sup> Hustvedt, *Women Looking at Men*, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Drew D. Johnson and Julie L. Carnagie, eds., “Long Hair for Men,” vol. 5 of *Fashion, Costume, and Culture: Clothing, Headwear, Body Decorations, and Footwear through the Ages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Detroit: UXL, 2013); Mark Harris, “The Flowering of the Hippies,” *The Atlantic*, September 1967, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1967/09/the-flowering-of-the-hippies/306619/>.

<sup>5</sup> Erik Goosmann, “The Long-haired Kings of the Franks: ‘Like so many Samsons?’” *Early Medieval Europe* 20, no. 3 (2012).

undoubtedly lost much of its utility. Although head hair may insulate the head, hats and other articles of clothing had certainly rendered null any such practical purpose of hair.<sup>6</sup> In English and Modern French this distinction between human and animal hair exists at a linguistic level given the tendency to refer to human hair, or “cheveux,” but animal fur, or “poils.” Verbal ambiguity can also arise when people, usually men, become “too” hairy. Everyday parlance refers to them as wild or hairy beasts. Similarly, in medieval literature humans whose hair became too copious were referred to as wild men and likened to beasts, raising the question: how hairy is too hairy?

The ambiguous status of hair serves both to connect and to distance humans from other mammals. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example, defines hair as:

1. a. One of the numerous fine and generally cylindrical filaments that grow from the skin or integument of animals, esp. of most mammals, of which they form the characteristic coat; [...]

2. *collect.* a. The aggregate of hairs growing on the skin of an animal: spec. that growing naturally upon the human head; [...]<sup>7</sup>

The first definition describes hair as belonging to mammals, of which humans represent but one exemplum. The second definition of hair as a collective noun, however, singles out human head hair, implying, at least linguistically, a distinction from the previously described hair growing from the skin of animals. These two definitions thus exemplify how hair can simultaneously connect and separate humans from other mammals through the distinctly human manifestation of head hair. A similar duality marks the definition of hair in medieval encyclopedias. Medieval encyclopedists such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus emphasize how hair grows on all animals that

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<sup>6</sup> Several medieval medical and encyclopedic texts nevertheless continued to insist on hair's role in defending the head and brain from drafts.

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (Online), 2nd ed., s.v. “hair.” The *OED* includes these definitions among others.

beget other animals, including men.<sup>8</sup> For medieval intellectuals like Bartholomaeus, the belief that the four humors govern all animate bodies strengthened the similarity of all mammalian hair. Despite the structural similarities between human and animal hair, Bartholomaeus nevertheless differentiated human head hair from all other by including a second chapter on hair dedicated exclusively to this distinctly human manifestation of it.

Since hair represents a commonality between humans and animals, it carries a symbolic richness shared by few other parts of the body. Medieval and modern writers and audiences alike often associate excessive hairiness and hairy people with animals or endow such people with characteristics typically attributed to animals. In the Middle Ages, for example, animals were often associated with unbridled sexuality and strength.<sup>9</sup> Through the shared nature of hair, medieval thinkers attributed these characteristics to hairy humans such as wild men, mythical creatures described as covered in hair from head to toe. They lived in the forest in close proximity to the animals they resembled and were notoriously more lustful and stronger than their civilized, smooth-skinned counterparts. On a lesser scale, a man with a full beard and a hairy chest or arms was usually described as virile and strong.<sup>10</sup> Even something as distinctly human as styled hair, especially women's hair, could be criticized by moralists and negatively associated with animals. To debase their wearers, some medieval texts compared various women's hair styles to goat, ram, or unicorn horns.

The distinctly human behavior of manipulating and styling hair renders it an intriguing boundary marker. Since hair is a particularly malleable body part it became a common marker of

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<sup>8</sup> Hair grows on the body of "animalium generantium animalia" (V. 65; beasts that beget beasts). Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, ed. Wolfgang Richerum (1601; repr., Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964). Unless otherwise noted, English translations are my own.

<sup>9</sup> See Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 61-80.

<sup>10</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, V.15.

social boundaries in the Middle Ages. Married women wore their hair covered and bound, while young, unmarried girls wore theirs long and flowing. In some places, long hair could connote high birth while short hair a servant's status.<sup>11</sup> Monks tonsured their hair as a visible marker of their separation from the society of man and devotion to God. In addition to these more permanent social markers, hair could denote temporary boundaries. Hair removal was a sign of penance for both clerics and lay people in the Middle Ages. Pulling hair out or tearing it was a common literary motif marking a time of mourning. For women especially, the fairly well-documented practice of unloosing hair at the death of close kin marked a temporary suspension of normal social rules.<sup>12</sup> The ease and convenience with which hair could create social boundaries meant that these same boundaries could be falsified, manipulated, or mocked. In medieval literature, for example, knights such as Tristan tonsured themselves in order to feign outsider status, conceal identity, and gain access to their lady love. Women like Silence of the *Roman de Silence* could keep their hair cut short in order to impersonate men and protect family heritage. In branch three of the *Roman de Renart*, the fox tonsures the wolf Isengrin as a means to subject him to a painful lesson. Though its visibility and malleability make it a convenient boundary marker, these same characteristics make the boundary subject to easy modification.

The potentially deceptive nature of hair makes it quite similar to clothing. Scholars including E. Jane Burns have explored how clothing becomes an integral part of social identity, showing how alterations to the sartorial body permit protagonists to cross social boundaries of class, rank, and gender.<sup>13</sup> Like rich garments, blond hair, elegant hairstyles, and accessories for

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994): 44-45.

<sup>12</sup> Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair," 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).



women signified nobility in medieval literature. Both hair and clothing could likewise be treated as removable and manipulable objects in order to cross the very boundaries they represented. Jean de Meun's Malebouche infamously states to the barons assembled by the God of Love, "Li abiz ne fait pas le moine" (v. 11062; the habit does not make the monk).<sup>14</sup> It seems that Malebouche could have substituted the tonsure for the habit without significantly altering the adage.

Additionally, both hair and clothing were commodities. Although clothing clearly had a more commercial status than human hair (there was, however, a demand for the hair of dead women to increase the volume of elaborate hairstyles in the latter half of the thirteenth century), animal fur was an important commodity in the Middle Ages precisely because it lined medieval garments. Medieval people lined their clothing with the *poils* of an animal, a term that refers both to an animal's fur but also to the animal hides bought and sold by furriers. Unlike modern uses of animal fur on clothing, fur linings of medieval garments were located on the inside with the fur facing inward and became important markers of social standing. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries nobles prized the light-colored fur linings of the ermine weasel, native of Russia, while later centuries preferred the dark-furred sable. These pelts came from relatively long distances and were so small it could take hundreds to line the inside of a large mantel, making the garment expensive and sought after by members of the nobility and wealthier upper bourgeois classes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. Armand Strubel (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992). English translation from *The Romance of the Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun*, 3rd edition, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Marie Christine Pouchelles describes how a *houppelande*, a large mantle popular in the fourteenth century, could be lined with up to 500 sables. Marie-Christine Pouchelle, "Des peaux de bêtes et des fourrures. Histoire médiévale d'une fascination," *Le Temps de la réflexion* 2 (1981): 406.

No matter how costly the fur, these linings remained on the inside of garments, only occasionally visible at the edges and cuffs. The medieval distaste for wearing fur on the outside of garments may have risen from the symbolic ties of hair to animals. Wearing animal hides on the outside of clothing could serve to remind viewers of the connection between humans and animals. Only the poorest classes, the *vilains*, who, for some, were closer to animals than nobles, wore furs on the outside of their garments, as exemplified by the wild herdsman in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*:

Vestus de robe si estrange  
Qu'il n'i avoit ne lin ne lange,  
Ains eut a son col atachiés  
Deux cuirs de nouvel escorchiés,  
De .ii. toriaus ou de .ii. bués. (vv. 307-11)<sup>16</sup>

[He was dressed in very strange clothing / made of neither cotton nor wool. / Attached to his neck he wore / two newly-skinned hides / from either two bulls or two oxen.]

Unlike the noble knight Calogrenant, the herdsman wears neither linen nor wool but freshly skinned animal hides on the outside of his clothing, a detail that strengthens his resemblance with the animals he keeps. Noblemen and women wore animal skins on the inside of their garments not only for warmth, but to symbolize their domination of their more bestial nature, contrasting with the uncivilized peasants who lived and worked in closer proximity to animals.

Though clothing and hair could serve similar social functions, the symbolic location and nature of animal furs on medieval clothing exemplifies the principal difference between the two. Despite the integral role a knight's armor or a woman's rich garments play in the creation of their identity; clothing nevertheless remains an addition to the body. Hair represents an integral

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<sup>16</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier au lion ou le roman d'Yvain*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994). My translation.

part of the human or animal body, organic in a way that clothing can never be.<sup>17</sup> Although both become encoded with meaning, hair is connected to a person's inner being both because it originates within the body and because it could be read to determine a person's temperament. The science of physiognomy, popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, scrutinized external physical features as a means of determining a person's character. The head was the seat of reason where human intelligence becomes the most evident, and practitioners of physiognomy scrutinized all features associated with the head and face. Medieval scientific treatises additionally posited hair growth, texture, and even color as a reflection of one's humoral make-up; thus, head hair in particular represented a direct link to one's inner being. If hair suddenly changed or grew irregularly, one could reasonably interpret it as an outward sign of a significant change in internal make-up. To complicate issues further, in the Middle Ages as today, there existed many different recipes for changing one's appearance, including hair. Such information was sometimes included alongside physiognomic treatises. The malleability of this highly visible and interpretively-loaded body part therefore makes it difficult to know how to interpret hair.

The marginal status of hair that exists both inside and outside the body, its malleability, its role in both maintaining and undermining social boundaries, and its presence on both humans and animals, makes it an important element to consider when studying medieval boundaries. Boundaries rarely remain stable, and socio-economic changes in the thirteenth century create a rich literary environment in which to question new and established norms. Whether these boundaries pertain to species (human/animal), individuals (interior/exterior), or members of society (noble/bourgeois/peasant), they are constantly revised and reconstructed, and often

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<sup>17</sup> One notable exception is the giant that young King Arthur defeats in the late fifteenth-century *Conte du papegau*. This giant knight from the sea has arms and clothing that are actually a part of his monstrous body. See Peggy McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 19-27.

highly unstable. Hair, as a body part easily manipulated and with little inherent meaning or purpose, becomes a useful tool for studying how medieval authors perceived the changing world around them.<sup>18</sup>

### **Derrida and *L'Animal que donc je suis***

My reading of boundaries draws inspiration from a series of lectures about animals delivered by Jacques Derrida at a 1997 conference, posthumously published in 2006 under the title *L'Animal que donc je suis*.<sup>19</sup> Throughout these lectures, Derrida worked to destabilize the boundary between humans and animals in a way that forces us to reconsider both human treatment of animals and the existence of a stable division between humans and animals. Such a division, he argues, has marked rational philosophical thought from Descartes to Lacan. Derrida fittingly begins his destabilization of the boundary by subverting the Cartesian maxim, “Je pense donc je suis,” in his title. Derrida replaces the *logos*, the “je pense” that defines humanity, with “the animal,” giving the translation “The (human) animal that therefore I am.” He thereby introduces an animal presence directly into the heart of rational thought, the characteristic that many philosophers posit as *the* factor separating humans from animals. Derrida also plays with the notion of replacing the Cartesian “I am” with its French homonym “I follow” (both rendered in French as *je suis*). In doing so, he infuses Descartes’s timeless act of self-definition (presumably, humans have, do, and will always think) with temporality. The alternate

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<sup>18</sup> Roger Bartlett notes the ambiguous nature of hair as a signifier in the public display of one’s penitent state, showing that penitence could be demonstrated either through the removal of hair or by allowing it to grow long. He situates hair as a variable signifier within a system of oppositions that constantly fluctuates. Though the existence of a boundary between a state of penitence and the quotidian clearly exists, the boundary itself is multi-faceted. Bartlett, “Symbolic Meanings of Hair,” 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> *L'Animal que donc je suis* is the title Derrida gave to his introduction, which was initially published in the 1999 conference proceedings. Marie-Louise Mallet, Avant-propos to *L'Animal que donc je suis*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilee, 2006), 9.

translation, “The (nonhuman) animal that therefore I follow,” challenges the very notion of an atemporal characteristic such as rational thought that distinguishes humans from animals.

Derrida interprets humans as chronologically following animals in his interpretation of Genesis 1 where God creates humans after the animals. An additional reason for placing humans after animals comes from Derrida’s interpretation of Genesis 2 when God brings the animals before the first man. Adam only realizes what he is and is not through studying the animals, none of which represent a suitable partner. Derrida’s title thus represents the first of several disruptions of the human/animal dichotomy. He places humans in proximity with animals as the Cartesian “I” becomes an animal following the animals.

A destabilized human/animal opposition allows Derrida to explore the relationship between humans and animals in a variety of ways. While he does not repudiate the boundary altogether, since doing so would contradict logic and be foolish, “une bêtise,” he repeatedly repudiates the existence of a deciding factor that separates humans from animals.<sup>20</sup> Instead, Derrida postulates an abyssal and multi-faceted dividing line between humans and animals that multiplies every time humans try to define it:

La discussion mérite de commencer quand il s’agit de déterminer le nombre, la forme, le sens, la structure et l’épaisseur feuilletée de cette limite abyssale, de ces bordures, de cette frontière plurielle et surpliée. La discussion devient intéressante quand, au lieu de se demander s’il y a ou non une limite discontinuante, on cherche à penser ce que devient une limite quand elle est abyssale, quand la frontière ne forme pas une seule ligne indivisible mais plus d’une ligne en abîme ; et quand, par conséquent, elle ne se laisse plus tracer, ni objectiver, ni compter comme une et indivisible. Que sont les bords d’une limite qui croît et se multiplie à se nourrir d’abîme?<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Derrida, *L’Animal que donc je suis*, 52, 65.

<sup>21</sup> Derrida, *L’Animal que donc je suis*, 52-53.

The destabilization and multiplication of a binary characterized by the perpetual need to separate one side from the other opens many possibilities for studying complex relationships between human and nonhuman animals. Commenting on the abyssal boundary, Karl Steel notes that Derrida “[transforms] the simple binary of human and animal into an a- (rather than anthropo-) centric network of relations in which humans would be one node among many.”<sup>22</sup> Such a move allows the focus to shift from separating humans from animals to seeing the complex relationships humans have with a variety of animals.

Derrida draws several conclusions from the move from a two-sided dividing line to an infinitely-sided one. First, he signals the inappropriateness of using the singular term “the animal” to refer to the many living beings that exist on the other side of the multi-faceted divide. Derrida asserts that the singular “animal” is a term humans give themselves the right to use in order to emphasize their superiority and eliminate distinctions among the animals: “comme si tous les vivants non humains pouvaient être regroupés dans le sens commun de ce ‘lieu commun,’ l’Animal, quelles que soient les différences abyssales et les limites structurelles qui séparent, dans l’essence même de leur être, tous les ‘animaux.’”<sup>23</sup> He therefore coins the neologism “l’animot” to evoke plurality in the singular form (the term is singular; however, it is a homonym of the plural French noun *animaux*). Derrida therefore encourages his audience to consider the beings on the other side of the divide as individuals with unique relationships to humans and other animals. Derrida’s neologism also emphasizes the word itself, “le mot.” Authorities over many centuries have cited speech, and by extension the ability to name, as the trait that humans possess and animals lack. By placing “the word” within “l’animot,” Derrida

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<sup>22</sup> Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Derrida, *L’animal que donc je suis*, 52.

encourages his readers to question the purity of these dividing factors, as he himself will do to *logos*.

Derrida's essays have two profound impacts on my own. First, he encourages us to question the reliability of traditional boundary markers between the species. He primarily addresses *logos* and its manifestations in the philosophy of Heidegger, Kant, and Lacan. His list of features unique to humankind, however, including clothing, laughter, history, gift-giving, or shame, could be long extended.<sup>24</sup> Hair proves an intriguing boundary marker to study because though it belongs to both humans and animals, medieval and modern authors tend to point out its peculiarity to humans. Second, Derrida's "l'animot" allows for multiple and complex interactions between members of different species, and also between two members of the same species. It encourages readers to recognize the similarities between a human and a bear, for example, without ignoring the insuperable differences that exist between the two species. It creates a space to study why, depending on the circumstances, a human can be described like a wolf but not like a horse. Such flexibility becomes particularly useful for the study of hair because hair has different meanings in different contexts. Sometimes it connects humans with animals, but sometimes it separates them. Studying how hair functions in different manifestations of the human/animal relationship allows us to study how humans use animals to define themselves.

Derrida's work could be used as a starting point to explore how various animals receive a voice in medieval literature, but this is not the purpose of this study.<sup>25</sup> Although I examine how hair brings humans into close proximity to animals, I am studying almost exclusively the human

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<sup>24</sup> Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> For an example of this kind of scholarship, see Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

side of the species divide. I will therefore not use Derrida's term "l'animot" to refer to animals. Sometimes medieval writers encourage readers to look at specific animals, while at other times they use animals as symbols against which they define themselves. I will examine the significance of the specific animals with which humans find themselves put into contact via hair, but also the more general and symbolic action of humans becoming "animal" or animal-like. The thirteenth century was a period of immense social, economic, and religious change throughout Europe and France that troubled established boundaries, and animal comparisons represent a way to understand and comment on these changes. I therefore consider how authors use animals to show or teach their audience about humans, eliciting animal comparisons in order to address complex societal issues and questions.

### **Blurry Boundaries in Thirteenth-Century Society**

Following the prosperity and intellectual creativity of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, thirteenth-century France underwent significant socio-economic changes. The population shift to cities, the expansion of the middle class, the creation of new religious orders, new duties of the clergy, along with a rediscovery of Greek philosophers meant that new roles and boundaries were being established and old roles lost or altered throughout the century. These and other changes necessitated a rethinking of the ways that French society configured knowledge and religious practice.<sup>26</sup> These changes affected not only the lives of medieval people, but also literature where animals became a useful tool to question the rapidly changing society,

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<sup>26</sup> For an overview of thirteenth-century French history see Monique Bourin-Derruau, *Temps d'équilibres, temps de ruptures: XIII siècle. Nouvelle histoire de la France médiévale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1998).



interrogating human exceptionality, devotional practices, social identity, and dominance in relationships.

With the collapse of the Roman Empire, cities as they existed in antiquity tended to decline as Roman buildings were abandoned, used for different purposes, or quarried for private construction. After the trend in the Early Middle Ages toward agriculture and rural life, the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed a boom in cities.<sup>27</sup> Paris in particular saw substantial growth in both population and architecture in the thirteenth century. At the end of the twelfth century Philip Augustus made Paris the center of his reign. Seeking to protect the city and its riches and also to unify the mercantile right bank of the Seine with the scholarly left bank, he constructed new city walls from 1190-1210.<sup>28</sup> By the end of the twelfth century Paris was already one of the largest cities in Europe with approximately 25,000 inhabitants in 1180. By 1220 that number had doubled, and scholars estimate the population by the end of the thirteenth century at anywhere from 80,000 to 240,000 people.<sup>29</sup> In response to increased populations and their spiritual needs, cities saw the need for new churches or church-related construction, and also for more clergy.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> While Albrecht Classen cautions readers us on making generalizations about medieval cities, he nevertheless notes common trends of city growth and decline after the fall of the Roman Empire. Albrecht Classen, "Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: Historical, Mental, Cultural, and Social-Economic investigations," in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> The walls along the Right Bank were paid for by the merchants and Philip Augustus paid for the construction of the walls along the Left Bank. The walls were a part of making Paris the sacred, civic, royal, and artistic center of France. Meredith Cohen, "Metropolitan Architecture, Demographics and the Urban Identity of Paris in the Thirteenth Century," in *Cities, Texts, and social networks, 400-1500*, eds. Caroline Goodson, Anne E. Lester, and Carol Symes (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 67-68.

<sup>29</sup> The most commonly agreed upon figure by the end of the thirteenth century is 200,000. Philippe Lorentz and Dany Sandron, *Atlas de Paris au Moyen Âge. Espace urbain, habitat, société, religion, lieux de pouvoir* (Paris: Parigramme, 2006), 68. See also Simone Roux, *Paris in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jo Ann McNamara (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Thirteenth-century Paris alone witnessed the creation of as many as fifty-five new churches and church-related constructions Cohen, "Metropolitan Architecture," 67, 72.

The increasing importance of cities and trade led to the emergence of the middle and merchant classes. In Paris many of these merchants were situated on the Right Bank, which developed so quickly that by the end of the thirteenth century the walls of the city were already outgrown.<sup>31</sup> These classes quickly gained in importance as they had the capital to help finance the crown. They often, however, found themselves at odds with the nobility, who claimed family origins as the right to power and influence but who lived off rents rather than working to earn money. The middle classes imitated the nobility, wearing elegant clothing and building elaborate homes to correspond with their growing influence. Romans, fabliaux, and other court-produced literature often denigrated these newly rich middle classes as miserly buffoons whose preoccupation with money revealed their baseness and often became the source of marital strife. The conflict between the two classes exists in thirteenth-century sumptuary laws, edicts issued by the king which attempted to limit consumption of luxury goods in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Fashion historian and literary scholar Sarah-Grace Heller explains that unlike the more elaborate sumptuary laws of the fourteenth century that emphasized dress silhouettes and appropriateness, and which are often interpreted as concerned with women, thirteenth-century edicts were “more concerned with stabilizing how much a person could consume and display relative to his or her income than with the prohibiting dubious attire.”<sup>32</sup> Heller identifies the primary criteria of the 1279 and 1294 edicts as social status, income, number of robes, and quality of cloth per *aune* (a measure roughly equivalent to four feet). She notes that these laws permitted higher status and income individuals to purchase higher quality fabric and to own more garments. Since these laws were more concerned with the quality of the garments,

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<sup>31</sup> Cohen, “Metropolitan Architecture,” 86.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, “Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance in Thirteenth-Century Sumptuary Laws and the *Roman de la rose*,” *French Historical Studies* 27, no.2 (Spring 2004): 317.

including richness of fabrics and fur linings, Heller concludes that they illustrate the anxiety and tension surrounding the inappropriate display of wealth through clothing, and specifically the inappropriate display of bourgeois wealth.<sup>33</sup>

The thirteenth century also witnessed great changes in the composition and role of the Catholic Church. Under the direction of pope Innocent III, the Fourth Lateran Council met in November 1215 and approved seventy-one canons. The majority of the canons concerned the practical, moral, and ethical life of the church and had a substantial impact on medieval society.<sup>34</sup> The first and twenty-first canons, in particular, had a great effect on the way people interacted with priests and changed the role of religion in people's everyday life. The first canon, the confession of faith, officially put forth the doctrine of transubstantiation, stating that the Eucharist changed into the body and blood of Christ and, significantly, that only a priest could administer the sacraments. This last component greatly affected the pastoral concerns of the church since priests would need to be readily available to members of their congregation. Canon 21, perhaps the most influential one, required all Christians to give confession to their local priest once a year. If they failed to do so they were denied entry into churches during their lifetime and denied a Christian burial at the end of it. Canon 21 also required the faithful to partake of Eucharist at Easter; however, confession was necessary in order to partake. Throughout the thirteenth century, confession began to play a more important role in literature, especially hagiographies. This increase may have come in response to the Fourth Lateran Council as either a need to normalize this new obligation or as a reflection of the new religious

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<sup>33</sup> Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance," 323-24. For more on French sumptuary laws see Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); and Henri Baudrillart, *Histoire du luxe privé et publique depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1878-1880).

<sup>34</sup> F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 181.

reality. The Council also called for a reform of the morals of the clergy: their life was to be characterized only by edifying practices fitting to those entrusted with the pastoral care of souls. The Council additionally limited the creation of new religious orders without papal approval. Some canons were concerned with meeting the needs of expanding cities, including the call to have mass available in all languages spoken within a parish, the need to train more priests, a condemnation of extortion, and a requirement that Jews and Saracens dress distinctively to allow Christians to avoid mixing with them in cities. The Fourth Lateran council also tried to accord a more prominent role to the church in marriage. Canons 50 and 51 prohibited marriage to the fourth degree of consanguinity, required marriages to be announced in churches by priests, and forbade clandestine marriages. Finally, Pope Innocent was also concerned with heresies, which he deemed a threat to the church. In addition to excommunication, canon three called for heretics to be handed over to secular authorities, meaning that they could now be punished by death. This same canon also extended the indulgences offered to those who went on crusade to the Holy Lands to any who took up the cross to expel heretics, thus making a great impact on the future of the Inquisition.<sup>35</sup>

Thirteenth-century religion was marked by a renewal in apostolic piety and the subsequent growth of the mendicant orders. The *vita apostolica* is characterized by voluntary poverty, asceticism, imitation of Christ, and a deep, internal spiritual piety. It also emphasized pastoral care and preaching.<sup>36</sup> The developing urban centers also influenced the creation of spiritual orders. The significant growth of population by the thirteenth century created an

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on the Fourth Lateran Council and its social impact, see Logan *A History of the Church*; and Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 85-94.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 61.

increased need for priests to teach growing congregations and to minister to the needy, concerns also echoed in the Fourth Lateran Council. The Cistercians, though still influential in the thirteenth century, were not able to fully meet these needs since many of their large monasteries were located in the countryside and governed by strict rules.<sup>37</sup> The situation led to the creation of the mendicant orders, notably the Franciscans and Dominicans, in the early thirteenth century. The new orders had more freedom to travel and to participate in urban life by serving the poor, preaching, and combatting heresies.<sup>38</sup> In 1227 Pope Gregory IX granted the mendicants the power to preach and offer confession. The pope, along with other supporters of the movement, envisioned the orders collaborating with the church to offer adequate pastoral care. To the traditional priesthood and monastic orders, however, the mendicants represented a threat and an encroachment on the privileges of priests as people began seeking out the mendicants for instruction, confession, and administration of final rites.<sup>39</sup> The University of Paris hotly debated the role of the mendicants in the second half of the thirteenth century. Guillaume de Saint-Amour vehemently criticized both the orders (that he saw as signs of the Apocalypse) and Louis IX who supported multiple mendicant orders in Paris.<sup>40</sup> Criticism of the orders also found its way into vernacular literature. Rutebeuf famously criticized the many mendicant orders established before and during the reign of Louis IX in poems such as the *Diz des Jacobins*, *Diz des Cordeliers*, *Les ordres de Paris* and *La chanson des ordres*. Jean de Meun's personifications Faux Semblant

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<sup>37</sup> Mary Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>38</sup> Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Félix Vernet, *Les Ordres mendiants*, (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1933), 15-34.

<sup>40</sup> Vernet, *Les Ordres mendiants*, 18-22; Tanya Stabler Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 17-20.

(Hypocrisy) and Abstinence Contrainte (False Abstinence) also criticize the orders and lent literary voice to much contemporaneous criticism.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the mendicant orders, the apostolic character of thirteenth-century devotion greatly influenced the somewhat controversial beguine movement. Beguines were lay women who led a religious lifestyle, often in small communities within or just outside city walls. Although early communities and individual beguines can be traced as early as 1190, the movement took shape in 1230 when Pope Gregory IX gave formal approval to beguine life, allowing them to acquire property and adopt regulations to govern their communities, or beguinages.<sup>42</sup> In France beguines found great support in Louis IX who made donations to the various communities in the realm and oversaw the creation of a beguine court throughout the 1250s and 1260s.<sup>43</sup> Unlike cloistered nuns, beguines often worked in the city as seamstresses or teachers and earned a modest living.<sup>44</sup> Contemporaries saw the beguine movement in both a positive and negative light due in part to the conflicting priorities of withdrawal from and involvement in society characteristic of the apostolic model that governed their lifestyle. Jacques de Vitry praised early beguines as holy maidens (*sanctae virgenes*) who scorned property and familial wishes of marriage in order to live a life of poverty and humility. Others, including Guillaume de Saint-Amour and Rutebeuf, criticized the beguines for the informality of their

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<sup>41</sup> For more on the social impact of the mendicant orders see C.H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Mendicant Orders on Medieval Society* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> There were two types of beguinages: convents and courts. Convents were the most common and consisted of an association of women living together or in very close proximity under a superior and under the spiritual authority of their parish priest. Beguine courts were less common but much larger. A court consisted of a small community of multiple dwellings situated near a chapel that they used for religious ceremonies. As in convents, a superior governed the complex which was generally situated just outside the city walls or as a gated community within the town itself. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 36, 48, 50-51.

<sup>43</sup> Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris*, 14-34.

<sup>44</sup> Beguines came from all strata of society. Some were noble or members of upper class families and lived off their rents. Many, however, worked in order to support both themselves and their community. By the second half of the thirteenth century many beguines were quite poor and barely earning enough to survive, causing the beguinages to create emergency funds to help impoverished members. Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 91-117.

religious lifestyle: though they devoted themselves to a religious life and assumed religious dress, they took no vows. These women inhabited the boundary between secular and religious, active and contemplative life. Even the staunchest supporters of beguines could not deny the hybrid nature of their condition. The Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach noted that “they live the eremitical life among the crowds, spiritual among the worldly and virginal among those who seek pleasure.”<sup>45</sup> The beguine’s hybridity may have been met with apprehension by some, but the hybridity itself was symptomatic of the question facing many medieval people, both lay and religious: How can someone lead a religious life in a crowded and wealthy city?

The increased demand for well-trained clergy in cities led to the creation of universities as the older forms of education by private instructors or cathedral schools proved insufficient.<sup>46</sup> Among university students, clerics, and rulers desirous to best lead their subjects there was a vast need to acquire knowledge. This was amplified by the availability of Latin translations of Ancient Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, and their Arabic commentaries which became more available in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries thanks to translations coming principally from Spain and Sicily.<sup>47</sup> Within the context of increased learning in universities and increased knowledge from new translations, the movement known today as encyclopedism flourished in the thirteenth century.<sup>48</sup> Medieval encyclopedias are characterized by the desire to summarize

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 35.

<sup>46</sup> See Hilde de Ridder-Symons, ed., *A History of the University in Europe, vol. I. Universities in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); John Van Engen, *Learning Institutionalized: Teaching in the Medieval University* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> For more on the transmission of Greek texts and their Arabic commentaries into the Latin West see David C. Lindberg, “The Transmission of Greek and Arabic Learning to the West,” *Science in the Middle Ages* (1978); Fernand van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, trans. Leonard Johnston (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1955).

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Le Goff, “Pourquoi le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle a-t-il été plus particulièrement un siècle d’encyclopédisme?” in *Enciclopedia medievale*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo, 1994).

vast amounts of knowledge, to organize that knowledge coherently, to disseminate it to a large audience, and, in the process, to lead people to repentance and discovery of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>49</sup> Authors of encyclopedias refer to themselves as compilers (*compilatores*) because they sifted through the Scriptures, writings of the Holy Saints, patristic authors, and the pagan philosophers and poets and compiled what they find there for their readers. The result of such a process was not a synthesis presenting a unified conception of the medieval world, but instead a compilation of contradictory modes of thought and viewpoints gathered in one place. Medieval encyclopedias testify to the fact that though the boundaries of knowledge in the Middle Ages were subordinated to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, they were in reality rarely stable.

Urbanization, changes in everyday religious practice and in devotional models, the rise of mendicant orders, and the emergence of universities and of encyclopedism demonstrate the extent to which social, religious, and intellectual boundaries were changing in thirteenth-century France. Many of the boundary fluctuations that I have described centered around Paris, yet many of the texts I work with are not “Parisian.” While this is true, the changes in Paris directly and indirectly influenced the rest of France and Europe in the thirteenth century. Urbanization affected all large cities in France, and the changes felt in Paris affected other cities as well on a different scale. Moreover, the University of Paris attracted students from all over the continent, and the theological debates concerning the mendicant orders discussed there were disseminated throughout Europe and France both in tracts and by the clergy themselves who either met in Paris for councils or who were educated there before assignment to their dioceses.<sup>50</sup> The theological, philosophical, and intellectual concerns of the city cannot be divorced from the literary imaginings addressing similar problems. Literary depictions of the human/animal divide

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<sup>49</sup> Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Vernet, *Les Ordres mendiants*, 15-34.



become a part of this picture as authors slip into metaphor and analogy when discussing controversial topics. The underlying conflicts behind many of these social, religious and intellectual issues results from the confrontation between groups or ideologies united by similar beliefs and interests. Often these groups had to coexist: sometimes the relationship was peaceful, sometimes it was one of co-dependence, and sometimes one of open hostility. The struggle to define the boundary and the relationship between two similar yet inherently different groups bears much resemblance to the relationship between humans and animals. What in nature could be more like humans than animals, yet so distinctly “other?”

### **Animals and Humans in the Middle Ages**

For medieval theologians, humans were intrinsically and hierarchically superior to animals according to God’s design. Genesis 1 clearly lays out a model for human rule of the earth and its inhabitants: “Et ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram et praesit piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae omni que reptili quod movetur in terra” (Gen. 1:26; And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth).<sup>51</sup> The assertion of human dominion over all other living creatures afforded humans many practical benefits including the right to kill their animal subjects and use them for food and clothing.<sup>52</sup> As Karl Steel reminds us,

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<sup>51</sup> The Douay-Rheims Bible English translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate. <http://vulgate.org>. Peggy McCracken explains that though many medieval theologians used this passage to discuss questions of sexuality and procreation, some, including Philippe Buc, used the human-animal hierarchy as a means of legitimizing human dominion over other humans. McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> There was some debate as to whether or not human killing of animals was a part of God’s divine plan or a consequence of the Fall: “On the one hand, social hierarchy could be understood as a divine invention that predated the Fall and allowed for the restraint of human excesses; on the other hand, power over others could be understood as a diabolical consequence of the fall.” McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 14.

in the Middle Ages animals were human property, and killing them was a sin only if it injured another man in his property.<sup>53</sup> The order set out in Genesis not only placed humans as rulers over the animals but also provided a basis for human separation from animals: it claims only humans are made in God's image. For medieval intellectuals, and many following them, one of the implications of creation in the image and likeness of God was that humans, unlike animals, possess *logos*, or rational thought, self-expression through language, and knowledge of God.<sup>54</sup> This viewpoint found support in Genesis 2 where God brings the animals to Adam so that he can exercise his *logos* by naming them according to their kind. Authors of many bestiaries propagated this view of human distinction by opening their works with illustrations or narrations of Adam naming the animals.<sup>55</sup> Animals, by contrast, were believed to act on instinct rather than reason. Aquinas, for example, explained animal behavior as regulated by a kind of species determinism. Dogs may be capable of choosing between two alternatives, but they do so in accordance with a pattern of instinctive behavior consistent with other members of their species.<sup>56</sup>

For many medieval intellectuals, the rational distinction between humans and the rest of creation manifested in the body. These scholars cited bipedalism and hands as the most obvious corporeal evidence of rational thought. Although humans had a double nature, one both eternal and fleshly, they can turn away from their fleshly nature and gaze toward the heavens.

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<sup>53</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 13.

<sup>54</sup> This view is also present in Aristotelian thought. For Aristotle, animals were living beings (*aloga zôa*) without *logos* (*ratio* in Latin). Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 49.

<sup>55</sup> The importance of naming in accordance to animal nature itself has a profound impact on medieval encyclopedias and bestiaries, especially in Isidore de Seville, where if you understand a creature's name you can understand its nature. Lynn Van Dyke, "Names of Beasts: Tracking the *Animot* in Medieval Texts," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012): 5.

<sup>56</sup> Lynn Van Dyke explains that though seeing animals as dominated by instinct was by far the most prevalent view of animals in the Middle Ages, it was not the only one. Some texts acknowledge variations between individuals of species. Van Dyke, "Names of Beasts," 7-10.

Humankind's upright posture reflected their eternal outlook. Animals, however, generally walk on all fours, causing them to look toward the ground. This earthbound posture became further evidence of their ignorance of God and lack of rational thought. The bodily manifestation of human intellect was also linked to hands. For Abbot William of St. Thierry, writing in the twelfth century, the uniqueness of human hands directly correlated to speech and intelligence:

If man had no hands his mouth would have to be fashioned like those of quadrupeds so he could take food from the ground. The length of his neck would have to be increased, his nose shaped like that of a brute animal. He would have to have heavy lips, thick coarse and projecting suited to cutting fodder. The fleshy part around the teeth would have to be solid and rough, as in dogs and other animals that eat meat. Thus if hands had not been provided for the body, an articulated and modulated voice could not exist. Man would have to bleat or low or bark or make some other kind of animal noise. But now, with the hand serving the mouth, the mouth serves reason and through it the intellectual soul which is spiritual and incorporeal. This is something not shared with irrational animals.<sup>57</sup>

This provided further evidence for St. Thierry that God intended to separate humanity from the rest of creation from the beginning since he formed the human body before breathing into it the breath of life, or rational thought. Although posture and hands represent the most significant features with direct ties to human intellectual distinction, any blatant changes to the human form, including an abnormal growth of hair, would have raised serious questions about humanity.

Despite the differences separating humans from animals, medieval intellectuals did not deny the reality of a connection between them. Although humans rule over animals, God created both from the dust.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, as a consequence of the Fall, most theologians described humans as participants in the constant Pauline struggle between their eternal, God-like nature and the base, fleshly desires that connect them to the beasts. To complicate matters, bestiaries and encyclopedias often included a chapter dedicated to humans alongside descriptions of animals.

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 48-49.

<sup>58</sup> According to Genesis 2:7, God formed man from the dust of the ground, and in Genesis 2:19 God formed all other living creatures out of the ground.

Bartholomaeus Anglicus writes in book XVIII of *De proprietatibus rerum* that: “Dicitur autem animal omne quod consistit ex carne & spiritu vitæ animatum, sive sit aereum, ut volitalia, sive aquaticum, ut natatilia, sive terrenum, sicut sunt agrestia & gressibilia, scilicet homines, reptilian, bestiae & iumenta” (XVIII.1; And all is called ‘animal’ that consists of flesh and the animating spirit of life, whether aerial or flying, or aquatic or swimming, or land-based, as are wild and tractable [creatures], men, crawling things, beasts, and beasts of burden).<sup>59</sup> By including humans among the animals, Bartholomaeus follows Isidore of Seville and encyclopedic tradition. Thus, humans have both a vertical and horizontal relationship with animals. Though they rule animals, they are often classified as one animal among others. In the prologue to book XVIII Bartholomaeus Anglicus includes humans among the “tame beasts” that have wild counterparts: wild men. This similarity did not, however, inhibit Bartholomaeus from noting human distinction from animals. In book III, he describes humans as an “animal deiforme” with an intellectual soul caught at the intersection between divine beings and terrestrial ones. Such variation of the term “animal” in the *De proprietatibus rerum*, used sometimes in opposition to humans and sometimes to describe them, illustrates the precarious relationship of humans with the bestial realm: both hierarchically superior to animals and a simple subcategory of them, one species among others.<sup>60</sup> It also illustrates why animals would be a useful tool to discuss the social, religious, and intellectual changes affecting thirteenth-century France. Though humans may have some characteristics that connect them to animals and cause the boundary to blur, they remain

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<sup>59</sup> Carolynn Van Dyke’s English translation. Van Dyke, “Names of Beasts,” 17.

<sup>60</sup> For more on the precarious nature of animal names in medieval literature see Van Dyke, “Names of Beasts.” Van Dyke argues that despite the tendency found in most medieval encyclopedias and bestiaries to provide general names and descriptions of animals, some medieval texts accord individuality to animals. These latter texts come close to conceptualizing the individuality of the Derridean *animot* despite using terms such as “the animal.”

inherently different from them. One could potentially argue the same for the nobles and the bourgeois, the lay and the religious groups of the thirteenth-century.

## Medieval Animal Studies

Like medieval theologians, recent medieval scholars have much to say about humans and animals. Joyce Salisbury brought considerable attention to the study of animals in *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, originally published in 1994. In this work, she studies animals and how they interact with humans in literature and reality, considering them as living creatures that cohabited the medieval world. Salisbury's study examines animals as more than symbols and draws attention to the permeability of the human-animal boundary. She also posits that perceptions of this boundary shifted from the early into the later Middle Ages. She argues that early medieval Christian thought attempted to draw a clear line between humans and animals, maintaining that there was no way a being made in the image of God could lose that distinction or mix with animals. She claims that by the twelfth century a mindset more similar to the modern one began to infiltrate medieval thought as some theorized a possible link between the species, which led to a reexamination of the categories of human and animal.<sup>61</sup> In support of her view she cites the increasing popularity of hybrids in bestiaries, travel literature, and marginalia along with the prevalence of metamorphosis tales in both literary and scientific texts. The blurred view of human/animal relationships that Salisbury associates with the twelfth century clearly finds an echo in many of the thirteenth-century works in this study.

Dorothy Yamamoto continued this line of category questioning in *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*. Throughout this book Yamamoto explores how

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<sup>61</sup> Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 121-45.

peripheral and ambiguous figures such as peasants, amphibians, and wild folk contaminate definite categories, including that of human and animal.<sup>62</sup> She studies the body as a site of tension and competing discourse. For example, it is the body of the wild man that becomes covered in hair and causes medieval authors and audiences to interrogate his humanity.

Yamamoto questions the trustworthiness of the body for assigning identity given its ability to change or be modified.<sup>63</sup> Like Yamamoto's, my own work pays particular attention to the body, especially head and body hair, as the site of ambiguity between humans and animals. Yamamoto and others have already demonstrated that medieval authors often blur the boundary between human and animals. While my work offers further proof of this assertion, it is less interested in studying the boundary itself than in determining how hair functions at the boundary, how authors write animal traits onto hair, and the specific social and cultural contexts under which the authors manipulate the boundary. By looking at how and why hair becomes an untrustworthy boundary marker between humans and animals, I aim to offer insight into the effects of an author's choice to draw attention to the human/animal distinction in the thirteenth century, and what this can tell us about medieval humans.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen takes a slightly different approach to the human/animal boundary in *Medieval Identity Machines*.<sup>64</sup> In his chapter on "Chevalerie," Cohen applies Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "becoming" to medieval knights and their relationship with their horses and military accessories. Deleuze and Guattari insist on the act of "becoming" at times when animals, people, and things recombine to create one whole entity with no boundary between the individual parts. The importance in such a combination is not the end result, but

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<sup>62</sup> Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Yamamoto, *Boundaries of the Human*, 4, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

rather the process itself that becomes imbued with a meaning and a reality of its own. The act of “becoming” reveals that no secure concept of humanity or animality truly exists because nothing in this world exists in and for itself exclusively, but rather in relationship with its surroundings. Cohen applies this concept to the chivalric circuit of knight, warhorse, and accoutrements of war where no one body or object has meaning apart from the conglomerate whole.<sup>65</sup> My work functions as a counterpoint to Cohen’s. Whereas Cohen’s knight’s identity depends upon the seamless combination of horse, rider, and gear, the human/animal combinations I explore often come apart at the seams, creating disturbing creatures. My research explores how authors write the animal onto the human body in such a way that instead of being incorporated into identity, it either questions it or represents one step towards discovering it. The combinations I study tend to reveal holes in identity and self-definition. Although characters or readers can find meaning in the human/animal clusters, medieval texts themselves generally eliminate them or emphasize them as a step towards an ultimate stable identity, usually housed within a whole (human) body.

Karl Steel’s *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* brings attention to the human side of the human/animal question. Steel focuses on animal instrumentality and the violence by which humans define themselves as humans in order to sustain the human/animal distinction. Steel reorients Lacan’s identity formation to show how humans misrepresent themselves as uniquely human:

humans attempt to form themselves as human by (mis)recognizing themselves as “not animal,” and then by subjecting themselves to the impossible demands of living up to this ideal self, one distinctively rational, ensouled, responsible, linguistic, and so on. Faced with a constitutive and irreparable disparity between themselves and their human self-image, humans assert that animals lack what uniquely afflicts humans. To give this assertion strength, they treat animals “like animals,” as instruments available for labor or slaughter, violence which does not

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<sup>65</sup> Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 35-77.

count as morally significant violence and which therefore qualitatively differs from the violence humans suffer.<sup>66</sup>

For Steel, humans retroactively claim the category of human by taming, killing, and consuming animals. Such boundary-making acts of subjugation should not be committed against humans, and if they are, they usually represent a punished exception, or an act committed in reverence.<sup>67</sup> Since human identity itself represents a misrecognition, it becomes unstable and must be constantly re-established. Although humans consign animals to an inferior status and claim language and reason for themselves, Steel argues that medieval intellectuals could not escape the reality of their own animality. Thus, in order to reclaim “humanity” humans continuously commit acts of violence against the “others” that they designate as animals.<sup>68</sup> Like Steel’s, my work focuses on humans and how they distinguish themselves from animals. While violence against animals will be an important factor in my discussion of *Guillaume de Palerne*, for example, it is not the deciding factor for all the texts covered here. Sometimes the intrusion of the animal represents an act of violence against humans.

In *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*, Susan Crane adopts a different approach to studying the relationship of humans and animals by focusing primarily on the animal side of the relationship. She argues that despite the humansist perception of animals as entirely other and lacking something that humans inevitably possess, medieval writers did in fact address the relationship between humans and animals in complex ways.<sup>69</sup> She revisits texts to examine animal encounters as two-way interactions between humans and other living creatures, focusing on living animals in medieval society and their presence in medieval books,

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<sup>66</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Steel claims that “an animal is human when it can be murdered.” Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 21.

<sup>69</sup> Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 1-9.



thought, and practice. Crane explores how the cohabitation of species can both create and shape human selves and occasionally prove ethically problematic. She uses the Derridean *animot* to consider the contiguities between humans and animals as she studies areas where the species come into close contact and overlap. This is particularly evident in her discussion of Marie de France's fables and lays where the Bisclavret is simultaneously human/dog/wolf. While Crane inevitably shines light on human activity and interests, animals constitute her primary object of study. My work, in contrast, looks at human use of animals, both real and symbolic, in texts in order to learn more about humans.

In her recent book *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France*, Peggy McCracken uses human-animal encounters in literary texts and artistic images to discern how medieval authors use animals to explore issues of sovereignty, authority, and the legitimacy of human dominion. Like Lévi-Strauss, McCracken sees medieval authors recycling animal motifs across a wide variety of texts because they are “good to think,” especially about sovereign relations.<sup>70</sup> She explores how the human use of animal furs for clothing participates in the technology of sovereignty; that is, she explores the “symbolic and material deployment of animals and their bodies for the display of human dominion. [She calls] it a technology to emphasize that the use of animals requires human work and skill: animals have to be slaughtered to be eaten, they have to be flayed to provide skins, and they have to be trained to labor for humans.”<sup>71</sup> McCracken explores sovereign relations in narratives about wolves; the symbolic appropriation of animals into sovereign identity through heraldry; how the role of the sovereign and beast can both collide and diverge in protective roles; how authors use snake women to explore the relationship of sovereignty, recognition, and choice-making; and several late

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<sup>70</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 37.

medieval wild-man narratives that question the absolute distinction of culture and wilderness as alternative models of social organization. McCracken's style of close-readings and study of a different aspect of sovereignty in each chapter is very similar to my own which examines a specific bestial manifestation of hair and fur in different texts. Yet despite occasionally overlapping, our works explore different aspects of the human/animal relationship. *In the Skin of a Beast* treats the multiple facets of human/animal subjugation and questions regarding the legitimacy of human dominance. While my work explores questions human dominance in chapters three and four, it looks principally at how authors manipulate human hair and animal fur in a wider variety of religious, cosmetic, and social contexts. Animal fur occasionally plays an important role in McCracken's discussions of consumption or texts such as *Guillaume de Palerne*; however, it is supplementary to the overall scope of her work.

### **Splitting Hairs: Creation and Dissolution of Boundaries**

Though hair and fur do not always occupy the central role in stories exploring human/animal relationships, they play an integral one. Hair, usually described as long and blond, is an essential part of medieval portraits. Sometimes this hair leaves the confines of the head to cover smooth, white skin, making both male and female protagonists change from paragons of beauty to paragons of sanctity that unexpectedly resemble animals or wild folk. Unlike animals, humans style, change, and cover their hair for reasons of fashion or propriety. However, sometimes this distinctly human manipulation of hair elicits animal comparisons in criticism of fashion, especially for women. Nobles wear animal furs on the inside of their clothing for warmth and to display their wealth and status. Yet sometimes literary texts use them to illustrate animality when these same nobles wear them as disguises on the outside of their garments in the

search to legitimate their social status. When studied in light of human/animal relations, the imbrications of sanctity and laity, gender, nobility, and humanity become evident. The humans in these texts remain human, but the animal presence creeps in at the margins when human hair or human use of animal fur leaves the confines of what is considered normal. The subtle variations of humanity reveal that the qualities that define social, religious, and gender status in the thirteenth century are themselves constantly fluctuating.

In chapter one of this study I explore how medieval intellectuals define hair and how these definitions and the problems raised by them also permeate literary texts. The chapter examines Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopedic text, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Aldebrandin de Sienne's health regimen, *Le régime du corps*, and Heldris de Cornouaille's *Roman de Silence*. Bartholomaeus' encyclopedia and Aldebrandin's health regimen are both based on similar Greek and Arabic sources yet were destined to very different audiences, allowing me to explore how discourse surrounding hair can become gendered. My reading of *De proprietatibus rerum* will show how the humoral similarities between human and animal hair call into question its reliability as a boundary marker between humans and animals by disrupting organization and inadvertently bringing people into proximity with animals. For Aldebrandin de Sienne hair proves to have a profound impact on the nature/nurture debate, which questions whether personality and appearance result from inherent qualities (nature) or environmental factors (nurture). Aldebrandin's text concludes with a treatise on physiognomy, a medieval science functioning on the authority of nature, wherein a person's external appearance represents a reliable indicator of their internal qualities. Aldebrandin, however, also spends considerable time telling women how to manipulate and change their appearance, including their hair. He cautions readers in applying the physiognomic framework, seemingly advocating, or at the very least

acknowledging, the importance of nurture. This chapter ends with a brief demonstration of the ways in which these discourses surface in the speeches of a personified Nature and Nurture (nurture) surrounding the concealment, questioning, and ultimate exposure of the protagonist's identity in the contemporaneous romance, *Le Roman de Silence*. Rather than providing an answer to the question, Heldris (much like the encyclopedists) summarizes the arguments of both sides and leaves the debate open to the reader's interpretation.

Chapter two explores how the notion of the wild man influences depictions of saints in the thirteenth century, causing animal characteristics to be written on saintly bodies at the intersection of lay and religious lifestyles. I study Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* and the anonymously composed *Robert le Diable* to show why a saint's hair begins to exceed human norms, making them look like animals or wild folk when they are actively seeking God and hence are at their most "human." Thirteenth-century Christianity, among both religious and lay folk alike, was marked with the concern of leading a religious life in the midst of large cities. Tension existed as some attempted to blend the sacred and the secular lifestyle. In *Marie l'Egyptienne*, Rutebeuf, an outspoken critic of such a mixture, recounts how Marie leaves the city of Jerusalem upon discovering her sin in order to dedicate her life to Christ. I show how during her penitence Marie's long hair partially conceals both her humanity and the animal presence that slowly transforms her body. I argue that the animal presence in the midst of sanctity symbolizes how a true devotion to God like Marie's cannot exist in the heart of society. Such a life should serve as an example that can edify those living in the city but cannot be carried out there. *Robert le Diable*, however, uses the wild man motif to explore more fully how to lead a holy life in the middle of a city. Robert's penance forces him to live in Rome, causes hair to grow all over his body, and makes him act like an animal. It thus creates a barrier between

Robert and the rest of the city; even as he resides in it he clearly does not belong to it. I argue that Robert leaves the city when a hermit lifts his penance because he has lost the animal presence that permitted his holy life there. Rutebeuf and the author of *Robert le Diable* seem to suggest that a life devoted to God makes a person radically other; this difference manifests itself in the protagonists' hairy appearance and animal-like behavior. While such behavior remains free from overtly negative connotations, the animal presence underlines the belief that those seeking absolute devotion to God would likely find such a lifestyle difficult to carry out in a city.

In chapter three I study how the author of *Guillaume de Palerne* uses the interactions between humans and animal hides to ask whether noble sovereignty is innate or constructed. Hides and furs were used to line the clothing of the nobility as a sign of wealth and power. Hides function as a visual reminder that humans can break animal bodies to establish sovereignty. In *Guillaume de Palerne* both animals and humans attack human bodies, thereby threatening the innateness of noble sovereignty and identity. Often in texts where nobles must go on quests to find their identity, they succeed in attaining it by symbolically incorporating the animal so as to reinforce the “natural” quality of noble power. In *Guillaume de Palerne*, however, I argue that Guillaume, Melior, and Alphonse recover their identity through human *engien*, ruse or ingenuity. Rather than turning into animals, the narrator emphasizes the transformation of animals into human clothing via the artisans who construct such clothing. In doing so he situates the source of noble power in *engien*, or nurture. The author never fully resolves the nature/nurture question because the importance of *engien* does not fully override importance of “nature.” As with quality clothing, in order to be truly noble, the creator must begin with high-quality raw materials. In showcasing the importance of production, however, the author reveals the importance of the intermediaries who physically construct the symbols of noble identity.

Chapter four examines how authors use hair, and specifically hairstyles, to connect women to animals. These animal comparisons explore questions of domination and submission between men and women. Through study of the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Dit des cornetes*, and the fabliau *Tresces*, I will show how men exploit animal comparisons to confirm their superiority over women, but also how women appropriate these comparisons to dominate men. Jean de Meun introduces both views in his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Jean's Mari jaloux transforms the act of a woman preparing her toilette from a noble, human activity required for entry in the garden of love to a symbol of deception and animality that justifies his physical domination of his wife via her long braids. Jean's Vieille, however, encourages women to exploit the connection to the beasts embodied by their hairstyles to become like wolves that ensnare men in their traps. The author of *Cornetes* expands upon the view espoused by the Mari jaloux by comparing women's popular horned hairstyle to rams. The poem connects hair to vanity, bestiality, and deception, and places the critique in the mouth of a bishop, giving it divine authority that confirms the "natural" order of the world. Finally, the fabliau *Tresces* demonstrates how women use their hair and appearance to literally trap and deceive their husbands. In this fabliau, the wife successfully substitutes human hair for animal fur and vice versa, illustrating the seemingly indomitable power of women over men.

Scholars do not always consider many of the works examined in this project as engaging in controversial aspects of thirteenth-century society. Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne*, for example, is often treated as a commissioned piece that Rutebeuf composed quickly and copied extensively from sources, and it therefore lacks originality and does not reflect thirteenth-century city life as do the majority of his other works. By revealing how these texts manipulate depictions of hair to connect humans and animals, I will show how they in fact participate in

discourses of sexuality, sovereignty, religious practices, and self-definition. I will show how the social connotations attached to hair imbue its presence in medieval texts with a multitude of meanings, most significantly the connection between humans and animals, thereby revealing anxieties about a changing society. The bestial presence inscribed onto the human body reveals a desire to interrogate human exceptionality, devotional practices, social identity, and dominance in relationships, as the instability of the human body becomes a vehicle for exploring the instability of thirteenth-century society.

## Chapter 1

### Hair in Thirteenth-Century Scientific and Medical Discourse

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the vulgarization of scientific and medical knowledge. While the reader of Aristotle in the twelfth century had to know Greek or Arabic, by the end of the thirteenth century, one could read it in Latin or find it summarized in the many encyclopedic and medical texts that flourished at the time. This chapter will first explore how the encyclopedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus and the physician Aldebrandin de Sienne, both deeply influenced by the newly available theories of the ancient Greek philosophers, defined hair in their works in order to obtain a clearer understanding of what medieval intellectuals knew about hair and fur and what they transmitted to their audiences. I will then briefly discuss the late thirteenth-century romance, the *Roman de Silence*, to examine how these definitions and the questions they raised began to permeate literature of the period. Bartholomeus's *De proprietatibus rerum*, written in Latin in the 1250s, was one of the most influential and widely read encyclopedic texts of the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> The existing two hundred manuscript copies of the Latin text and its medieval translations attest to its lasting popularity among the clergy and the intellectual and social elite.<sup>2</sup> Aldebrandin de Sienne composed his health regimen in the vernacular around 1256; it likewise boasts a large manuscript tradition and represents one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Little is known about Bartholomaeus the Englishman and the composition of *De proprietatibus rerum*. Based on the authorities that Bartholomaeus cites (and those he does), scholars have suggested that Bartholomaeus composed his encyclopedia circa 1250. Bernard Ribémont, introduction to *Le Livre des propriétés des choses* (Paris: Stock, 1999), 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> During the Middle Ages, *De proprietatibus rerum* was translated into French, English, Dutch, Provençal, Spanish, and the Mantouan dialect. Jean Corbechon's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum*, completed in 1372, survives in forty-five manuscript copies and was commissioned at a time when Charles V was encouraging the translation of influential works from Latin into the vernacular. Ribémont, introduction, 31-32.



earliest health regimens written in Old French.<sup>3</sup> The medical information contained in the treatise was moreover quite standard and representative of the many regimens circulating throughout France and Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Given that the sources cited in both texts were frequently studied and discussed in European universities at the time, we may assume that the information in them was available or quickly becoming available to a large portion of the medieval intellectual elite: those studying in universities or using encyclopedic texts as references, and educated members of the nobility. It is these members of society who subsequently composed much of medieval literature as we know it today. Though extant in only one manuscript, the plot of the *Roman de Silence*, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, situates the work squarely in the context of medical and anatomical discourse, raising questions of the influence of nature and nurture in determining human behavior. Though it plays a minor role in the story itself, hair complicates the distinction between Nature and Nurture (Nurture) through the characters of Silence and Merlin. Understanding the discourse surrounding hair in these texts can therefore help modern readers understand what hair was and what stakes it held in its medieval context.

Though both *De proprietatibus rerum* and the *Régime du corps* appear to have been read and to contain fairly representative information circulating in the thirteenth century, they also differ markedly in terms of intended audiences. Bartholomaeus Anglicus wrote his work in Latin, the language of the erudite, and he dedicates it to the Church and his Franciscan brothers. His prologue makes it clear that he envisioned a predominantly male audience of clerics and

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin, introduction to *Le Régime du corps* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), xix-lxxi. See also the following recensions by Françoise Fery-Hue: “Le Régime du corps d’Aldebrandin de Sienne: tradition manuscrite et diffusion,” in *Santé, médecine et assistance au Moyen Age: Actes du 110e congrès national des sociétés savantes*, vol 1 (Paris: C.T.H.S, 1987); “Le Régime du corps d’Aldebrandin de Sienne: complément à la tradition manuscrite,” *Romania* 117 (1999); “Le Régime du corps d’Aldebrandin de Sienne: complément à la tradition manuscrite (suite),” *Scriptorium* 58, no.1 (2004).

noble rulers, and the many extant manuscripts and medieval translations commissioned by royalty and nobles attest to its lasting popularity among the male-dominated intellectual and social elite. Health regimens were also usually destined for individual members of the nobility, often men. Aldebrandin de Sienne, however, wrote his for a countess and her four regal daughters. Taking into consideration the gender of the audience explains some important differences in the quantity and quality of information that the authors diffused, providing a sense of what the authors believed was appropriate and interesting knowledge for men and women, respectively. Furthermore, considering the ways in which these texts were tailored to gendered audiences may represent an avenue for understanding when and how hair troubles social and biological boundaries.

### **The Nature of the Encyclopedic Enterprise**

Medieval encyclopedias aimed to summarize, organize, and disseminate knowledge about the natural world. Depending on the author's degree of detail, the works could span volumes or be contained in one relatively short tome. Jacques Le Goff and Bernard Ribémont have classified the thirteenth century as a century of encyclopedism.<sup>4</sup> The origins of this movement lie in the humanism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the expansion of urban centers in the thirteenth century. According to Le Goff, one fundamental change resulting from the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the creation of a Christian concept of "nature." Since "nature" – usually personified and designated with a feminine pronoun – was created by God to govern the individual nature of all things on earth, man could know and study her without

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Le Goff, "Pourquoi le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle a-t-il été plus particulièrement un siècle d'encyclopédisme?" in *Enciclopedia medievale*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo, 1994). Bernard Ribémont, *De natura rerum: Étude sur les encyclopédies médiévales* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995).

infringing upon the unknowable quality of God and thereby avoid repeating Adam's transgression of eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge. This led to the restoration of confidence which should accompany the belief that man was created in God's image and transformed the desire to unlock the mysteries of the natural world from a taboo to a tool for the contemplation and celebration of the Christian God.<sup>5</sup> The population growth of the thirteenth century produced the need to train and educate a greater number of priests. The old cathedral schools proved insufficient for meeting this need, leading to the creation of universities and the appearance of an urban intellectual elite.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, this century witnessed a plethora of new information become available, thanks to the new translations of Greek and Arabic texts into Latin, notably newer translations of Aristotle's works. Aristotle's paradigm of empirical observation did not alter the medieval hermeneutics which sought to understand the things of the world as signs of divine truth. The Stagirite's works nevertheless became an indispensable source of knowledge on the properties of the natural world and necessitated the creation of encyclopedias to accommodate the newly available information.<sup>7</sup> These changes greatly affected the intellectual climate of the thirteenth century, creating an increased demand for knowledge. Princes, noblemen, and clerics were avid to know more about the world around them, but they did not always have the time or the learning necessary to read and digest the works of the great philosophers in the newly available Latin translations; authors of encyclopedic compilations addressed this growing need.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Le Goff, "Pourquoi le XIIIe siècle," 28.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> Ribémont, introduction, 17; Le Goff, "Pourquoi le XIIIe siècle," 37.

Though the term “encyclopedia” did not exist in the Middle Ages, scholars like Bernard Ribémont justify its use to designate a specific corpus of texts written primarily in the thirteenth century, noting that the authors themselves consciously situate their work within the parameters of a distinct genre.<sup>9</sup> In their prologues, these authors develop the characteristics of what modern scholars have subsequently defined as medieval encyclopedias. Scholars of the genre underscores three essential aspects of the medieval encyclopedic enterprise: compiling and organizing all available knowledge in one place, providing an explanation of the natural world, and reaching a large audience.<sup>10</sup> Encyclopedists like Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Vincent de Beauvais, Thomas de Cantimpré, and Brunetto Latini did not consider themselves authors; instead, they referred to themselves as compilers who sifted through the works of the Greek philosophers and early Church Fathers to gain understanding of the world around them which they conveyed to their audience. Bartholomaeus, for example, ends his prologue with this assertion: “In quibus de meo pauca vel quasi nulla apposui, sed omnia que dicentur de libris authenticis sanctorum et philosophorum excipiens, sub brevi compendio pariter compilavi, sicut per singulos titulos poterit legentium industria experiri” (Pr., 52-53; In this work I have put of my own will little or nothing, but all that shall be said is taken from authentic books of holy saints and of philosophers and compiled briefly without idleness, and so that by all the titles wise readers may ascertain it).<sup>11</sup> Authors like Bartholomaeus Anglicus may not have generated the

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<sup>9</sup> Ribémont, introduction, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ribémont, *De natura rerum*, 21; Ribémont, introduction; Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Citations will include book number in Roman numerals (the *prohemium* will be identified as Pr.), chapter in Arabic numerals when applicable, and the page number of the modern edition. Latin transcriptions of the prologue and books I through IV come from Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. Christel Meier et al., vol 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). Latin transcriptions from books V-XIX come from Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, ed. Wolfgang Richerum (1601; repr., Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964). English translations are my own; where appropriate, they are based on Trevisa’s fourteenth-century Middle English translation. John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: Trevisa’s translation of De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. M. C. Seymour, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

knowledge found in their works, but they also did not merely transcribe quotations.

Bartholomaeus refers to his task as that of organizing the vast sum of available knowledge “*summatim et breviter*” (Pr., 52; summarily and briefly). Encyclopedic compilations gathered a wide variety of contradictory modes of thought and viewpoints into in one work, which did not result in a unified picture of the medieval world. The authors of encyclopedias do not always seek to synthesize the information they present; nor does their work possess the level of ideological unity that would be found in a related medieval genre, the *summa*. Although both summarize information from contradictory viewpoints for those unable or unlikely to pursue such knowledge for themselves, the *summa* aims to resolve these differences.<sup>12</sup> An encyclopedia, however, accepts a plurality of views, creating a work whose boundaries of knowledge are difficult to stabilize.

Bartholomaeus, a Franciscan monk, composed his monumental text for very practical reasons: the education of his lesser brothers who lacked either the time or education necessary to study the ancient texts on their own, and the edification of the Holy Church. He writes:

De quibus adiutorio divino est presens opusculum compilatum, utile mihi et forsitan aliis, qui naturas rerum et proprietates per sanctorum libros nec non et philosophorum dispersas non cognoverunt, ad intelligenda enigmata Scripturarum, que sub symbolis et figuris proprietatum rerum naturalium et artificialium a Spiritu Sancto sunt tradite et velate. (Pr., 51)

[By help of God this work is compiled, profitable to myself and perhaps to others who do not know the natures and properties of things that are dispersed and spread out in books of holy saints and philosophers, for the understanding of enigmatic Scriptures, where the Holy Ghost has veiled beneath symbols and figures the properties of natural and artificial things.]

He recognizes both the need for a work to summarize the vast amount of information contained in the multitude of books, and the utility of the information compiled as a means of unlocking the

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<sup>12</sup> Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 68-70.

unseen mysteries of God that are known and understood through the seen, natural things of the world.<sup>13</sup> A moralizing duty coexists at the heart of medieval encyclopedic thought alongside the more practical concerns of the genre.<sup>14</sup> Organization, therefore, became a crucial element of the work's composition on a practical and theoretical level: practically because the encyclopedia contained such a vast amount of information, theoretically because it had to lead people to a better understanding of the divinely organized world.<sup>15</sup> Though they did not generate the knowledge, medieval encyclopedists deliberately chose how to organize it into volumes, books, and chapters to assist readers consulting only fragments at a time. In his prologue Bartholomaeus clearly delineates the subject of each of the nineteen books. He also alphabetizes a few books of his encyclopedia, which would have helped accommodate readers searching to consult only a single entry. The use of alphabetization represents a rare choice because, outside of indexes, it was not a widespread organizational tool in the Middle Ages due to the emphasis on memorization. Texts were often organized thematically or in accordance with an order found in a commonly memorized text.<sup>16</sup> Most information in Bartholomaeus' encyclopedia was classified hierarchically or according to some other organizational schema such as head to toe, or inside to

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<sup>13</sup> Franklin-Brown traces this view back to Augustine who used Pauline doctrine to support his view that the proper use of the things of the world involved understanding them as symbols of divine truth. Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 45-46.

<sup>14</sup> Marginal notes in several of the manuscripts indicate that some readers did indeed recognize the moral truths contained in the *De proprietatibus rerum*, and likely used it in the preparation of sermons. James R. Long, introduction to Liber IV, in *Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum*, vol. 1, ed. Christel Meier et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 191-92.

<sup>15</sup> Ribémont links organization to the ability to understand God's creation, "L'esprit de somme d'un encyclopédiste est donc, peu ou prou, lié à une réflexion sur l'organisation du monde et sur l'enchaînement des disciplines. Le reflet du miroir ne peut pas être anarchique car il doit donner l'image de l'harmonie de la nature ; en outre, la vision du chaos n'est guère propre à offrir un chemin vers le salut, ni même à proposer un exemple." Ribémont, *De natura rerum*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Partial alphabetization was used throughout Antiquity to the Middle Ages, especially in lexicography. The advent of printing led to the more widespread use of alphabetization in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Lloyd W. Daly, *Contributions to a History of Alphabetization in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1967); Ribémont, introduction, 30-31. For more on the role of memory in organizational techniques see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

outside. Such meticulous organization attests to the overarching goals of instruction and edification.<sup>17</sup>

Although alphabetization and book lists served as organizational tools, the encyclopedists encouraged their readers to proceed from beginning to end of their work in order to obtain a more thorough understanding of material organized according to higher, over-arching principles. In *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus adopts an organizational system based on a hierarchy of the universe that descends from the celestial to the terrestrial realm in nineteen books. The first two discuss the celestial beings, the next five describe man, and the remaining twelve examine the terrestrial sphere from top to bottom in terms of the four elements. The encyclopedic enterprise of authors like Bartholomaeus Anglicus was clearly ambitious. Often, their goals surpassed their means because a finite, albeit voluminous, book cannot contain the knowledge of an infinite universe. Though the Englishman and others attempted to overcome the problem by being “summatim et breviter” and by meticulously organizing their material, the sheer amount of information available exceeded the capacity of their classification systems. Bartholomaeus could not avoid concluding with a catch-all book XIX, a sort of appendix exploring various accidents, the perception of colors, smells, tastes, numbers, music, etc.<sup>18</sup> Despite its fairly rigorous classification system, *De proprietatibus rerum* could not contain the wealth of information available. It overflows the boundaries of books and chapters as Bartholomaeus, much like later encyclopedists, often found himself obliged to direct readers to different sections of the work. The world in all its complexity defies the categories set up by the encyclopedists, and this proves true in the case of humans and animals. In *De proprietatibus*

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<sup>17</sup> Ribémont, introduction, 30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Ribémont, *De natura rerum*, 33-37.

*rerum* animals creep into the books on humans on both a behavioral and physical level, while women find themselves mixed with the beasts.

### **An Encyclopedic Consideration of Hair**

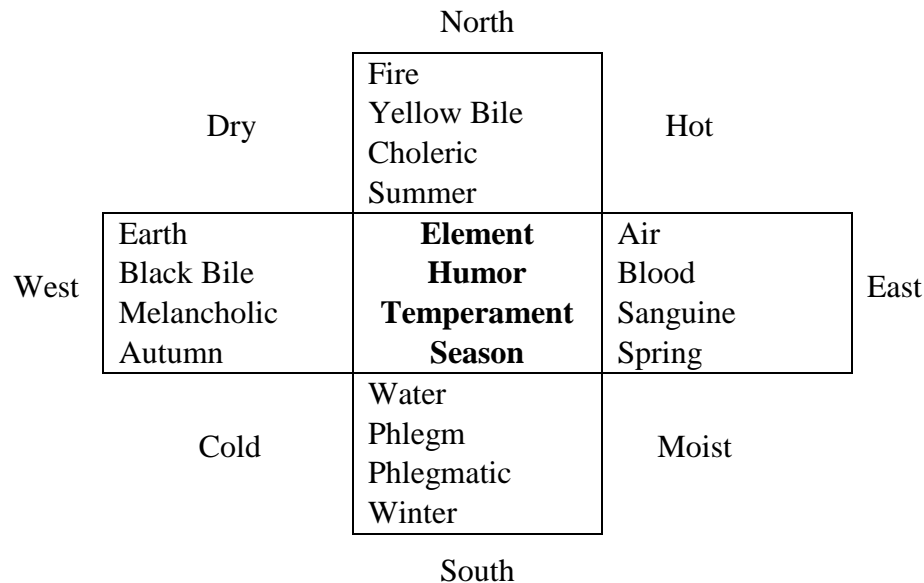
Organizational shortcomings aside, the amount of extant manuscripts indicates that encyclopedic compilations were immensely popular throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, not only for their interpretation of nature, but for their interpretation of mankind itself. Encyclopedists read the “book” of nature by demonstrating how external and internal features of the natural world reveal God’s plan for humanity and creation. In medieval thought, man is composed of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water) and also of their corresponding humors (black bile, blood, yellow bile, and phlegm). The humors and elements were also influenced by opposing attributes: hot and cold, dry and moist. According to Galenic theory the human body was subject to these humors and everything, including food and drink, contained them in various combinations. The humors could in turn determine the body’s temperament (melancholic, sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic), each of which was associated with a season and eventually assigned physical and emotional traits (see figure 1.1). Thus, physicians and those familiar with the Galenic theory could interpret men and women via their external and internal traits. In *De proprietatibus rerum*, information about humans and their hair in particular features primarily in books III through VII.<sup>19</sup> Situated between the celestial beings and the terrestrial sphere, the placement of the books about humankind highlight their liminal position: connected

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<sup>19</sup> Book III defines the soul which links humans to the celestial realm; book IV, the elements and their corresponding humors which influence man’s body and constitution; book V, man’s anatomy; book VI, the different ages and conditions of man; and book VII, the various illnesses and evils from which man suffers. This organization bears the influence of Isidore of Seville’s eleventh book in the *Etymologiae*, *De homine et portentis* (The human being and portents).



to God and the angels via the soul and the animals via corporeal existence. A close examination of Bartholomaeus's text will reveal what the Englishman thought his educated, male public needed to know about hair. Such an examination will furthermore yield insight into how scientific beliefs about hair affect the interpretation of the natural world and *De proprietatibus rerum* itself.



**Figure 1.1:** The Elements, Seasons, Humors, and Temperaments, based on Claude Thomasset, “The Nature of Woman,” in *A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages*, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (ed.) (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992) 49.

Book V, “De hominis corpore et de singulis eius partibus de quibus sacra scriptura facit mencionem” (Of man’s body and of its individual members which the sacred scriptures mention), contains most of the information regarding hair in *De proprietatibus rerum*. Bartholomaeus relies heavily on his sources, including Constantinus Africanus, Aristotle’s *De animalibus*, Isidore of Seville, Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna, to describe the parts of the body from head to toe.<sup>20</sup> In this book, he dedicates three chapters explicitly to hair: V.15 “De

<sup>20</sup> Ribémont, *De natura rerum*, 196-98.

barbe” (On beards), V.65 “De pilis” (On body hair), and V.66 “De capillis” (On head hair). Hair also features in descriptions of the head itself, eyebrows, temples, hands, and as a comparison in the chapter on nails. Thus, for humans, hair primarily figures in discussions about the head, with a secondary presence on other parts of the body, especially for men. Outside of book V, Bartholomaeus briefly describes ailments affecting hair in book VII such as horripilation, when one’s hair stands on end usually due to fever or extreme fright, and alopecia, a type of leprosy which causes one’s head and facial hair to fall out. The Englishman briefly mentions hair in book VI when explaining the ages of humankind, as in chapter six where he cites Aristotle saying that young girls have longer, softer, and more pliant hair than adult men (VI.6, 302).

Hair grows on the bodies of “animalium generantium animalia” (V.65, 228; beasts that beget beasts). In other words, it grows on all mammals, of which humans are unquestionably the most noble. Following the etymological tradition of Isidore of Seville, Bartholomaeus explains in chapter 65 that hair (*pilus*) is so named because it grows out of the skin (*pellis*). Though likely an invention of the Sevillian, this linguistic link underscores the important relationship between hair and the pores in the skin, from which it grows, a relationship maintained in *De proprietatibus rerum* as Bartholomaeus situates his two books on hair after a chapter on skin. In chapter 66, he refers to hair on the head as *capillus* and explains that it has other names dependent upon its style and the gender of its possessor. *Caesariēs*, according to Bartholomaeus, refers to cut hair and *coma* to uncut hair on men. *Crīnes*, on the other hand, refers only to a woman’s long hair: “crines autem proprie mulierum sunt, & dicuntur crines, eo quod vittis dicriminentur & dividuntur, unde & discriminalia dicuntur vittae quibus capilli divisi recolliguntur” (V.66, 229; women’s hair is called *crīnes* in Latin, for women’s hair is separated, parted, and pleated, and bound with laces. And so, the pleats of women’s hair are knit and bound with laces that are called *discriminalia* in

Latin). Bartholomaeus gleans these terms from Isidore's *Etymologiae* where cultural norms infringe upon the interpretations of hair to the point of gendering certain words through the grammarian's etymological games. The word *crīnis* in classical Latin meant strictly hair on the head and only very rarely referred symbolically to the tail of a comet. Though it was often used in reference to women's hair (possibly because men's hair was described less often) it was not, as Isidore claims, exclusive to women.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, *caesaries* in classical Latin referred to the hair of either a man or a woman, and only very rarely to the hair of a beard.<sup>22</sup> By the thirteenth century, terms which had been neutral had become gendered, and authors presented this gendering as a linguistic fact with practical consequences. A woman's hair should be uncut, adorned, pleated, and braided, and a man's cut, not because of any innate property, but rather because people refer to it as *crīnis* and *caesaries* respectively.

Like all other parts of the body in medieval thinking, hair growth is regulated by the four humors. According to Constantinus Africanus, whose eleventh-century *Viaticum* made the principles of Arabic medicine available to a broad European audience, hair forms from an exhalation of the humors, notably of hot and dry.<sup>23</sup> The humoral excess escapes the body in the form of smoke through pores in the skin. Although often yellow bile, no specific humor is implied because hair results from any of the four humors being "cooked" or heated up in order to exit the body; the specific humors vary based on the humoral makeup of the animal or person in question. When this smoke exits the pores, it comes into contact with the outside air; the air simultaneously hinders its passage and dries it into hair. Following the logic that internal states

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<sup>21</sup> Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "crinis."

<sup>22</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "caesaries."

<sup>23</sup> Bartholomaeus uses the Latin word *fumus* to describe the exhalation of the humors. Trevisa translates this as *fumosyte* from the Old French *fumosité*. The word can be translated as vapor or smoke. In this chapter, I will generally translate *fumus* as smoke when referring to the exhalation arising from humors.

and humoral complexions correspond with exterior signs, Bartholomaeus states that hair takes on the qualities of the humoral smoke that produced it, “Pro qualitate igitur fumi erunt & capilli, quia si fumus niger & capilli nigri, & si multus fuerit fumus, multi erunt capilli, & si paucus, pauci” (V.66, 229; Also the hair has the quality of this smoke, for if this smoke is black the hair is black, and if there is much smoke there is much hair, and if smoke is scarce hair is scarce). Likewise, hair becomes curly when the smoke exits the pores in two contrary directions: the dry and earthy part of the smoke moves downwards while the hot, light part moves upwards. This contrary motion causes the hair to bend, curve, shrivel, and pinch, resulting in shorter curled hair (V.65).

The environment, too, can affect hair growth and color. Bartholomaeus claims that a moist environment allows hair (on the body or head) to grow longer, while hot, dry air causes the smoke to dry quickly. He concludes that the hair of men from moist countries like Thrace is long, full, and soft, while it is hard and curly in hot and dry countries, especially if the people of these countries have a hot and dry complexion (V.65). In this example, internal humoral makeup and external environmental factors work in concert, resulting in hair that corresponds with both. Bartholomaeus does not discuss what would happen if the environment and the humoral makeup of a person were at odds. Moreover, hair can also change color due to external factors apart from generation: hot water makes hair white and cold water can make it black (V.65). Bartholomaeus cites the formation of white foam in hot water rather than cold as proof of this because hot water has more spirit than cold.<sup>24</sup> The potential for the outside environment to affect hair does not detract from the fact that for Bartholomaeus, hair functions as a key component in decoding a person’s humoral fingerprint: “Similiter ex capillis de capite procedētibus noscitur caput. Nam

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<sup>24</sup> Bartholomaeus provides no examples of hair changing color due to water. He perhaps refers to accidental burns from boiling water.

secundum eorum qualitatem & quantitatem, velocitatem sive tarditatem crescendi, de complexionem capitis & interiori eius dispositione iudicator” (V.2, 120; Also the head is known by hair that grows upon it; for the inner disposition and complexion of the head is known by the quality and quantity of hair, and by the swiftness and slowness of growing of hair). The connection between body and humors is apparent in all parts of the body, but nowhere more than the head and the hair on it, where the observer may glimpse a body’s internal makeup (V.2).

In general, men have more hair than women in more places because the former tend to have a hot and dry complexion, while the latter a cold and moist one. This is in part related to the fact that men have larger hearts than women, which produce more blood and hence more heat. The superfluous heat of a man’s blood is either released as smoke through the pores and turned into hair or spent in his daily strenuous activities.<sup>25</sup> In terms of bodily traits, males of all species have harder, hairier, and rougher bodies and deeper voices than females.<sup>26</sup> In chapter 15, Bartholomaeus shows how this humoral makeup leads to the growth of beards:

Et haec est causa quare vir & non mulier barbescit, quia masculi foeminis naturaliter sunt calidiores, & ideo in maribus fumus qui pilorum est materia magis augmentatur, quem, quia natura non sufficebat consumere, expulit per duo loca, scilicet per caput & per barbam: unde accidit aliquando in mulieribus calidae & humidae complexionis, quod videntur barbescere. (V.15, 144)

[And therefore, a man has a beard and not a woman, for a man is naturally hotter than a woman. And therefore, in a man the smoke that is the physical matter of hair increases more than in a woman. And since nature does not tolerate the wasting of that smoke, it is put out and dried in two places, in the head and in the beard; and therefore, sometimes women of hot and moist complexion have beards.]

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<sup>25</sup> This natural activity does not always suffice and Bartholomaeus recommends blood-letting to avoid illnesses associated with too much blood (IV.8).

<sup>26</sup> Bartholomaeus writes in chapter five of book VI that boys are differentiated from men in voice and face; a boy’s face is not yet covered in hair because the hot smoke still represents a significant source of nourishment and growth (VI.12, VI.5, and V.15).

Nature is always economical, ensuring that the excess heat of men naturally leads to the growth of beards. Women have smaller hearts that produce less blood. They, in theory, therefore cannot sustain hard work and their cold, moist complexion does not heat the blood enough to cause the superfluities to be released through the pores. A bearded woman represents a natural anomaly whose existence philosophers and doctors explained through humoral complexions. Women should be cold and moist, but when nature becomes corrupted by old age, environmental factors, or by consuming too much food composed of a certain humor, their complexion may become too warm, causing her to adopt a more a typically male complexion. Thus, she too would need to release more heat and may grow a beard.<sup>27</sup>

Following Isidore of Seville, Bartholomaeus emphasizes two distinct purposes of hair: protection and adornment. Hair protects the head and the brain from exposure to cold air, and a man's beard similarly protects his cheeks which are full of sinews and nerves.<sup>28</sup> It also plays a defensive role on the eyelids and eyebrows. Constantinus and Isidore state that eyelids protect the eye by keeping out air while eyelashes grow on the lids to prevent debris from falling into open eyes and defend closed ones. Everything about eyelashes, from their curved shape that makes them stronger, to the fact that nature does not allow them to grow too long or fall out (at least not to the extent that hair falls out), enhances their ability to assist and protect the eye (V.8). The eyebrows similarly protect the eyes from sweat and other humoral superfluities which escape through the head, the body's chimney. In addition to protecting the head, face, and eyes,

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<sup>27</sup> Joan Cadden notes that later authors often cite a difference in pores as the reason why men have beards and sweat while women do not. Some authors say that women grow small beards if they do not menstruate. Despite the presence of some facial hair, even the hottest woman was generally considered to be colder than the coldest man. Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 182-83.

<sup>28</sup> A *caturrus*, or cold, for example, was believed to be caused by hot or cold air negatively affecting the brain. Though hair is not particularly mentioned in conjunction with colds, this illustration of the negative consequences of cold air on the brain emphasizes its role as protector of the head (VII.4).

hair adorns them. In the chapter on head hair Bartholomaeus reiterates the belief, attributed to Aristotle, that baldness and hair loss are considered unattractive for either sex (V.66, V.2).

Likewise, a man's beard "faciei viri est ornamentum; unde apparens, & cooperiens maxillas, in una parte est ad ornamentum, in alia ad maxillarum adiutorium sive famulatum" (V.15, 144; is the adornment and the ornament of man's face, and hence, the external covering of the jaws; in one part it adorns, and in the other covers and serves). Eyebrows likewise adorn because no one, according to Constantinus, can be considered attractive without them (V.9).<sup>29</sup>

Finally, having the proper amount and normal growth of hair signifies good health, which old age, illness, or corruption of the humors may disrupt. In general, when the body cannot dispose of excess humors or when it begins to run out of certain humors, an imbalance or, in more serious cases, a corruption occurs which adversely affects overall health. In the case of hair, color change results primarily from the smoke of the humor producing it while hoariness (the process of hair turning white) and baldness result from imbalances and corruption. When people age, they begin to lose their heat; this loss results in an excess of cold phlegm and white smoke. The hair on the temples turns white quicker because of its proximity to the bones of the temple which are naturally cold. Baldness, like hoariness, occurs primarily in old age when the humors fail. Smaller quantities of certain humors produce less smoke which prevents new hair growth. Moisture keeps hair from falling from the pores, so lack of the moist element (in addition to thinning of the skin at the front of the head) results in hair loss. Hair does not usually fall out of the back of the head because the thickness of the skin and the density of the pores

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<sup>29</sup> The consensus that eyebrows enhance beauty is shared by Brunetto Latini in his *Livres dou tresor*. He compares the corruption of an entire species by evil tendencies to the loss of eyebrows: "Se tu reinoes les sorcils d'un home, tu en hostes petites choses, mais tous li cors en deviant plus lais; tout autresi se tu blasmes entre toutes creatures une petite vermine que ele soit mauveise por nature, certes tu fais tort a toutes creatures" (I.11.3). Brunetto Latini, *Li livres dou Tresor*, eds. Spurgeon Baldwin and Paul Barrette (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003).

there hold it in place. Bartholomaeus cites Galen as saying that children, women, and castrated men do not go bald because they have plenty of moisture in their heads.<sup>30</sup> Baldness can also result from a corruption or illness rather than a depletion of the humors. Bartholomaeus warns particularly of *allopiciam*, alopecia areata, one of the four types of leprosy. Hair loss associated with this leprous form of alopecia results from a corruption or blockage of the blood which nourishes hair. This corruption causes the hair to fall out, often well before age fifty, especially in the front part of the head and the eyebrows and eyelashes, and making the skin itself appear red and pimply (V.66, VII.64). Like all leprosy, Bartholomaeus explains that alopecia can only be cured by the hand of God, but because this form in particular is associated with corrupt blood, bloodletting represents a potential method of slowing down progression of the disease if doctors recognize the symptoms early and if they succeed in ridding the body of the corrupted blood.

In *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus provides a standard definition of hair as understood in medical discourse passed down over many generations by proponents of humoral theory. As outlandish as some of the explanations appear to the modern reader, they are nonetheless conform to humoral theory, a theory based on the importance of maintaining an equilibrium in the body, humors, and the soul. Bartholomaeus does not just provide this information simply for information's sake; ultimately, the readers of *De proprietatibus rerum* are to use the knowledge about things seen in order to contemplate and understand things unseen, as stated in the *prohemium*. In the case of man, the body becomes an outward sign which can teach about the unseen state of the soul. Thus, an outside observer can literally read hair and other physical features and subsequently interpret them. The reading of hair, however, can become

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<sup>30</sup> Castrated men do not go bald or grow beards because they no longer generate enough heat. Their constitution changes from being dominated by hot elements to cold ones when they are cut which makes the hair stay in place and prevents it from falling out (V.66).



complicated by virtue of its association with the beasts. Scientifically speaking, little differentiates human hair from the fur of other mammals; the same process governs its growth, aging, loss, color, and texture. Hair serves as a visual reminder of the connection between humans and the beasts (described in book XVIII of *De proprietatibus rerum*) and thereby has the potential to problematize the hierarchical relationship between humans and animals both literally, in terms of the text's organization, and metaphorically when humans begin to take on attributes of their hirsute counterparts. Ultimately, though anatomical observations about hair are grounded in humoral theory, the connection to animals causes the interpretation of hair to mix science with metaphor as external features of hair become associated with emotions, strength, and sexuality.

### **Hair as Disruption**

Bartholomaeus dedicates chapters 15, 65, and 66 of book V explicitly to hair. Looking solely at the context of these descriptions in *De proprietatibus rerum*, the most striking feature is that Bartholomaeus waits until the very last two chapters of book V to describe body hair, *pilus*, and head hair, *capillus*. This breaks with the traditional head to toe order found in most medical and encyclopedic texts, including one of Bartholomaeus's principal sources, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. In his section on human anatomy, Isidore begins with the head and moves logically to the skull and then hair. Head hair leads him to acknowledge the presence of hair on other parts of the body before returning to different hair styles and continuing to the temples.<sup>31</sup> Although

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<sup>31</sup> "Hair (*capilli*) is so called as if it came from 'strands belonging to the head' (*capitis pilus*), made so as both to be an ornament, and to protect the head against the cold and defend it from the sun. 'Strands of hair' (*pilus*) are so called after the skin (*pellis*) from which they grow, just as the pestle (*pilo*, i.e. *pilum*) is so called from a mortar (*pila*), where pigment is ground. A 'head of hair' (*caesaries*) is so called from 'needing to be cut.'" Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XI.i.28-29, 232.

this arrangement causes Isidore to allude to parts of the body below the head, the brevity of these allusions means that the disruption does not hinder the overall flow of the passage.

Bartholomaeus, by contrast, chooses not to describe hair after his section on the skull, and his omission is considerably more noticeable:

Caluaria est anterior pars cranei, ab ossibus carnis sic dicta, propter capillorum defectionem, & neutraliter pronunciatur. *Unde dicet Isido lib.II.cap.1* sic vertex dicitur superior pars capitis exterius ubi capilli capitis colligantur, & in qua cesaries vertitur, unde & nuncupatur, sic occipitium dicitur pars capitis posterior, quasi contra capitium caluaria capillis spoliatur cito propter eius siccitatem, vertex tardius, sed occiput tardissime sive nunquam propter humoris superfluitatem. De capillis autem quaere infra eodem. (V.4, 127)

[*Caluaria* ‘the front part of the skull’ has that name *caluaria* of bald bones for lack of hair, and is neuter [grammatically] too. And in *libro ii capitulo 1* Isidore says that *vertex* is the outer part of the head, where the hair is knit, where the locks are wound. Then the *occiput* ‘the back of the head.’ The front part of the head soon turns bald for dryness thereof, the top of the head later; but the back of the head almost never, and that for the excess of humors. Regarding hair, seek more within.]

Bartholomaeus knows that hair should logically follow the chapter on the skull, especially since the entirety of the entry on the skull revolves around its relationship to hair. The instruction to search for hair later in the book likewise demonstrates his awareness that his readers expect hair to follow immediately the section on the skull. It also encourages the reader to flip forward in his own reading to find the other chapters where hair is discussed, thus enacting the kind of disruption that hair introduces into the organizational schema.

This omission does not imply that Bartholomaeus was less concerned than Isidore with maintaining a logical order when describing the body. On the contrary, organization was of the utmost importance to Bartholomaeus and his readers, especially since book V (unlike some of the others) does not adopt the alphabetical order. The rationale for the Englishman’s decision to defer his description of hair becomes clearer if we turn once more to *Etymologiae*. Isidore’s

survey of the body roughly follows the head to toe order until after his description of nipples, at which point he diverts to descriptions of body parts that affect the whole person: skin and flesh, the limbs, joints, sinews, and tendons, and the bones, marrow, and cartilage. After this digression, he returns to the ribs, continues downwards ending at the feet, and then moves to the inside of the body to discuss the vital organs (*viscera*). This time, the disruption of the head to toe order is quite noticeable, though he at least situates these sections at just about the body's midpoint. Organizationally, with the exception of skin, these body parts prove difficult to place since they are more "inside" than the limbs but more "outside" than the internal organs.

Bartholomaeus takes a slightly different approach in book V to avoid such an interruption to the book's flow. Rather than describing first the exterior body parts head to toe and then moving inwards, he describes them all at once working from the outside in: the brain follows the head, the lungs and heart follow the breast, and so on. He waits until the end of the book to describe the parts that constitute the entire body, this time from the inside out: bones, marrow, cartilage, sinews, flesh, fat, skin, hair, head hair. Head hair, *capillus*, represents the obvious outlier to this system since it very specifically grows only on the head. Its presence at the end of the book breaks up the traditional and logical flow. Yet it allows Bartholomaeus to gesture back to where the book began, at the head, creating the appearance of a self-contained whole, a book on humans that both begins and ends at the chief member of the body. The disruption at the skull remains nonetheless quite palpable. However, had he placed the chapter on head hair after the chapter on the skull where it arguably belongs, he perhaps would have felt it necessary, following Isidore's lead, to also treat body hair which, due to its connection to animals, he perhaps saw as an even greater threat to the order.

Animals appear with relative frequency in book V, especially when Bartholomaeus wants to point out a difference between shared body parts. In the last half of the second chapter on the eyes, for example, he mentions the superior sight of eagles and a cat's ability to see at night (V.6). In the chapter on the stomach, a part of the body laden with moral connotations in anyone too concerned with their terrestrial existence, Bartholomaeus notes that the human stomach has a slightly different shape than the stomach of most other animals due to humans' upright posture (V.38). Allusions like this to the animal kingdom usually appear at or near the end of a chapter, after the general explanation of the body part in question. Animals function as a gloss on humans but the species do not intermingle; humans unquestionably remain the focus of each chapter. Chapter 65, however, represents the only chapter where humans are not the *de facto* object of study but rather the comparison. After the brief introduction of the etymology and origin of hair, Bartholomaeus moves immediately to the premise that all mammals have hair and examines the source of the many differences in quantity and quality. According to Aristotle, the variations result from differences in the skin of the beasts and the nature of the humor which produces the hair:

Nam animalia grossae cutis, grossum habent pilum, & hoc accidit propter multitudinem terrestris partis, & viarum sive pororum amplitudinem. Et cum cutis fuerit continua & spissa, erunt pili multum tenues & subtiles propter stricturam viarum, & quando humor fumosus qui est in cute, fuerit velocis siccitatis, non erunt pili magni neque longi, & cum fuerint grossi & pingues, erunt è contrario, & propter hoc elongantur capitis pili hominis valde, quia ille humor pinguis est, nec de facili desiccatur. (V.65, 228)

[For beasts with much skin have much hair, and that is for multitude and plenty of the element of earth, and also for wideness of pores. And if the skin is enclosed [continuous] and thick, the hair is full thin and small for narrowness of passage. And if the exhalation of humors that are in the skin dries quickly, there is not much nor long hair; and if the humor is great, thick, and fat, the hair is the opposite way. Therefore, hair of a man's head is full long, for the humor is fertile [fat] of nature and dries slowly.]

From the chapter's introductory remarks which discuss all mammals, Bartholomaeus moves to beasts whose governance by the element of earth causes them to have wider pores. He then moves to man's head, the only place where he imagined enough smoke could escape the body to allow a large amount of hair to grow. Bartholomaeus gives such a thorough explanation of *pilis* in this book that he does not have to describe it again in his introduction to animals in book XVIII. The chapter focuses on animals to such an extent that even when discussing aging, Bartholomaeus refers to the beasts: "Quando senescent animalia habentia pilos, indurescunt tunc pili plus qua prius, sicut indurantur plume avium, & hoc propter paucitate humoris" (V.65, 228; When a beast with hair becomes old, then the hair becomes harder and stiffer, as feathers of fowls get hard in old age, and that for scarcity of humors). The reader must wait until chapter 66 for the descriptions of baldness and hoariness which accompany the aging process in humans.

The root of the problem seems to be that visible body hair represents, first and foremost, an animal rather than a human trait. This explains why animals become the main example in chapter 65, *De pilis*, and humans, while still occupying an important role, the alternate. This also explains Bartholomaeus's apparent reluctance to include this chapter near the beginning of the book about *human* body parts. The preceding quotation, moreover, renders explicit the connections among animals, earth, skin, and hair. In elemental terms, non-human mammals have an abundance of earth which produces their thick skin which in turn leads to a hairy epidermis. Thus, to understand the difference between human and animal *pilus*, the chapter on body hair must follow the chapter on skin from which it derives both literally and linguistically. The need to physically distinguish humans from other animals becomes a driving force behind the revised order of book V because, for Bartholomaeus and other medieval encyclopedists, no discussion of the physical body can exist apart from a moral consideration of the state of the soul within it:

“Item membra quamdiu reguntur ab anima sana, permanent ad completionem suae actionis, & perfectionem corporis sunt utilia, sed privata à regimine spirituum residuo corpori sunt nociva. Item membra purae & imperturbatae complexionis ad obediendum actioni spiritus sunt habiliora” (V.1, 117; Also as long as members are ruled by the healthy soul, they are profitable and useful for the perfection and proper function of the body. But if a member loses the governance of spirits, it is grievous to other parts of the body. Also, the members of pure and clean complexion are more able to obey the working of the spirit). Like the earth, which functions as a mirror reflecting God’s Word and power, the human body is a book to be read and interpreted reflecting the soul within. Bartholomaeus claims that a pure, healthy body houses a pure spirit. If the inverse is likewise true, then a body too reminiscent of the beasts threatens the integrity of the rational soul, and the rational part of the soul distinguishes humans from the beasts.

Why then does Bartholomaeus choose to focus primarily on animals in his chapter on body hair at the end of book V? Is he trying to reassure his readers that even though human and animal hair originates from the same material, their different elemental compositions ensure that they will never become as hairy as animals? Or is he implicitly warning them that if they become too influenced by the element earth (in other words, if they become too attached to their earthly life and desires) they may become metaphorically hairy, running the risk of compromising their rational souls? Did Bartholomaeus’ readers even recognize the organizational irregularity as anything more than an inconvenience? Since we do not know exactly how medieval readers read this chapter, the consequences of this decision cannot be fully grasped; we can nonetheless identify a potential anxiety regarding the possibility of a slippage between species. When animal comparisons arise in book V, they tend to be situated near the ends of chapters. I believe that the reason behind this placement lies not merely in the book’s concentration on human rather than

animal anatomy, but also in the tension created by the relationship between humans and other mammals. This tension becomes especially troublesome in regard to the hierarchy governing *De proprietatibus rerum*. The hierarchy, announced in the encyclopedia's prologue, presents an ordered universe with humans situated above other terrestrial beings. The connection between humans and animals, if it cannot be ignored, is at least relegated to the end of the section. Consequently, when dealing with a subject like body hair which automatically elicits images of animals, Bartholomaeus places it at the end of the book where information that threatens or does not fit into the organizational principle of the work must go. This corresponds with the presence of the catch-all book XIX which closes the work. Bartholomaeus cannot deny the duality of human nature. The connection between humans and animals exists for him on a scientific level, and its existence renders the hierarchy fragile. By putting the chapter on body hair at the end of book V and following it with a chapter on exclusively human head hair, Bartholomaeus assuages the anxiety, at least on the surface.

The pattern of placing provocative comparisons between humans and animals at the end of a chapter appears in other sections of the work. In book IV, Bartholomaeus provides an overview of four elements and their qualities and the four humors with their corresponding temperaments which serves as a theoretical underpinning for the remaining chapters on humans and other terrestrial beings.<sup>32</sup> Bartholomaeus describes each humor and its effects on the body and then describes the corresponding Galenic temperaments as relayed in Constantinus Africanus's translation of the *Pantegni* by 'Ali ĩbn al-'Abbas al-Majūsī (Ali Abbas). R. James

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<sup>32</sup> According to James Long, Bartholomaeus's chapter on the elements and corresponding humors represents an exception in contemporaneous encyclopedic literature because neither Vincent of Beauvais in his *Speculum maius* nor Thomas of Cantimpré in *De natura rerum* devotes much attention to the theory of the humors. Brunetto Latini devotes four considerably shorter chapters (99-102) in book I of the *Livres dou trésor* to the elements, humors, and complexions. Long also states that book IV was "among the most successful of the nineteen books of Bartholomaeus's encyclopedia and quite possibly the most utilized conduit for the layman of the accumulated medical lore of the Greeks and the Arabs." James Long, introduction to Liber IV, 191-92.

Long succinctly summarizes the essence of the humoral theory in his introductory note to book IV:

The proper balance of these humors spells health for the body, their imbalance on the contrary induces illness and infirmity. Galen, however, applied these concepts not only to diseases but also to constitutional variations of those enjoying good health. The Greek word *krasis* was translated into Latin as *temperamentum* which means “a mixing in due proportion.” Arbitrarily and with no empirical evidence Galen associated the composition of humors, the *temperamentum*, with specific mental traits as well as body structures. It was not long, however, before his highly imaginative treatment came to be regarded as science.<sup>33</sup>

The underlying assumption of this theory is that the interior state can be read on the outside.

Since Bartholomaeus will posit hair as a reliable indicator of internal humoral make-up in the opening pages of book V, it logically follows that it would appear in the short physical descriptions that occur at the end of each of the four chapters on complexions in book IV.

A sanguine person, influenced by hot and moist humors, for example, is of good spirits, ready to love, and his body is of a good complexion and hue; Bartholomaeus makes no mention of hair here (IV.7). In terms of physical appearance, someone cold and moist, or phlegmatic, is generally white-skinned with “crine mollis [...], flavus et laxus, [...] cuius cutis superficies plana et lenis ac a pilis denudata” (IV.9, 236; soft hair [...], yellow and loose, [...] his skin is plain and smooth and is without hair). Women are generally cold and moist, and though the description refers to men, it corresponds with the ideal female portrait. As for people of a hot and dry choleric disposition, that is, the humors most associated with men, Bartholomaeus writes: “Colerici generaliter solent esse [...] in corpore longi, tenues et macilenti, colore fusci, in crinibus nigri et crispī, pilis hispidi et hirsuti” (IV.10, 238; Choleric men are [...] long, slender, and lean, in color brown; in [head] hair black and curly, [body] hair rough and stiff).

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<sup>33</sup> Long, introduction to Liber IV, 194. See also Jean-Marie Fritz, “La théorie humorale comme moyen de penser le monde: limites et contradictions du système,” in *Écriture et modes de pensée au Moyen Âge*, eds. Dominique Boutet and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Presses de l’Ecole Normale Supérieures, 1993).



Bartholomaeus provides no physical description for the cold and moist melancholic disposition. The heaviest of the humors, melancholia or black bile is associated with the earth. When this humor exists in over-abundance in the body or if it becomes corrupted, it poses a significant threat to physical and especially mental health leading to mania, melancholia, and leprosy. Bartholomaeus bypasses a physical description and instead focuses on such a person's mental state which is characterized by unwarranted fearfulness and sadness.<sup>34</sup> He ends the chapter with two anecdotes. The first is a contemporaneous one, and he vouches for its authenticity: "Et hoc cotidie ad oculum experimur, sicut nuper accidit quemdam nobilem ad tantam desipientiam melancolie vitio devenisse, quod modis omnibus murilegum se putabat. Unde alias quam sub lectis, ubi cati insidiantur muribus, quiescere non valebat" (IV.11, 242; And this we see every day with our own eyes, as it happened of late to a nobleman who fell into such a madness of melancholia that he in all ways thought that he was a cat. Therefore, he would rest nowhere but under beds, where cats wait for mice). The second, biblical example, which concludes book IV, is that of king Nebuchadnezzar who, as punishment for his sin of pride, wandered in the wilderness for seven years as a beast, sometimes a lion, sometimes an eagle, and times an ox. Closing with humans who think they are animals is a surprising way to end a book on the elements that began by espousing the nobility that separates humans from other terrestrial creatures. Though the book opens and closes on humankind, the conclusion shows men who have fallen to the state of an animal. Bartholomaeus ends with what seems like a subtle warning that though endowed with reason, man is still terrestrial, linked to animals, and susceptible to his animal nature.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bartholomaeus notes only that the skin of those under the influence of black bile can take on a blackish or blueish hue and that they often have a bitter taste in their mouth.

<sup>35</sup> Unsurprisingly, the marginal notes accompanying this section in some manuscripts refer to those who neglect their own condition and live like beasts. This fourth book is the first book where marginal notes appear. These notes

Like book V, this book is cyclical, but rather than circling back to man's nobility, it continually spirals downward hierarchically, that is, farther away from the celestial ideal into the terrestrial realm. Each chapter connects to the preceding one, starting and ending in a similar fashion. He cycles through the qualities starting with the most noble, heat, and proceeds to the temperaments where he once again starts with the most noble, sanguine, and cycles through. In the same way, the book itself begins with humans, the most noble of terrestrial beings, and ends by gesturing toward their connection with the less noble beasts. The role or absence of hair in each of the four temperaments from blood to black bile singularly captures this descent:

Bartholomaeus makes no mention of hair in descriptions of men influenced by the purest of all humors, blood; phlegmatics have yellow, straight hair and smooth skin; choleric men have black and curly hair and even body hair; while melancholics are prone to lunacy and believe that they are animals covered in hair. It is of course possible that Bartholomaeus's sources gave little to no indication about the hair of sanguine people or that he merely forgot to include such information.<sup>36</sup> It seems just as likely, however, that Bartholomaeus deliberately chose not to mention hair, a visual reminder of man's connection to the beasts, when describing the most noble of man's temperaments. Thus, as he progresses from the noblest temperament to the least noble, man likewise follows a symbolic progression from smooth-skinned human to hirsute beast.

In the often cited Ovidian description, man's reasonable soul, the foundational source of his distinctive place in the terrestrial realm, is reflected in his upright posture which allows him

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were likely made by or intended for preachers. We cannot know for certain whether they were written or authorized by Bartholomaeus Anglicus, but they fall within the stated purpose of the book of understanding the symbols of the natural world for a better understanding of the Scriptures. Long, introduction to Liber IV, 198.

<sup>36</sup> He does not suggest that people of this temperament were bald since he and his authorities clearly state in book V that baldness is unbecoming.

to look to the heavens while the animals look to the ground.<sup>37</sup> Beasts look to the cold and dry earth because they are made of it. The cold and dry melancholic nobleman accordingly finds himself on all fours with the cats, a clear indication that he has lost his wits. Abandonment of the upright posture, however, usually only happens in the most extreme cases. In the chapter on body hair Bartholomaeus shows that the inability to reason is not the only thing associated with the animal's earthly disposition; their thick coat of hair is too. Thus, both their posture and their hairiness demonstrate the connection animals share with the earth, the element of black bile, and the melancholic temperament responsible for making even some of Bartholomaeus's humans believe they are animals.

The tendency to relegate allusions to the relationship between humans and animals to the ends of books also affects descriptions of the sick human body. At the end of book V chapter 66, Bartholomaeus differentiates between normal hair loss and the more serious alopecia, a variety of leprosy specifically affecting hair. Citing Constantinus and other authorities, Bartholomaeus compares alopecia to foxes (*allopes* in Greek and *vulpes* in Latin) that he believed lost their coats twice a year due to excessive heating of the blood in the liver. The connection between alopecia and foxes seems a bit of a stretch since most fur-bearing mammals shed their coats with seasonal changes. The choice of a fox perhaps has less to do with the manner in which they lose hair than with the red color of its coat, reminiscent of the corrupted blood believed to cause the illness. To learn more about alopecia and leprosy in general, the reader must go to book VII, where Bartholomaeus devotes one chapter to leprosy and the four ways many medieval authors believed it appeared: *elephancia*, *tiria* or *serpentyna*, *alopecia*, and *leonina*. The chapter on leprosy occurs near the end of the seventh book which, like book V, moves from head to toe

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<sup>37</sup> Bartholomaeus refers to this tradition without naming Ovid, calling him instead the "Poeta," in book XVIII.

before moving to diseases affecting the entire body. Bartholomaeus situates leprosy after rashes like scabies and impetigo and before descriptions of rabies and snakebites.<sup>38</sup> In the description,

Bartholomaeus connects all four types of leprosy explicitly to animals:

Est enim una species ex pura melancholia, & haec proprie dicitur elephantia, ab elephante animali, maximo sic vocata propter morbi maximum nocumentum quo infestat patientem. Unde haec passio durior est caeteris, tanquam compactior & difficilior ad curandum & reprimendum. Secunda fit ex melancholia & phlegmate, & haec dicitur tyria vel serpentine à tyro serpente, quia sicut serpens talis de facili dimittit spoliū, & est squamosus, sic patiens talem lepram de facili excoriatur ex cutis superficie & resolvitur in quondam squamam. Tertia species fit ex melancholica sanguinis infectione, & dicitur alopecia & vulpina [...]. Quarta est species ex cholera rubea corrupta in membris eu melancholia, & dicitur leonina à leone tali animali calidissimo & fortissimo. Sed haec species leprae causatur ex humore feruentissimo, & super modum malitioso, & ideo more leonino corrodit & destruit omnia membra. (VII.64, 351-52)<sup>39</sup>

[One manner of leprosy results from pure melancholia and is called *elephancia*, and it gets that name from the elephant that is a great and huge beast. It is so named because this malady causes very great harm and suffering. Therefore, this disease is more severe than the others, being more compact and more difficult to cure and stop. The second comes from melancholia and phlegm and is called *tiria* or *serpentina*, and gets that name from an adder that is called *tyrus*. For as an adder sheds his skin and is scaly, so is he who has this manner of leprosy, being often torn of skin and full of scales. The third type of leprosy comes from melancholia infecting the blood, and is called *alopecia* and *vulpine* ‘fox-like’ [...]. The fourth type of leprosy comes from red cholera corrupted in the limbs with melancholia and is called *leonina*. It gets this name from the lion that is the hottest and most fierce and cruel beast. And this manner of leprosy comes from the most boiling and malicious humor, and therefore it gnaws like a lion and destroys all the limbs.]

All variants of leprosy result from the corruption of black bile, melancholia, either alone or affecting one of the other four humors. Thus, the negative association of black bile and animals

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<sup>38</sup> The chapter immediately following leprosy distinguishes between leprosy and *morphea* which is nearly identical to it with the exception that the latter occurs only in the outer skin while the former affects the flesh inside. François-Olivier Touati notes a recurring tendency of authors to describe leprosy alongside other skin diseases with the express purpose to elucidate the differences in order to better identify true leprosy. François-Olivier Touati, *Maladie et société au Moyen âge: La Lèpre, les lépreux et les léproseries dans la province ecclésiastique de Sens jusqu’au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 1998), 134-35.

<sup>39</sup> From Galen to Isidore of Seville, six types of leprosy were identified. In the thirteenth century, the number was reduced to four. This classification in turn broke down over the course of the fourteenth century. Touati, *Maladie et société*, 133.

once again returns near the end of a book where animals such as the rabid dog and snake likewise threaten the human body. The connection to the animals is first linguistic in the manner of Isidore of Seville, as the name of each type of leprosy derives from a connection to a specific animal. For three of the four variants, the connection moves beyond a linguistic play on association and the leper often physically takes on the appearance of the animal in question: large like an elephant, scaly like a snake, or hairless like a shedding or mangy fox. Regardless of the type, all manner of leprosy causes man to take on physical animal traits. The eyes become round, the nostrils and nails disfigured, the voice hoarse. The skin becomes fatty, apparently changing consistency and Bartholomaeus writes that if a person gets wet, the water would roll off the skin as if it were “a corio madefacto” (VII.64, 352; made of a wet hide). This last irruption of the animal on the body seems gratuitous since water rolls down the skin of a non-leprous person as well. Such intrusions of animal-like features represent a serious threat in the case of leprosy because, unlike other skin diseases, leprosy corrupts the inner workings of the body in addition to the epidermis. Consequently, lepers not only look like animals, but are often viewed as morally unhealthy as well, especially given the Biblical connotations of leprosy, sin, and unbelief. Lepers were suspected of harboring a hidden sin and were reputedly lascivious. Consequently, beliefs surrounding contraction of the disease were entwined with sexuality: it could be contracted by lying with a woman who had previously slept with a leper or passed on to a child conceived during menstruation.<sup>40</sup> Bartholomaeus accordingly alludes to the moral depravity of lepers. He includes his description of the sexual sources of the disease in book VII, and warns in book V that the unnatural loss of eyebrows and other hair caused by leprosy is

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<sup>40</sup> Bartholomaeus relates both beliefs in book VI. Touati traces the connection to leprosy and menstruation to the placement of the rules for treating leprosy near rules governing pure and impure animals, purification of women after childbirth and menstruation, and sin offerings in Leviticus. Touati, *Maladie et société*, 102.

linked to overindulgence in the art of Venus (V.9, V.66). If lepers looked like animals, some concluded it was because like animals they gave in to their bestial desires, namely their sexuality.

The connection between hair, sexuality, and animals was strong in the Middle Ages, as evidenced in the portrait of the hirsute wild man of the forest whose overabundance of hair represented his excessive libido.<sup>41</sup> In *De proprietatibus rerum*, the sexual connotations of hairiness affect primarily men and their beards. Men have beards because of their hot complexion. Beardless men have a colder complexion either naturally or due to castration. Bartholomaeus concludes that: “Ex quo patet quod barbae spissitudo, caloris & humoris substantialis ac vigoris est indicium, & differentiae sexuum certum experimentum” (V.15, 144; And so it follows that thickness of beard shows heat and substantial humor and strength, and is certain evidence to know the difference between men and women). Bartholomaeus links a full, thick beard to the previously unmentioned attributes of strength and virility (in relation specifically to copulation) since this statement immediately follows the explanation of how losing the testes prevents the growth of beards. What was initially a sign denoting only humoral constitution here associates two generally accepted facts with one external sign: beards.<sup>42</sup> More important than the originality or even the accuracy of the claim, is the illustration of how a sign system built on a relatively logical premise of cause and effect (more heat causes more hair) quickly becomes entangled with generalities and animal attributes. The incorporation of attributes only loosely related to the humoral “scientific underpinning” of the work opens the

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<sup>41</sup> In book XVIII, of all the common characteristics of the wild man, Bartholomaeus only describes hair and an excessive desire to copulate. (XVIII.84). Cadden also notes the connection between body hair and sexual virility and then connects this to the sensuality of the wild man. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 181-82.

<sup>42</sup> The connection is logical, traditional, and not without precedent. For proof, Bartholomaeus would have to look no further than the book of Judges where Samson’s long hair held the key to his great strength, lost because of his unbridled passion for Delilah.

door to even more exceptions to the rules and points to potential flaws in the system.<sup>43</sup> The beard's symbolic connection to virility adheres to humoral theory to the extent that it is the product of generative heat. It only indirectly symbolizes man's virility in reproductive terms since that role belongs to his seed.<sup>44</sup> If the science becomes blurred, the symbolic connection to animals and their reputed unbridled sexuality and strength fills the gap. Interestingly, the same superfluities either burned away or turned into a beard in a man, exit a woman's body in the form of corrupted menstrual blood, which turns men into animal-like lepers (VI.12).<sup>45</sup>

The connection between hair and sexuality applies to head hair too. If baldness is a sign of excessive sexuality, hoariness, by contrast, denotes "maturitatem, & extinctionem libidinis, & vitiorum puerilium mortificationem vitae praesentis, & futurae instantis necessariam novitatem" (V.66, 230; length of life and age, and quenching and passing of carnal pleasures, stopping and killing of vices and the pleasures of youth, and ending of this life, and necessary tidings of new life that comes hereafter). The connections to the humoral makeup remain, though they are faint. The quenching of carnal pleasure is inferred from the way the aging body produces less heat and blood which are necessary elements for coitus; presumably the same is true for the other pleasures of youth. The reason white hair signifies the ending of this life and its pleasures and

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<sup>43</sup> Jean-Marie Fritz notes the general tendency for discourse on the temperaments and humors to take on metaphoric rather than strictly scientific or medical meaning. Fritz, "La théorie humorale," 20.

<sup>44</sup> Hot and cold are the two active elements, but heat is most associated with generation (IV.1). The generative ability of women was the subject of much debate in the Middle Ages. Many intellectuals following Aristotle, maintained that only the males could "cook" nutritional residue to produce the active seed necessary for generation. Authors like Albertus Magnus linked semen to menstrual blood. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 121, 171-72, 181.

<sup>45</sup> Though they essentially come from the same source, according to Bartholomaeus (excess humors), no negative connotations are attached to men's beards, while women's menstrual blood is assigned to the chapter on bad or corrupt blood in IV.8. Bartholomaeus follows Isidore of Seville in stating that if menstrual blood touches fruit or herbs they dry out, trees lose their fruit, iron rusts, brass and metal turn black, and if a dog eats this blood it turns rabid. Its only positive contribution occurs during pregnancy when it nourishes the fetus. This nutritive role continues after the birth of the child when it was believed to turn into the mother's milk (IV.8). Cadden explains that menstruation is reminiscent of the Fall which may explain some of the negative connotations attached to it. Medically, menstruation could be seen in a more positive light as a healthful purgation. See Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 174-77.

tidings of the next is likely less humoral and more metonymical and cultural. White hair occurs more commonly on older people who are naturally closer to reaching the afterlife and less often associated with amorous liaisons. White is also the color of holiness and purity, necessary ingredients for admission to the afterlife and the opposite of carnality, which is why medieval authors often depict hermits as older men with flowing white hair.<sup>46</sup> Given the humoral context of white hair, however, one can ask whether the white hair of hermits is a symbol that they no longer care for the carnal pleasure of their youth, or a symbol that they have used up all their natural heat pursuing carnal pleasure and can now pursue the deeper things of God.

For the most part, the discussion surrounding hair, the humors, and complexions revolves around men. Bartholomaeus envisions a primarily male readership of priests and noblemen, and most examples and illustrations in the work default to a male perspective. For example, the few details Bartholomaeus provides about the general characteristics of people with various complexions refer only to men. Discussions explicitly regarding women take place in separate sections of the work: a separate chapter becomes necessary to describe menstrual blood in book IV, and the chapter on “youth” in book VI does not describe girls. Unless explicitly discussing procreation, women and women’s bodies seem to hold a lesser interest for Bartholomaeus.<sup>47</sup> Women do, however, figure in book XVIII on animals where Bartholomaeus includes a chapter entitled “De femina.” This chapter describes general characteristics of females of all species, including humans:

Fœminae maribus sunt debiliores praeter ursum & leopardum, nam horum fœminae sunt audaciores & fortiores. Et sunt fœminae leviores ad instruendum, & sunt magis sollicitae circa fœtum, sunt etia maioris pietatis, &c. *Quaere supra residuum lib.6 cap1. de puella, ibi multa enim inuentes de hac materia.* (XVIII.47, 2068-69)

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines dans la littérature française du Moyen Age* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), 69-73, 158. This topic will be addressed further in chapter two.

<sup>47</sup> Book V’s description of body parts does include descriptions of the uterus and breasts.



[The females are weaker than the males, except the bear and the leopard for those females are more hardy and strong than the males. And females are quicker to learn and teach than males. And they are busier with their offspring and children and milder. For more information look earlier in *book vi chapter 1 on girls*, for there you shall find much more of this information.]

Bartholomaeus describes women side by side with the animals, differentiating between them only when a significant difference presents itself, much as he did in the chapter on body hair in book V. He even directs his readers to the appropriate chapter in book VI if they would like more information on women. Women, like hair in book V, seem to represent an organizational disruption in *De proprietatibus rerum*. Immediately following this chapter, Bartholomaeus describes engenderment and fetuses, another liminal category in medieval theology, which providentially fall in line with the alphabetization of the book. Unsurprisingly, no such chapter on men exists in book XVIII.<sup>48</sup> Such treatment corresponds with medieval views connecting women more explicitly than men with nature. Often, writers imagined men as connected to the spirit while associating women with the flesh. Women were seen as bodies ruled primarily by internal organs and sexual desires rather than the mind. Aristotle considered women as truncated men; they were passive while men were the initiators in all domains.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, Bartholomaeus situates women among a group of beings that exist on the earth for men to understand and interpret, but who themselves are not capable, or at least have no need, to participate in the interpretive act. Neither Bartholomaeus nor any other medieval theologian denies women a rational soul, but unlike men, he links them to nature and irrational beasts since,

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<sup>48</sup> Isidore of Seville does not have a chapter on women in the twelfth book about animals.

<sup>49</sup> Claude Thomassett, "The Nature of Woman," in *A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992); Jacques Dalarun, "The Clerical Gaze," in *A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

as evidenced by Eve, they are more prone to succumb to their animal instincts. For Bartholomaeus, it seems that such weakness also hinders their need, and perhaps their ability, to lift their heads and contemplate the heavens and the world around them.

In addition to relegation to a lower status, readers can detect the lack of attention to women in the disregard of their lived realities. Focusing specifically on hair, we see that the humoral system creates norms and standards which become potentially problematic for its outliers, especially women who, with the exception of their heads, should be free from visible body and facial hair. While it is true that not all men have beards, most were more than likely visibly hairier than women on some part of the body, arms, chest, or hands. Women too naturally grow hair in places other than their head, yet Bartholomaeus ignores this reality in favor of the ideal of smooth, hairless skin. The willful ignorance of the presence of body and even facial hair on a woman may indicate more about the sex and profession of Bartholomaeus's audience than about his unawareness of female anatomy. He works in generalities for a male and primarily clerical readership who need only know the reason why women should be smooth-skinned and men hairy. The encyclopedist relays and thereby propagates the standards of male and female body norms on the basis of "scientific" facts gleaned from trusted sources with little concern for individuals and variation outside of those explained by the different complexions. Variations, however, are precisely what the readers of these encyclopedias would be likely to notice; they are what alert physicians to abnormalities in their patient's body. This places a burden on women, and indeed anyone who strays from the norm, to make their bodies conform to these standards. The question of how to conform to standards is not the subject of encyclopedias, though Bartholomaeus does include a lengthy chapter devoted to health. Rather, the more

practical and day-to-day concerns lay more within the purview of health regimens, some of which were dedicated to women.

### **Aldebrandin de Sienne and Health Regimens**

Aldebrandin de Sienne's *Régime du corps* (c. 1256) is a regimen containing medical and dietary advice on how to stay healthy. Addressed to a female audience, it shows how one physician interpreted feminine medical concerns and assisted women in meeting the standards of beauty put forth in encyclopedic texts. Aldebrandin's health regimen additionally provides some insight into the type of information a male authority figure believed women needed to know, what they were to do with it, and how this differs from that provided to men. Health regimens were increasingly popular from the mid thirteenth century through the end of the fifteenth century. Their authors generally wrote them for an identifiable individual, usually a wealthy man of high social standing, although some more general texts destined for university use and training exist.<sup>50</sup> The health regimens were usually composed in Latin prose but vernacular texts started to appear with more frequency from the middle of the fourteenth century, and a few verse regimens also exist.<sup>51</sup> Written toward the middle of the thirteenth century, the *Régime du corps* by the Italian Aldebrandin de Sienne represents not only an early regimen, but the earliest known example in France of such a medical text composed in the vernacular. An Italian physician practicing at the court of Provence, Aldebrandin dedicated his text to the Countess of Provence, Béatrix de Savoie. Béatrix was preparing to embark on a trip to visit her four daughters who were all married to European princes: Margaret wife of Louis IX of France, Eleanor wife of Henry III of England, Sanchia wife of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, and Beatrice, wife of Charles I

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<sup>50</sup> P. Gil Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," *Histoire de la pensée médicale en Occident* 1 (1995): 265.

<sup>51</sup> Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," 265.

of Sicily.<sup>52</sup> Aldebrandin makes no reference to Béatrix's health, age, her personal preferences for activity or food, or her religion as is often the case in later health regimens.<sup>53</sup> Although attached to a precise individual, Aldebrandin's *Régime* may have been intended as more of a general handbook on health for noble women.

Given that health regimens were usually written by physicians, they often address questions of nature and nurture. The genre of the *régime de santé* has its roots in Greek medicine dating back to texts attributed to Hippocrates which associated good health with maintaining an equilibrium between what entered and exited the body, and provided lists of foods considered beneficial in each season.<sup>54</sup> As in encyclopedic texts, Galenic theory of the four humors and complexions likewise proved highly influential and the advice contained within the *régimes* revolves around the physician's role as intermediary, attempting to help the patient re-establish an equilibrium with his body, its humoral nature, and the environment.<sup>55</sup> The authors of medieval health regimens devote as much or more attention to the environmental, or external, factors as the internal ones because they are not only vital in maintaining good health or impairing it, but they also represent aspects of a patient's life that physicians can, to an extent, control. Recognized by Galen and others before him, the six external factors, the *sex res non naturales*, include: air quality, exercise and rest, food and drink, sleep and wakefulness, secretion and

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<sup>52</sup> This dedication can be found in B.N. fr. 2021, believed to be the oldest surviving manuscript. The editors of the 1911 edition of the *Régime*, Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin, state that this dedication exists at least partially in four different manuscripts and that it was potentially added by scribes. Some manuscripts connect Aldebrandin to the king of France, Louis IX and his mother Blanche of Castille indicating that the author may have eventually been admitted into Louis's court. Landouzy and Pépin, introduction, lii-lvii.

<sup>53</sup> Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," 264-65.

<sup>54</sup> Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," 257-58.

<sup>55</sup> Danielle Jacquart and Marilyn Nicoud identify the primary role of the medieval physician as intermediary between his patient and nature: "Régler le mode de vie implique une information du patient afin de le rendre apte à devenir à son tour, grâce aux conseils du médecin, 'ministre' de sa nature. [...] Pour résoudre le conflit interne que constitue la maladie, il ne s'agit pas tant d'intercéder auprès d'une instance supérieure, Dieu ou la nature, que de se faire l'interprète du trouble et l'arbitre d'une réconciliation entre l'homme et sa santé." Danielle Jacquart and Marilyn Nicoud, "L'office du médecin entre intercession et médiation," in *L'intercession du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne: Autour d'une pratique sociale*, ed. Jean-Marie Moeglin (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2004), 204.

excretion, and emotions.<sup>56</sup> Advice on how to mediate between the body's natural state and the six "non-naturals" constitutes the majority of Aldebrandin's *Régime du corps* which is divided into four parts. The first book, "De garder le cors tot ausi le bien sain com le mal sain genraument" (On protecting the body in good and bad health in general), provides a general overview of how to live well in terms of the *sex res non naturales*, humors, and seasons. The same principles guide the second book, "De garder cascun membre par lui" (On protecting each member), which addresses the care of specific body parts. The third book, "Des simples choses qu'il convient a l'homme user" (On natural products suitable for man to use), is dedicated entirely to informing the reader of the best dietary practices and includes information on the quantity and quality of food consumed, its humoral makeup, and times of the year and even day that certain aliments are best eaten. The "Physiognomia" (Physiognomy), the last section of the work described by modern scholars as an appendix to the regimen, which provides the basic principles of the science of interpreting a person based on their appearances, is likewise based entirely on being able to identify an individual's humoral complexion.<sup>57</sup> Though the *Régime* ultimately provides its readers with far fewer details on hair throughout its four books, hair nevertheless complicates the interpretation of the work. A highly visible part of the external body, hair provides a physician information about the health and temperament of his patient. Explicit instructions found within the *Régime* on how to manipulate hair, however, undermine this very principle and place hair in the middle of a dispute over the ascendancy of nature and nurture.

In terms of its composition, the regime was similar to encyclopedic texts in that the information contained within was not usually original work, but a compilation of knowledge and advice taken from Greek and Arabic medical texts. The first two parts of Aldebrandin's *Régime*

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<sup>56</sup> Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," 259-60; Jacquart and Nicoud, "L'office du médecin," 202.

<sup>57</sup> Landouzy and Pépin, introduction, lxvi-lxviii.

*du corps*, for example, rely heavily on Avicenna's *Canon* with some references to Ali Abbas and Rhazes. The third section represents essentially a summary of Isaac Judaeus's *Diatæ Particulares*, while the final section, the "Phisanomie," is a near literal translation of book II, chapters 26 to 58 of Rhazes's *ad Almansorem*.<sup>58</sup> Like other compilations, the *Régime* belongs to a movement towards the vulgarization of knowledge, but it is not an encyclopedic text. Key differences between Aldebrandin's health regimen and a text like *De proprietatibus rerum* lie in the intended audience and purpose of the work. Though both embody a spirit of vulgarization of specialized discourse, each also varies widely in the scope of the knowledge transmitted. Written in Latin to an educated and likely clerical audience, *De proprietatibus rerum* attempts to provide a brief yet relatively detailed account of the entire natural world in order to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to furnish information from which clerics could develop sermons. Aldebrandin de Sienne composed his work in vernacular French for one person while simultaneously envisioning a wider yet still noble audience. The knowledge contained in the *Régime* consists exclusively of medical information of a highly practical nature. In the prologue, Aldebrandin introduces his work in terms of the traditional division of "phisique" into theory and practice. He essentially characterizes theory as knowledge about the humors, medicine, and fevers and the ability to diagnose them properly. Theory, however, is the subject of other works, not his own. The *Régime* focuses on practical aspects of medicine, offering advice on "comment et en quel maniere on doit ouvrer et maintenir homme en santé et le maladie remouvoir" (Pr., 7; how and in what way one must work to maintain man in good health and rid him of sickness).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For a more in-depth study of Aldebrandin's sources see Landouzy and Pépin, introduction, li-lxix. See also Margaret Wade Labarge, *A Medieval Miscellany* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 276.

<sup>59</sup> All citations come from the 1978 reprint of Landouzy and Pépin's 1911 edition of the *Régime*. Citations will include the book number in Roman numerals (Pr. for the proème) and page number of the 1978 edition. Aldebrandin de Sienne, *Le Régime du corps*, eds. Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978).

Several factors support the idea that the *Régime du corps* was intended primarily for women. First, the dedication to Béatrix and her four daughters, all queens or countesses, situates the text in a noble context for a female readership. This also accounts, in part, for why Aldebrandin composed the regimen in the vernacular rather than Latin.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, while the default figure in Bartholomaeus's encyclopedia was male, the patient in the *Régime* has a somewhat more neutral identity. Aldebrandin usually employs the masculine "homme" to refer to mankind and individuals, like the majority of medieval authors and their source texts. Evidence for a female addressee, however, lies in the types of issues Aldebrandin discusses. In book I, for example, he includes a chapter on how a woman should take care of herself during pregnancy and childbirth. He devotes a second chapter to information on topics related to child rearing such as the choice of a wet nurse, the production of the best breast milk, and a child's first words. The information itself is traditional and dates back to Galen. However, such a topic does not often find its way in to medical regimens dedicated to individuals (primarily because they were directed to men) but was reserved for university texts intended for the training of physicians. Modern scholars attribute the inclusion of this information either to the close tie between Aldebrandin and the sources which he often reproduced verbatim, or to his female patrons who would have had a vested interest in such knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the two are not mutually exclusive: since he was writing to women, the text includes information on pregnancy found in the sources that works intended for princes or other noblemen would have chosen to disregard. Further evidence appears in the second book which, like book V of Bartholomaeus's

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<sup>60</sup> Margaret Labarge Wade contends that "many noble women of the thirteenth century, especially queens, had some acquaintance with Latin but could read the vernacular more easily. In addition, if the treatise was to have a wider audience, as its author hoped, and those who saw or read it were primarily female, the use of the vernacular would have been essential." Labarge, *A Medieval Miscellany*, 274.

<sup>61</sup> P. Gil Sotres leans towards the first explanation and Labarge the second. Labarge also notes that information on pregnancy is found in the writings attributed to Trotula that treat women. Sotres, "Les régimes de santé," 260, 277; Labarge, *A Medieval Miscellany*, 278.

*De proprietatibus rerum*, endeavors to look at each individual body part. Aldebrandin considerably condenses this section, describing only eight parts of the body: hair, eyes, ears, teeth and gums, face, stomach, liver, and heart, contrasting with Bartholomaeus's 65 chapters. Aldebrandin addresses only external features found on the head, which would be a part of a woman's daily hygienic routine, and the most essential vital organs which affect health, and which can be most practically taken care of daily. The descriptions are primarily cosmetic in nature and contain only a very limited discussion on the medical aspect of each body part and its care.<sup>62</sup> Though such information would arguably be of interest to men as well, Aldebrandin's omission of the beard when describing hair in part two supports the notion that he was writing for a female audience.

### **Hair and *Le Régime du corps***

Hair occupies one of the eight chapters in the second section of the *Régime*. The section adopts the typical head to toe order with hair as the first chapter but Aldebrandin focuses primarily on the head and its features. In terms of organization, hair does not cause the same problems for Aldebrandin as it did for Bartholomaeus. This chapter on hair breaks down into roughly two parts: the first medical and the second cosmetic.<sup>63</sup> In the first, Aldebrandin provides an abbreviated explanation of the origin of hair, enumerates several reasons why it falls out, and gives some practical advice on how to make it grow. The second half of the chapter offers natural ways to change one's hair color, get rid of lice, and remove unwanted hair. The division between the two types of information found in this chapter is not rigid; some of the remedies to

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<sup>62</sup> Labarge, *A Medieval Miscellany*, 278.

<sup>63</sup> The information included in the chapter on hair is contained almost entirely in Avicenna's *Canon*. Landouzy and Pépin, introduction, lxvi.



encourage hair growth simultaneously render it more beautiful. Likewise, the technique for removing lice feels slightly out of place couched between examples of how to dye and remove unwanted hair.

Aldebrandin begins by explaining that hair is not, strictly speaking, a body part. Rather, as Bartholomaeus previously noted, it embellishes the body. He provides a brief description explaining how hair is produced: “sachiés tot vraiment ki cavel sont engentré d’une matere fumeuse caude et seche que li nature cache fors jusques au cuir de le char, et ist par les petruis du cors, et [de] si faite matere wischeuse engentrent le poil et li cavel” (II, 85; know truly that hair is produced from a hot and dry smoky substance that nature hides just behind the skin of the flesh, and it comes out through the holes of the body, and from this sticky substance is produced body and head hair). Aldebrandin’s summary is similar to the definition provided by Bartholomaeus. His abridged version of the origin of hair provides the reader with only the essentials necessary to comprehend the advice which follows; the finer points of the process remain unspoken. He provides no explanation of where the smoke-like substance comes from or why so many variations of hair types and colors exist. The inclusion of *le poil* in this brief explanation represents the only reference to body hair in this section of the *Régime*. Moreover, unless they feature in a remedy, animals, the other carriers of *poil*, are also absent from this chapter. There is no concern about hair representing a connection between humans and animals. Hair seems to carry none of the negative philosophical connotations that it held for Bartholomaeus Anglicus, which made it the source of an organizational problem. Aldebrandin quickly moves into a discussion of the different causes of hair loss, which can be separated into three categories: insufficient smoke to nourish existing hair or produce new hair, too wide or too narrow pores, and diseases resulting from a corrupted *matere* which infects existing hair. Though he names

three illnesses affecting hair, alopecia areata, pityriasis rosea [tyrisais], and ophiasis, he tells his reader that they will find no further information about such kinds of hair loss because “de prendre garde que li cavel ne cient par tels ocuisons n’est mie notre ententions” (II, 86; to take care that hair does not fall out for these reasons [alopecia, tyrisais, and ophiasis] is hardly our intent). Instead, Aldebrandin elaborates on the other two causes of hair loss and their potential cures. He adds a fourth set of variables leading to hair loss all related to deprivation: not eating enough, not sleeping enough, and suffering from a long-lasting illness.

The remainder of the more “medical” section of the chapter consists of a basic explanation of specific ailments and their symptoms, dietary suggestions for restoring humoral balance, and finally natural remedies and ointments which one can apply to the affected areas, bearing in mind seasonal variations. The dietary advice ranges from general types of food and their elemental natures, to very specific items to avoid or consume. In the shortest section describing hair loss related to food or physical deprivation, for example, Aldebrandin encourages the afflicted persons to eat good, nourishing food that is hot and moist, that has not been overcooked, that is neither strong nor salty. He also warns that they should avoid old, new, and strong wine. He allots more substantial space to treatment of the pore-related issues. Hair loss from wide pores, evidenced by losing hair in large amounts, can result from working too much or having excessive amounts of heat stemming from natural changes in the body, hot air, or things that are put on the head. He encourages those adversely affected by wide pores to avoid hot and dry foods and to consume cold, moist foods and to drink cold water. If, however, one suffers from more moderate hair loss accompanied by a shining scalp, this could be a sign of narrow pores and Aldebrandin prescribes the exact opposite, encouraging his readers to eat hot and dry foods. Once again, the reader only receives the most basic information; Aldebrandin never

explains how people get narrow pores, why working too much causes wide pores, or why each problem requires different types of food.

Practical advice follows the dietary in the form of either suggested best practices or natural remedies and ointments to be applied directly to the affected areas. Those whose hair loss resulted from malnourishment, illness, or extreme physical strain should abstain from sexual relations, bathe in tepid water, and refrain from washing the head with soap. As with the dietary suggestions, the practical advice for those suffering from wide pores is quite substantial. First, Aldebrandin explains that they need to wash their head “en ewe degoutant qui vient par tuiaus” (II, 86; in dripping water which comes from pipes) and then rub either rose or myrtle oil on it. He also suggests a variety of remedies that not only prevent hair from falling out, but also cause new hair to grow. Most involve crushing flowers or other herbs and mixing them with oils or the alkaline solution used for washing and whitening clothes. One, in particular, is guaranteed to “retient les cavials, et croist, et enbelist” (II, 87; preserve, increase, and make hair more pleasing).<sup>64</sup> He also offers suggestions for hair loss resulting from narrow pores including “uns des esperimens certains et esprovés por retenir les caviaus et por faire naistre tout là où il n’en a nul” (II, 87; a sure and proven way to preserve hair and make it grow where there is none). This tried and true recipe includes burning honey bees on a hot tile to make a powder and mixing this powder with olive oil. Aldebrandin cautions his reader, however, not to let this ointment touch the face because doing so will result in hair growing in unintended places.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Other recipes involve melting ladanum, a resin supplied by the cistus tree, in wine and mixing it with either *mertin* or lentisque oil, rubbing it on the head and then washing it off (II, 87). Frédéric Godefroy, *Complément du dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.v. “ladanum.”

<sup>65</sup> This particular remedy involves rubbing the head with an ointment made by cooking the roots of a plant which has large round leaves, a yellow flower, and that grows near swamps and rivers, in washing solution. Other options involve shaving one’s head, rubbing it with either onions, or presumably the leaves from wild mustard, euphorbia, or cassia trees, and finally applying chamomile or bitter almond oil on the head (II, 87-88).

Although this section in which Aldebrandin addresses signs and symptoms to help the reader identify the underlying cause of hair loss is more “medical” in comparison to the subsequent sections on hair color and epilation, the advice itself is, by modern standards, cosmetic. Aldebrandin states outright that his book does not address illnesses which fall within the theoretical domain of “physique.” Moreover, he never addresses hair loss resulting from “defaute de matere,” which, as evidenced by Bartholomaeus, is linked more explicitly to illnesses such as alopecia areata. Aldebrandin deliberately omits providing information on what we would label as diseases under the guise that such information falls outside this *Régime*’s intended purpose (II, 86). Aldebrandin’s advice, as unorthodox and ineffective as it appears to the modern reader, is practical for those suffering from natural hair loss, not from a medical condition. Aldebrandin addresses readers who want to have fuller, more luxurious hair for cosmetic reasons and who, it would seem, care little for the medical theory supporting the various treatment options. In this context, the transition to how to change one’s hair color in a section about keeping individual body parts healthy becomes less surprising, and the treatment of hair dye is in fact more similar in tone with the preceding information than it initially appears.

Aldebrandin offers advice on how to dye hair blond, red, and black. We can question the feasibility of putting such advice into practice since some of the ingredients would have been quite difficult for a European to attain. This represents a further example of how the text simply follows its sources; Aldebrandin rarely offers substitutes for more unattainable items. He perhaps assumed that the wealth and positions of his patronesses would suffice to acquire the more exotic ingredients. Predictably, he begins with the coveted gold hair exalted in romances, stating that, “se vous volés les caviaus faire biaux et gaunes” (II, 87; if you want to make your hair beautiful and yellow), you must cook the flowers of yellow shrubs like the common broom or gladiolus in

an alkaline solution and apply it to your hair. A second option for rendering hair curly, thick, and presumably golden involves mixing orpiment, or yellow arsenic, with olive oil.<sup>66</sup> The reader can in theory obtain red hair, not quite as appealing as blond but an easier color to attain, by cooking saffron and henna in the same alkaline wash solution.<sup>67</sup> Another method for attaining “biaus caviaus et coulourés [rouges]” (II, 87; beautiful red-colored hair) involves allowing a mixture of washing liquid and the ashes of the branch which grows annually on a grapevine to sit for one day and then adding a powder made of a mixture of ten drams of the *Lupinus* plant, five drams of myrrh and balm of Mecca [bausme – resin from the *Commiphora gileadensis* tree], three drams of willow flowers, and dried sediments from wine. This mixture, which can be applied as often as necessary, should be left in the hair overnight and washed out in the morning and “li cavel en devienent tot rouge” (II, 88; the hair will become completely red). To achieve a black color, one must soak part of an acacia tree and the shells of unripe walnuts in vinegar and apply the mixture to the head. Additionally, Aldebrandin also offers two recipes for nourishing and strengthening hair and ends with a third method for lightening hair color.

The last part of the chapter deals with removing things that do not belong: lice and unwanted hair. The two suggestions for louse removal both involve washing hair in the alkaline laundry solution which the manuscript illustrates (see figure 1.2).<sup>68</sup> After offering these practical

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<sup>66</sup> Orpiment is a toxic sulfide of arsenic used historically to create yellow paint and to remove the hair from hides during the tanning process. Godefroy, *Complément*, s.v. “orpiment.” It has traditionally been used medicinally in China and India for treatment of a wide variety of diseases from cancer to skin diseases and is primarily used externally today in China. Jie Lieu, et al., “Mineral Arsenicals in Traditional Medicines: Orpiment, Realgar, and Arsenolite,” *The Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics* 326, no. 2 (2008): table 1, 364, 366.

<sup>67</sup> “Alcanne” is a plant from the Lythraceae family. When crushed, the leaves can be used to create a dye that will make hair yellow. Geneviève Dumas, “Le soin des cheveux et des poils: Quelques pratiques cosmétiques (XIIIe-XVIe siècles),” in *La Chevelure dans la littérature et l’art du Moyen Age*, *Senefiance* 50, ed. Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2004), 132.

<sup>68</sup> The reader can either boil three ounces of flax seeds in eight-day old washing solution and wash her head with it, or wash with water which has had barley in it for one night and afterwards apply either violet or rose oil to the treated area (II, 88).



**Figure 1.2:** Physician Treating a Woman's Hair. In *Le Régime du corps*, 1911, edited by Louis Landouzy and Roger Pépin (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), 88.

solutions, Aldebrandin directly addresses the source of the problem: one must purge the dry and hot humors. He offers no advice on how to do so in this chapter. For more information, the reader would have to return to the first book where different forms of purgation, from blood-letting to vomiting, are explained. Unlike Bartholomaeus, who often points his readers to books and chapters where they could find additional information, Aldebrandin does not direct his reader to specific chapters. Aldebrandin concludes the chapter noting that since he described methods for making hair grow, he must likewise explain “comment vous les porrés oster du poinil et des autres lius où il sont” (II, 88; how you can remove it from the pubic region and other places where it is). He proceeds to offer three different remedies for hair removal that all make hot wax seem pleasant by comparison. The first involves grinding a powder which is four parts lime (which can cause burns and irritation to skin in the presence of moisture) and two

parts orpiment and adding just enough water for the two to mix. Once this mixture has sat for two days, Aldebrandin instructs the reader to take a bath and rub the mixture on the unwanted hair and assures them that it will subsequently fall off. An even more effective method to rid oneself of unwanted hair consists of cooking two parts lime and one part orpiment. The reader will know that the mixture is fully cooked when a feather inserted comes out depilated. Aware of the inflammatory nature of the prescribed remedies, Aldebrandin suggests the following: “Et por cho que apriès, ces coses font cuire et ardoir là dont li poil chient, si oinderés apriès d’oile rosat ou de violat mellé à aubin d’uef, à craisse de porc sans sel” (II, 89; And if afterwards, these things cause the place where the hair falls off to cook and burn, rub rose or violet oil mixed with egg white and unsalted pork fat on it afterwards).<sup>69</sup> Finally, he offers two ways of ensuring that the hair does not return. First, one can rub the area with the blood of a tortoise, bat, or frog, vinegar, black or white hyoscyamus (the henbanes which are part of the nightshade family), mandrake, or opium. If readers follow this and other recipes they can “sachiés certainement ke ce ne laissera le poil revenir” (II, 89; know for certain that this will not allow the hair to return). The variety of recipes offered by Aldebrandin addressing how to make hair grow, how to change its color and consistency, and how to get rid of it highlight the malleable nature of hair which can be changed to meet the needs or desires of women (and presumably men) according to their circumstances.

On the one hand, the incessant reassurances that these natural remedies will prove effective bears witness to both the importance of this information for Aldebrandin’s readers and

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<sup>69</sup> These recipes for depilation and warnings about their potential to burn the skin are found in Avicenna and repeated in other medical and cosmetic treatises dating from the same period or earlier. Dumas, “Le soin des cheveux.”

the necessity to gain his reader's confidence.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, it may suggest a suspicion on the physician's part that they in fact may not work. More than any practical tips, however, this second section of the *Régime* provides the modern reader some access to the cosmetic concerns of the thirteenth-century noblewoman which were not so different from the concerns of many today. These women were very keen on finding ways to make their hair beautiful, healthy, and long-lasting. They also wanted the ability to change its color and to get rid of it when it grew in undesirable places. Though these cosmetic concerns are fairly removed from any discussion of humoral theory, at least as it was seen in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum*, an implicit connection remains. *De proprietatibus rerum* states that women should have long, soft hair and smooth faces, and they neither go bald nor grow visible hair anywhere other than their heads because of their cold and dry humoral makeup. Any reader, however, would be bound to encounter women whose bodies fail to meet these qualifications. Much like the photoshopped images found in advertisements in today's western society, texts like the Englishman's describe an unattainable, ideal female body (one subsequently reproduced in medieval illuminations). Women not conforming to this image (ie. almost any woman) would be left searching for ways to remedy their "imperfections," lest others suspect them either of having a humoral makeup that differs from the norm, or of suffering from a humoral imbalance. Health regimens deal with these problems on a more focused, individual level since the physician producing the work would aim both to realign the body with its nature and to address the immediate concerns of his patient and patron. Aldebrandin's *Régime* is slightly more general than later regimens and his

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<sup>70</sup> Based on documentation from ancient Roman sources, the Arab world, and later references to hair coloring in the sixteenth century, Geneviève Dumas concludes that hair coloration was a fairly common practice in the thirteenth century. Depilation with an ointment or via barbers who frequented public bath houses also likely took place. In both cases, however, we cannot know for certain which or how many women had access to the necessary ingredients. Dumas, "Le soin des cheveux," 137.



definition of health conforms with the general norms reproduced in learned texts for women which were influenced as much by culture as by science. Questions of hair color, softness, and growth that people today would tend to identify as cosmetic concerns, were all linked to humoral theory and the “science” of the body, explaining why Aldebrandin offers dietary suggestions for preventing hair loss and encouraging its growth as a way of helping his patients regain their natural humoral balance. If dietary advice proves insufficient, he offers additional remedies and ointments to encourage “right” or “healthy” appearance. Aldebrandin proves sensitive to the desires and the likely realities of his female readership. If these women cannot naturally get their bodies to look the way they are supposed to (or in the case of hair color, the way they want them to look), he provides information with the potential to help them sustain the desired illusion of feminine smooth skin and blond hair.

The information found in this chapter provides insight not only into the needs and concerns of the noble woman of the thirteenth century, but also into what the authors of health regimens thought they needed to know. The information in the *Régime* indicates that Aldebrandin believed that Béatrix and her daughters had little need for an understanding of how their bodies worked, but rather a need to know what their bodies should look like. Aldebrandin presents hair only as an adornment and ignores its protective role. For Bartholomaeus hair was an embellishment, but its primary purpose was to protect the brain and face from hot and cold air. Such concerns are absent from the *Régime* since they belong to the “theorike” aspect of “phisique” rather than the “pratike” aspect. The practical nature of the information found within the *Régime* may be a characteristic of the genre, but the general lack of theoretical or philosophical knowledge directed toward women, coupled with the inattention to women as readers in the encyclopedic texts, points to the subordinate and passive role that women were to

play in society. For adherents of Aristotelianism this role was simply a part of a woman's nature as unfinished men. Bartholomaeus and other intellectuals instructed their readers that this passivity was likewise written in their naturally cold humoral makeup since women were cold and passive while men were hot and active (book IV). Women needed to know the basics of how to stay healthy and beautiful, and although their bodies were important for procreation, they did not necessarily need to understand how they work.

### **Hair and Physiognomy**

Although women were not the *a priori* addressees of the encyclopedic texts and were generally excluded from the intellectual landscape, this does not mean that they were entirely excluded from interpretative acts altogether. Medieval intellectuals generally considered women more bodily than spiritual and intellectual, but that does not mean that they could be entirely removed from the widespread tendency in literature and theology to correlate the nature of a person or creature with his or her external appearance. Support for women's vested interest in the study of external appearances comes in the form of the small "phisanomie" which constitutes the fourth and final section of Aldebrandin de Sienne's *Régime du corps*. In this small treatise copied from the Persian physician Rhazes, Aldebrandin promises to teach his readers "comment vous porrés connoistre le nature de cascun par les menbres que on voit dehors" (IV, 193; how you can know the nature of each person by the members that we see on the outside).<sup>71</sup> Despite being labeled an appendix by some, the information in this fourth section connects to information to

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<sup>71</sup> Gerard of Cremona translated Rhazes's *Liber ad regem Almansorem* (*Liber almansoris*) into Latin in the twelfth century. It was influenced by the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*, perhaps the most influential phsysiognomic work during the Middle Ages. Rhazes presents his physiognomy in the form of lists of aphorisms divorced from any original philosophical or logical underpinnings. Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture 1470-1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 63.

the first two parts of the *Régime*. Aldebrandin states that the reader can only truly practice the science of physiognomy in light of the information relayed in the first two books, which provide the basic explanations of the four complexions and the proper, healthy conditions for individual body parts.<sup>72</sup> The science of physiognomy was based on the same basic principles that ground Galen's complexion theory: the body and the soul affect one another, and character is not independent of bodily processes.<sup>73</sup>

Physiognomy is the science of knowing people based on their external appearances. Its origins are located in the Greek and Arabic textual tradition, and by the thirteenth century physiognomy was rapidly becoming more medicalized. Thirteenth-century texts such as Michael Scot's *Liber phisionomie* (c. 1228-1235) or Albertus Magnus's *De animalibus* (c. 1260) routinely connected physiognomy to Galen's complexion theory.<sup>74</sup> Medieval intellectuals interested in physiognomy considered it a practical science. In the Arabic tradition, physicians wrote and dedicated physiognomic treatises to princes in order to help them choose wives. Scot's *Liber phisionomie*, likewise, may have been written as an aid to assist his benefactor Frederick II in choosing a wife.<sup>75</sup> While Aldebrandin makes no claim of match-making (his patrons were already wed), the science of discovering a person's character by their physical appearance would no doubt have been useful for queens surrounded by strangers in foreign courts. Thus, the inclusion of the "Phisanomie" reflects the increasing popularity of physiognomy at the time of

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<sup>72</sup> "Pour ce que doné vous avons enseignemens en .ii. parties que dit vous avons devant, comment vous poés conoistre les .iiii. complexions si com le sanguine, le colorike, le fleumatique, le melancolique et le complexion de cascun membre de cors [...], si vous laisserons à dire de ceste matere" (IV, 193; Since we have already given you instruction in two parts, how you can know the four complexions, sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic, and the complexion of each part of the body, [...] now we can tell you about this subject).

<sup>73</sup> Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 52.

<sup>74</sup> Medicalization of physiognomy had already begun in ancient Greece. The move towards medicalization is also prominent in the *Liber almansoris* where Rhazes may have been trying to "render the formerly instinctual Islamic physiognomical inspection more 'rational' and empirical as well as more medical." Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 63.

<sup>75</sup> Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 70.

the *Régime*'s composition and its incorporation into medical theories. Aldebrandin therefore encourages his readers to participate in the encyclopedic pursuit of interpreting the world around them on a smaller scale – only on the people around them – with a smaller set of tools than the educated, male elite. Their knowledge base may be smaller than that of a cleric or nobleman with access to Latin texts and universities, but they still had access to the prerequisite knowledge of Galenic humoral theory in the first half of the treatise so that they too could pursue physiognomic interpretation.

The book on physiognomy does not, however, begin after the brief explanation that one can know the nature of a person by studying their features. The introduction continues, and Aldebrandin situates physiognomy in the heart of the contemporaneous debate on nature and nurture. Scholars have identified this introductory note as Aldebrandin's only original contribution to the fourth section of the work.<sup>76</sup> For this reason, the remainder of his introduction merits close attention:

Et jasoit ce que selonc nature il doive ensi estre com nous vous dirons, il puet bien estre autrement, et ce puet estre par les bons enseignemens et por le doctrine que li homme retient, car vous devés savoir que norreture tolt aucunes fois nature de ses drois par divers usages, si com vous veés tous jors en hommes et en bestes.

En hommes poés veoir quant maint homme sont de si male nature que par leur nature ne doivent faire se mal non, et par les enseignements et por le doctrine des sages hommes, devienent bon et font autre cose que lor nature n'apporte.

As bestes veés vous ausi com chiens, chevaux et autres bestes qui par enseignemens font tels choses qu'il ne font pas par lor nature. Et n'entendés pas ke nous cuidons, por ce ke dit vous avons, que nature ne passe norreture, mais li .i. puet l'autre passer par aucunes choses, si vous <en> prendés garde soutiument. (IV, 193-94)

[And although according to nature it should be as we tell you, it can well be otherwise. This can happen due to the good education and doctrine that man retains because you should know that education sometimes takes nature's rights by various customs as you can see every day in men and in beasts.

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<sup>76</sup> Landouzy and Pépin, introduction, lxvii.

In men, you can see how many men are of such a bad nature that by their nature should do nothing other than bad, and by the education and doctrine of wise men, become good and do other things that their nature did not bear.

In beasts, you can also see how dogs, horses, and other beasts that by education do such things that they do not do by their nature. And do not think, by what we have said to you, that we think that nature does not surpass education, but the one can pass the other in some things, so you should astutely be on your guard.]

Aldebrandin essentially warns his readers not to place too much confidence in the information that follows or in the conclusions they draw from that information because nurture has the power to undermine nature in some instances. To illustrate his point, he provides examples from both the human and animal kingdoms, one of the few times that he likens humans to beasts throughout the *Régime*. Each example shows nurture improving upon the nature of the being in question. Thus, he explains, wise men can correct bad penchants in other men and humans can teach certain animals to behave in ways contrary to their nature – with the underlying assumption that the change represents an improvement. Aldebrandin does not necessarily take the side of either nature or nurture, but he recognizes the possibility that one or the other will dominate in a particular domain.

This celebration of nurture at the end of a health regimen is understandable since these texts represent the physician's own attempts at educating his patients on how to reconcile their bodies to their natures. Furthermore, Aldebrandin writes his *Régime* for women who are or will likely be mothers involved in the upbringing, or “nurture,” of their own children. He indeed already gestured to the importance of “nurture” in the chapter in book I devoted to instruction on the upbringing of children and the selection of a good nurse. In this earlier section, Aldebrandin focused on the physical dangers of poorly choosing a wet nurse:

Et quant ce sara ke le vaura loier, si doit les menbres souef coucier, [et estendre, et drecier] et metre à point à doner li bele fourme, car c'est legiere cose à faire à

sage nourrice; car tot ausi comme li cire quant ele est mole prent tel forme c'on li veut donner, ensi li enfant prenent tel fourme ke leur norrice leur donne; et por ce, sachiés ke biautés et laidure à avoir tient à grant partie as nourrices. (I, 75)

[And when you want to wrap it [the baby] up, you must lay down the soft limbs and stretch and dress them and make it a point to give the baby a nice form because it is a small thing a wise wet nurse does. Because just like wax when it is soft takes whatever form one wants to give it, so the baby takes whatever form the wet-nurse gives it; and for this reason, know that beauty and ugliness can arise in large part from wet-nurses.]

This example likens the child's body to wax which can be physically molded for good or evil by whomever bears the greatest responsibility in upbringing. The danger of the outward appearance changing in physiognomic terms, lies in the supposition that such a change cannot occur without having an impact on the soul. Consequently, Aldebrandin warns that noble lords and ladies must "nourrir lor enfans à sages nourrices et bien acoustumees, por ce ke, par le malvaisté de lor nourrices ne peussent lor noble forme cangier" (I, 77; have their children fed by wise and well-accustomed wet-nurses, because the bad nature of wet-nurses can change their noble form). If the wet-nurse can change a child's noble form, there is a risk that she may also change the child's noble soul. Aldebrandin assures his readers in the introduction to the "Phisanomie" section that the "enseignements et [...] le doctrine des sages hommes" can likewise redress any natural shortcomings. Aldebrandin clearly recognizes the important positive and negative consequences "norreture" can have on a person's life, and he accordingly transmits this information to women concerned with the upbringing of their own children.

There are at least two other possible explanations for the cautionary advice which precedes the summary of Rhazes's physiognomic treatise: Aldebrandin could be expressing a lack of confidence either in the principles he relays or in the abilities of his readers to correctly apply these principles. The latter casts a negative light on women's supposed intellectual capacities in favor of the truth of the science of physiognomy. Such a view is reminiscent of

women's inclusion among the irrational beasts in Bartholomaeus's *De proprietatibus rerum* and Aldebrandin's warning would constitute a kind of safeguard against any incorrect interpretations made by his readers. Though in line with the misogynistic view of women prevalent in many medieval texts, this view also discounts the important role that Aldebrandin and other physicians assign to nurture and the six non-naturals in health regimens. This leaves the likelihood that Aldebrandin, a practicing physician, had perhaps realized that the physiognomic principles, while a good general guide, are not infallible. The very fact that Aldebrandin was a physician, however, makes it unlikely that he should wholly dismiss physiognomy since the same principles upheld the whole of medieval medicine. Aldebrandin's text identifies the tension existing between the principles of nature and the humors, and the importance of "nurture" and environmental factors in restoring health. Rather than choose one side as more influential than the other, Aldebrandin presents the merits of each and lets his readers decide what to make of the treatise.

Despite his diplomacy, the warning that precedes the treatise casts a shadow of doubt regarding whether the reader can have confidence in the descriptions that follow. The information on hair found within the small fourth book is fairly standard and applies principally to men.<sup>77</sup> Aldebrandin, like Rhazes, essentially provides a list of character traits one can glean from studying hair, devoid of any logical or medical explanation: people with straight hair are slow and fearful while those with curly hair are bold and clever; a hairy stomach indicates a lustful man who sleeps often with women; much hair on the sides or chest signifies bravery;

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<sup>77</sup> Rhazes's treatise on physiognomy recognized a distinction in men, women, and eunuchs. Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 63. Theories on complexion and physiognomy, in general, took the man as example and it is difficult to say how often and if they were applicable to women. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 185-87. A comparison between Rhazes's *Liber almansoris* and the information that Aldebrandin chose to reproduce, or had at his disposal, remains to be completed and falls outside the scope of this chapter.

strong, heavy people have hair on their necks and shoulders; and those with too much hair on their head and body have little learning and are fearful. This last trait seems odd given general concerns about baldness in both the *Régime* and *De proprietatibus rerum*. Perhaps the negative associations with too much head hair betrays a connection to animal hairiness since animals are often fearful of men and possess a limited capacity for human learning. Following the head to toe descriptions, Aldebrandin provides additional information to identify certain types of people – hardy, fearful, good, lustful, irascible, etc. Much of the information merely reiterates that found in the earlier sections of the regimen, but he occasionally scatters new information in the descriptions. A good-natured, intelligent person, for example, has the right amount of hair, neither too much nor too little. This hair will be neither too straight nor too curly and either blond or a shade between black and red. A person easily infuriated has black hair while lustful people, in addition to hair on their stomachs, possesses an abundance of soft hair.

Rather than questioning the legitimacy of these physiognomic rules, readers should question whether the very principles of physiognomy can be side-stepped. Hair, due to its manipulability, not only challenges the ascendancy of either nature or nurture, but also questions whether either can be trusted at all. In the book on physiognomy, Aldebrandin attaches a meaning to hair color, notably to blond, red, and black hair. In the second book, however, he explicitly informed his readers about how to change their own hair color by artifice. The change in hair color was generated entirely by outside factors with no indication that this change could affect the internal humoral make-up. The recipes allow an individual to mask her humoral make-up but not change it, since new hair would not grow in the desired color and would eventually have to be dyed again. The change only goes skin deep. Hair can also be cut; the reader can apply balms and lotions to make it grow in thicker and fuller. With the knowledge of how to



change the visible appearance of hair, how can physicians attach intrinsic meaning to its color, length, or thickness?<sup>78</sup> The malleability of hair questions the reliability of one of the most visible indicators of natural humoral make-up. It is little wonder that Aldebrandin concludes the chapter by returning to his initial advice of exercising caution when judging people based on physical traits: “Or, convient qui jugier velt, qu’il ne gart mie seulement à .i. enseignement que dit avons, mais à .ii., ou à .iii., ou à .iiii. ou autant com il porra plus, car tant com li enseignement s’acordent plus ensamble, si sera plus drois li jugemens. Et li ensegnemens ki font plus à droit <jugier> sont cil des iex et du visage” (IV, 202; So, it is fitting that whoever wants to judge, must not pay attention to only one detail that we have told you, but to two or three or four or as many as he can, because the more the details are compatible with each other, the better the judgement will be. And the details that are the best to judge are the eyes and the face). The physiognomist must give more weight to the eyes and the face because eye color along with most other permanent features of the face, such as nose or eye shape, could not have been significantly altered by artificial means. Considered in light of the reticence in the introduction, the important role of nurture in the health regimen, and the ability to modify external features like hair, the traditional advice to rely on multiple features rather than one or two illustrates the complexity of the nature/nurture question and hair’s instability as a signifier. Aldebrandin provides no final explanation in favor of either nature or nurture. The reader sees only that each plays an important role in health and that nurture can occasionally surpass nature. In light of the treatise’s earlier cosmetic recommendations, though, the reader must question whether physiognomy is a reliable science and whether the connection between body and soul is as indissoluble as tradition presents

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<sup>78</sup> The question of audience and the included or excluded information from the *Liber almansoris* further complicates this question. Since the examples in this section are male and the audience is primarily female, would it be possible to assume, at least in terms of hair color, that men did not dye their hair as women did and that the information would be therefore more reliable?

it. Just as hair proved troublesome in the separation of humans and animals in *De proprietatibus rerum*, its manipulability causes it to play an equally troubling role in the consideration of nature and nurture in the *Régime du corps*.

### **The Roman de Silence**

Hair is but one trait of a person that can be manipulated by outside factors; complexion and weight can likewise be read and manipulated. Hair, however, becomes more troubling due to its connection to both humans and animals. Hairiness represents only one difference between humans and animals, and compared to speech and reason, a relatively insignificant one. By playing a less decisive and less easily recognizable role in determining humanity, it has the potential to prove more problematic in medieval texts than speech and reason. It is much easier to define the difference between human and animal speech, for example, than to define when a man's hairiness goes from normal to excessive. Hair therefore becomes a useful tool for texts which question the boundary between humans and animals or the tension between nature and nurture as evidenced in Heldris de Cornouaille's *Roman de Silence*, written in the second half of the thirteenth century. The question between the dominance of nature and "nurture" becomes a central part of the *Roman de Silence*.<sup>79</sup> The romance begins with the courtship of Silence's parents, Cador and Eufemie, at King Ebain's court. By the time Silence is born, Ebain has denied women the right to inherit in his realm, which ultimately makes her parents decide to raise their daughter as a son. At the age of twelve, Silence recognizes the gravity of her situation and is racked with indecision on whether to take up woman's work as a personified Nature urges, or to

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<sup>79</sup> Scholars place the *Roman de Silence* in the second half of the thirteenth century. It is written in Old French with some Picard features. Sarah Roche-Madi, introduction to *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: East Lansing Colleagues Press, 1992).

continue living as a boy like Norreture suggests. Silence accepts to live as she has been raised and ultimately becomes the most noble and valiant knight of King Ebain's court where s/he becomes the object of Queen Eufeme's affections. Angered at Silence's multiple rejections, the Queen's final attempt to rid herself of the knight involves sending him to capture Merlin who lives in the forest as a wild man and who can only be captured by a woman. Merlin's appearance in the story allows for a final debate between Norreture and Nature which leaves the latter victorious as Silence captures Merlin by enticing him to succumb to his civilized nature at the smell of cooked food. Silence drags Merlin back to court where he eventually reveals the truth about Queen Eufeme's adulterous liaisons and about Silence's gender. The former is drawn and quartered while Ebain marries the latter once Nature restores her to her original state of exquisite feminine beauty.<sup>80</sup> Despite nature's apparent triumph at the end, Heldris's text, like Aldebrandin's *Régime*, offers more an exposition of the arguments in favor of both nature and nurture than a decisive conclusion to the debate.<sup>81</sup> Just as the mutability of hair implicitly undermines Aldebrandin's presentation of physiognomy, hair plays a significant role in what Heldris terms the denaturing of Silence and Merlin.

The plan to disguise Silence's identity unfolds in two stages: in the womb and in the birthing chamber. The initial decision to disguise a female child's identity occurs during Euphemie's pregnancy, which, in contrast with other romances of the time, Heldris's text describes in some detail. He tells the reader that the baby kicked, pressed, and jabbed Eufemie causing her to grow very heavy, and that her discomfort distressed Cadour. Although Heldris has

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<sup>80</sup> What exactly Nature does in the three days between Silence's unveiling as a woman and her marriage to Ebain remains a mystery. Though Silence was a handsome man, Nature must remove all traces of her being a man. The only "trace" Heldris specifies is sunburn.

<sup>81</sup> Silvère Menegaldo, "Merlin et la scolastique: De la coincidentia oppositorum à la quaestio disputata dans le *Roman de Silence*," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 12 (2005).

no desire to enter into the details of Eufemie's labor, he states that it was very difficult for Cador's cousin, the only woman allowed to assist in the delivery, that it contorted Eufemie's body, and that the "grans painnes" and agony of prolonged contractions caused spasms to go through Eufemie's heart, bones, nerves, and veins (vv. 1775-94).<sup>82</sup> The text tells us that Nature formed Silence in her mother's womb to be the most beautiful of all women. While she is still in the womb, however, Silence's parents devise their plans to undermine Nature should they have a girl by changing her into a boy. It is perhaps no coincidence that this battle over the baby's sex begins in the womb. Medieval medical texts stated that the womb was the site of the "battle" over the embryo's sex.<sup>83</sup> Cador and Eufeme ultimately carry out their plan after the child's birth in the secrecy of the birthing chamber. Since he had previously arranged for the baby to be announced as a boy regardless of its sex, Cador ignores protocol and impatiently enters his wife's bedchamber to learn the truth, much to his wife's surprise and embarrassment (vv. 2000-2007). The plan to change his female child into a male heir is twofold. The relatives who raise Silence must not only raise a girl as a boy, they must also ensure that this she looks like a he. To prevent nature from unveiling their plans of raising their daughter as a son, Cador tells his wife:

Et se nos falons a oir malle,  
 Ceste ira al vent et al halle,  
 A la froidure et a la bize.  
 Moult bone garde i avra mize.  
 Devant le ferai estalcier,  
 Fendre ses dras, braies calcier.  
 Et ceste dame i metra painne,  
 Ki est ma cozine germainne.  
 Devenra por m'amor norice. (vv. 2051-59)

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<sup>82</sup> Lorraine Kochanske Stock also notes the added details of Eufemie's labor and the difficult task of the midwife. Lorraine Kochanske Stock, "The Importance of Being Gender 'Stable': Masculinity and Feminine Empowerment in *Le Roman de Silence*," *Arthuriana* 7, no. 2 (1997): 28. All citations, verse numbers, and English translations are taken from Heldris de Cornouailles, *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: East Lansing Colleagues Press, 1992).

<sup>83</sup> Some physicians thought the womb was divided into seven chambers: three on the right, three on the left, and one in the middle. If the embryo formed in the chambers on the right it would be a boy, on the left it would be a girl, and if it formed in the middle a hermaphrodite. Thomasset, "The Nature of Woman," 58-60.

[But if we don't have a male heir, / this girl-child will wander in wind and scorching sun, / in freezing cold and autumn breeze. / We will watch over her very carefully. / We will have her hair cut short in front, / have her garments split at the sides and dress her in breeches, / and the lady who is my first cousin will take care of everything. / She will be nursemaid out of loyalty to me.]

Like Eufemie's "grans painnes," Cador's cousin "metra painne" to control three exterior signs which risk revealing Silence's true nature: her complexion, her hair, and her clothing.<sup>84</sup> Cador, like Aldebrandin de Sienne, recognizes the importance of nurture and the role of a wet nurse in the appropriate and inappropriate upbringing of children. Silence essentially experiences two births: her natural birth which was prolonged, painful, and orchestrated by Nature, and her second longer and even more difficult rebirth as a boy under the tutelage of Norreture.

Cador suggests that Silence's activities as a boy will sufficiently alter the perfect rose and lily complexion provided by Nature and that shears will give her the *cesaries* of a boy rather than the long *crines* of a girl. Along with clothes, hair and complexion feature prominently in Nature's ire and in Silence's guilt. In the description of Nature forming Silence that immediately precedes the unveiling of Cador's post-partum plans, Heldris devotes the most lines to describing the "painne" that Nature goes through to create Silence's perfect golden hair which falls perfectly in long curls from the part to the ear and the perfect mix of white and red for her complexion. Likewise, Silence recognizes, thanks to Nature's scolding, that she has been "tolte desnaturee" (v.2596; completely denatured), and temporarily vows to right these wrongs:

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<sup>84</sup> Complexion and clothing receive more attention outside of this initial description of Silence's upbringing. Clothing becomes especially important in concealing the fact that Silence is missing "a little something" to be a man. Complexion plays a role in Silence's disguise to escape with two traveling minstrels and it is the only trait of the three explicitly mentioned at the end of the story as being rectified by Nature; however, it seems likely that Nature also had to regrow Silence's hair before her marriage. For more on Silence's transformation see: Florence Bouchet, "L'écriture androgyne: le travestissement dans le *Roman de Silence*," in *Le Nu et le vêtu au Moyen Age (XIIe-XIIIe siècles): Actes du 25<sup>e</sup> colloque du CUERMA, Senefiance 47* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 2001); Patricia Victorin, "Le nu et le vêtu dans le *Roman de Silence*: métaphore de l'opposition entre *nature* et *norreture*," in *Le Nu et le vêtu au Moyen Age*; Peggy McCracken, "'The Boy who was a Girl': Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*," *Romantic Review* 85, no. 4 (Nov. 1994).

Jo ne voel pas moi estalcier,  
Fendre mes dras, braies calcier,  
Ne mais vivre a fuer de garçon  
Prendre mon coivre, et mon arçon. (vv. 2559-62)

(I won't cut my hair short any more, / wear slit garments and breeches / and live like a boy / with bow and quiver).

Though hair does not play as prominent a role as clothes and even complexion in the rest of the romance, Cador, Nature, and Silence all recognize its manipulability as a means to denature people. In the case of Silence, changing external appearances also changes internal realities. Silence's decision to follow her parents' plan affects more than her outer appearance; it effectively changes who she is. For Silence, the rejection of a female hair, clothing, and complexion corresponds with a rejection of typical female longings, desires, and activities. Looking like a boy and feeling like a boy seem to go hand in hand. This perhaps explains why Nature takes three days to "repolir / par tolt le cors et a tolir / tolt quanque ot sor le cors de malle" (vv. 6671-73; refinishing / Silence's entire body, removing every trace of anything that being a man had left there). In a sense, Nature reenacts a resurrection, putting Silence's male body to death and resurrecting her as a woman in both external appearance (hair and complexion) and, presumably, behavior.

Merlin, like Silence, becomes the object of debate between Nature and Norreture. In this context Nature could also be understood as Culture since her primary complaint is that Merlin has denied his human nature by living outside of society. She ultimately posits that man is a naturally social being. Merlin's appearance at the end of the text has provoked a variety of interpretations with some labeling him the *deus ex machina* of a mediocre poet, and others as the

key to understanding the entire story.<sup>85</sup> What matters for us is not what Merlin adds to the story, but the way Heldris chose to present him as a wild man:

Cho est uns hom trestols pelus  
Et si est com uns ors velus;  
Si est isnials com cers de lande.  
Herbe, rachine est sa viände. (v. 5929-32)<sup>86</sup>

[He is a man all covered with hair, / as hairy as a bear. / He is as fleet as a  
woodland deer. / Herbs and roots are his food.]

Hair constitutes the primary trait of the wild man.<sup>87</sup> Merlin's hairiness, his appetite for roots and herbs, and his life in the woods all result from Norreture's tutelage rather than Nature's.

Norreture's instruction of Merlin revolves principally around the issue of food because the smell of cooked meat threatens to ruin in one day the years she has spent teaching him to put aside his human nature and eat herbs (vv. 5997-6010). Norreture's dietary instruction results in Merlin's adoption of animal dietary habits in the woods, as reflected in his bear-like hairiness. The attribution of this state to nurture rather than nature is the opposite of what would be expected from more modern conceptions of the wild man as kin to the noble savage who has returned to a natural state. Nature's demand that Merlin eat the smoked meat symbolic of his *civilized* nature corresponds to the view illustrated by encyclopedists that humans are naturally civilized beings because they are made in the image of God and possess the spirit of reason. A man who looks and lives like a beast is not a man at all; he has become denatured, and descriptions of such

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<sup>85</sup> See Sarah Roche-Mahdi, "A Reappraisal of the Role of Merlin in the 'Roman de Silence,'" *Arthuriana* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2002); Lorraine Kochanske Stock, "Civilization and Its Discontents: Cultural Primitivism and Merlin as a Wild Man in the 'Roman de Silence,'" *Arthuriana* 12, no.1 (Spring 2002); Menegaldo, "Merlin et la scolastique."

<sup>86</sup> Merlin appears as a wild man in Geoffrey Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannieae* and *Vita Merlini*, and in Robert De Boron's *L'Estoire de Merlin*, notably in the Grisandole episode, which is part of the *Vulgate Cycle*. *Grisandole*. Kochanske Stock, "Civilization and Its Discontents," 25-27.

<sup>87</sup> The wild man will be discussed further in chapter 2. See Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

people as hairy animals recalls Bartholomaeus's insane nobleman. Indeed, upon Merlin's capture, Silence, the townspeople, and the king repeatedly refer to him as a fool.<sup>88</sup>

The wild man was a relatively well-known figure in medieval art and literature from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on, conjuring images of the wild men encountered by Alexander the Great, Merlin, Orson, or even Chrétien de Troyes's knight Yvain.<sup>89</sup> Given that, in physical terms, wild men in medieval texts have human bodies covered head to toe with hair, it is surprising that Bartholomaeus Anglicus makes no mention of the figure in his chapter on body hair in book V of *De proprietatibus rerum*, choosing to focus instead on animals.

Bartholomaeus, however, seems to deliberately avoid mentioning the figure in V.65, waiting instead until the book on animals to describe the *pilosi*, “monstra sunt ad similitudinem hominum” (XVIII.82, 1101; beasts monstrously shaped to the likeness of men). Bartholomaeus's reference to wild men as monsters need not have precluded their inclusion in book V, as other fantastical creatures with human bodies and animal attributes like the cynocephali, described as “homines monstrosos” (V.1, 118; monstrous men), appear in discussions about the head in that very book. The cynocephalus is a monstrous human while the wild man is a human-like monster. It would seem that Bartholomaeus defines monsters as animals with human traits rather than as humans with animal traits. It is difficult, however, to understand what makes the wild man a monster and the cynocephalus a human.

Bartholomaeus's avoidance of the wild man in V.65 produces the same effect as the of wild Merlin in the *Roman de Silence*: their unclassifiable nature causes wild men to function as a

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<sup>88</sup> See verses 6091, 6185, 6278, 6303. When Silence realizes that Merlin will reveal her own secret, she identifies herself as the fool who tricked herself in attempting to trick Merlin. Silence, thus, becomes indirectly linked to the wild man who Norreture attempts to denature. See verses 6441-70.

<sup>89</sup> For a catalogue of medieval literary and artistic examples of the wild man, see Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980).



link between the species. When describing the object of her quest, Silence exclaims: “Ne sai s’il est u hom u bieste” (v. 5908; I don’t know if he is a man or beast). Such a figure becomes the perfect tool for a debate on the ascendancy of either Nature or Nurture over humans.

Humankind’s rational spirit connects them to the world of culture and God, but their corruptible body and sinful nature ties them to the world of the animals. Evidence that the wild man belongs to both the human and animal world is written both in his appearance and his behavior. A hairy, wild Merlin epitomizes the organizational dilemma faced by Bartholomaeus Anglicus in book V of *De proprietatibus rerum* because a human who denies his nature to the point of looking and living like a beast undermines the hierarchy which places man above the beasts. This perhaps accounts for the wild man’s absence in V.65 and the short yet troublesome chapter devoted to him in book XVIII. In this book on animals, Bartholomaeus begins and ends with the argument that wild men are beasts rather than humans.<sup>90</sup> After questions of etymology and a brief reference to their sexual appetite, Bartholomaeus returns to the pressing issue of their humanity or bestiality:

*Item dicit Papitas. Pilosi [...] à Latinis Incubi vocantur, quorum forma à humana effigie incipit, sed bestiali extremitate terminatur. Idem dicit glossa super Isa.34, Sed idem dicit alia glossa, quod pilosa dicitur simia, est enim bestia monstrosa, pilosa multum & villosa, figuram humanam in multis repraesentat. Quaere infra de simia. (XVIII.84, 1101)*

[Also, Papias says that *pilosi* are called [...] *incubi* in Latin and his shape begins with man’s appearance and ends in the appearance of beasts in the outer part. And the gloss *super Ysaïam xxxiiii.* says the same, but another gloss says that *pilosus* is an ape and is a beast monstrously shaped, rough and hairy, shaped like a man in many points. Look hereafter *in monkeys*.]

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<sup>90</sup> This position supports an earlier reference to Aristotle and Avicenna’s claim that: “quaedam animalia omni tempore sunt sylvestria, & quadam semper domestica, ut homo, mulus & capra, & quaedam cito domesticantur ut elephas. De omni autem genere animalium domesticorum inuentuntur agrestia, sicut sylvestris homo, sylvestris bos, sylvestris equus, sylvestris canis, agrestis porcus” (XVIII.1, 970; Some beasts are always wild and some always tame, as man, mule, and the goat, and some are quickly made tame, as the elephant. Of all types of tame beasts some are found wild, as a wild man, a wild ox, wild horse, wild hound, and wild swine). Humans are “tame beasts” and like all tame beasts, they have wild counterparts. If man is an animal, the wild man is clearly “more animal” for Bartholomaeus.

Some claim that the wild man is a beast with the “appearance” of a man on the inside but the “appearance” of a beast on the outside. This seems problematic for the Englishman, as such a situation contradicts a central premise of *De proprietatibus rerum* on the correspondence between external and internal realities. Bartholomaeus rejects the idea of wild man as both human and animal in favor of the claim, posited by an unnamed authority, that the *pilosus* was in fact an ape that only looked like a man in several respects. By presenting the wild man as an ape, Bartholomaeus effectively makes the hairy exterior correspond to the animal interior. Any likeness to a man is only partial, because apes, and by association wild men, imitate humans. The apes can be taught and tamed by “norreture,” but these animals do not actually possess reason (XVIII.96). As he did when reordering book V, Bartholomaeus finds a solution which distances the human from the animal and its rough and hairy “outer part.” The Englishman denies the wild man’s connection to humanity by relegating him to the second to last book of *De proprietatibus rerum* with the apes; only nonhuman animals, clearly distinct from humans, remain the subject of the chapter on body hair. The wild man’s lasting popularity in medieval art and literature as a creature with access to both worlds, however, reveals that man’s distinctiveness from the animals remained unsettled. Characters like Heldris’s wild Merlin reveal that the troubling trope of animal hairiness was anything but untangled.

## **Conclusion**

Scientific and medical knowledge surrounding the make-up of the body was fairly standard in the thirteenth century, and deeply indebted to the philosophical traditions of Greek authorities and Church doctrine. In *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus strives to provide his male audience with a general understanding of the entire universe to better grasp the

Scriptures and correctly interpret the world and their place in it. Bartholomaeus, therefore, devotes a large amount of space to giving his audience a thorough understanding of man, his place in the universe, and his relationship to the rest of creation. He ensures that his readers possess a thorough understanding of the scientific and medical theories governing the body, its relationship to the rational soul, its growth, and its decay. This attention results in a detailed discussion of the origins of hair, the reasons for the many variations of hair color and style, the purpose of hair, and the differences and similarities between human and animal hair. However, because his interpretation of the world relies on the maintenance of a hierarchy of beings, things that connect humans to other beings, especially animals, prove problematic to classify. Of course, neither Bartholomaeus nor other encyclopedists feared that humans could literally become animals. The inclusion of a dog-headed man in book V is not a threat to humanity precisely because the actual transformation of the human head to an animal one remains an impossibility. Hair is quite different. It is a visible trait which separates humans from the animals; yet since both species have hair and little scientifically separates human hair from animal fur, the potential for the human body to become covered in fur is not only a subject of legend, but an observable possibility. Despite differences in quantity, hair represents a shared trait among humans and nonhuman animals which has the potential to threaten the former's distinctive position in creation. Hair and hairy humans become a troubling topic for Bartholomaeus, resulting in the displacement of information, possible omissions, and confusion on the classification of figures like the wild man. The idea that humans could look like animals and animals like humans contradicts the very premise of the encyclopedic enterprise of the possibility of gleaning hidden truth and meaning from external realities.

Aldebrandin de Sienne's *Régime du corps* offers a slightly different discourse on hair. Some of the differences in the amount of information contained in Aldebrandin's text can be attributed to the difference in genre itself. Others, however, may be influenced by the gender of his audience. Aldebrandin's health regimen addresses the health of the human body. Rather than looking at its metaphorical place in the universe, he focuses on its physical relationship to its actual environment. Aldebrandin provides a similar but considerably abridged definition of hair in his work. He explains the source of hair, but omits most information about variations, and, surprisingly, about illness. Instead of theoretical knowledge, Aldebrandin provides his readers with practical information about how to make hair grow, change its color, and remove it. Since larger questions about man's relationship to animals are not at stake in the *Régime du corps*, hair proves much less contentious for organization and content. The inclusion of the physiognomic treatise at the end of the work, however, shows that the author envisioned his readers as having a stake in the interpretive act. Rather than interpret all of creation, they needed only to interpret those closest to them. Even on this reduced scale, the manipulability of hair by artificial means calls into question the reliability of these interpretations and places hair at the heart of the nature versus nurture question of the thirteenth century.

The *Roman de Silence* illustrates how concerns of more "informational" texts likewise affect literature. Hair plays only a minor role in the plot of the *Roman de Silence*. Its manipulation and abnormal growth, however, complicates the relationship of both Silence and Merlin with Nature and directly influences the central debate of the tale. Silence's cut hair serves to denature her and prevents others from recognizing that she is a woman, proving, as Aldebrandin stated, that in some domains nurture can indeed surpass nature, at least temporarily. In the case of Merlin, Nature again attempts to denature man by taking him outside of society

to live like an animal. This condition causes him to become hirsute, proving that the closer humans get to animals and to nature itself, the farther away they stray from their own civilized nature. Hair and hairiness is a distinguishing feature between humans and other mammals, and its visibility allows for a quick, surface-level distinction. Since hair nevertheless represents a shared trait on a physiologic level, it has the potential to trouble the very boundary it sustains. The wild man is proof of the difficulty of defining the bounds of human hairiness, of knowing when one has gone from human to animal, or even from animal to human.

## Chapter 2

### The Fine Line Between Sacred and Secular

Hair disturbs boundaries in even the most organized texts, and the figure of the wild man highlights the sorts of disruption that hair can signify. Wild men became an increasingly popular literary motif from the twelfth century onward. Knights encountered them in untamed wilderness and either defeated them or brought them back to civilization to be cured; sometimes the knights themselves went through bouts of madness which made them act and look like wild men for periods of time. In the *Roman de Silence*, Heldris de Cornouailles introduced the motif of the wild man into the discussion of the supremacy of nature versus nurture in humans: wild Merlin illustrates how humans can be “denatured” when they are taken away from their civilized habitat to live as the beasts of the field. Similarly, in thirteenth-century hagiographic romances the physical characteristics and living conditions of wild men are transferred onto hermits and saints seeking spiritual isolation, becoming signs of sanctity. Though the wild man appears in these texts under conditions similar to those seen in *Silence*, rather than showing the negative effects of life outside of society, they sometimes reveal the incompatibility of society and religious devotion. In this chapter I will explore how two thirteenth-century texts, Rutebeuf’s *Marie l’Egyptienne* and the anonymous *Robert le Diable*, write the hairiness of the wild man and other animal imagery onto their saintly protagonists, placing them at the intersection of the human and the animal as a means to highlight their conversion while exploring the boundary between lay and religious lifestyles.

## Blending Sacred and Secular: Wild Saints and Hagiographic Romances

Morally and behaviorally hermits and wild men exist at opposite ends of the spectrum, with the former living a life of extreme abnegation and the latter a life of extreme indulgence. Despite this difference, the connection between the two is strong in medieval literature, especially in the *romans d'aventure*, because they live in similar environments and share some physical similarities. Both literary hermits and wild men live in solitude in the forest, share a privileged relationship with animals, and experience abnormal hair growth. The wild man has a human body covered in hair that ranges from thick and curly to short and wiry. This hair covers the entire body with the exception of the elbows, knees, and breasts of the females. Sometimes he walks upright, but other times he crawls on all fours gathering food (hence the bare elbows and knees). Ascetic hermits who chose to live in the forest also became wild in appearance. In texts dating back to the early Church fathers, saints like Onuphrius or Marie of Egypt are described as developing blackened or hirsute skin; this phenomenon was frequently explained as the result of either exposure or lack of food. Some of the wildest hermits wander alone in the wilderness naked, hirsute, or covered in animal skins; some lose the power of speech, as they have no contact with other humans; and some dwell in caves or even the dens of animals.<sup>1</sup> Despite these similarities to the wild man, Paul Bretel maintains that a clear distinction separates the two figures:

L'ermite sauvage, cependant, se distingue assez nettement de l'homme sauvage traditionnel par l'absence de traits négatifs ou diaboliques, comme l'agressivité perpétuelle, ou la sensualité débordante (élément encore accusé chez les femmes sauvages): à la lubricité et à l'exaspération des pulsions sexuelles de l'homme sauvage "laïc," s'oppose en effet, chez l'ermite absorbé par le milieu naturel, l'extinction de tout appétit sexuel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines dans la littérature française du Moyen Age* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), 492.

<sup>2</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 490.

The hermit may look like the wild man, but his chastity and non-confrontational behavior clearly mark him as an ideal human, setting him apart from and above the wild man and his civilized counterparts. The humanity of the wild man, however, was more ambiguous. Though he clearly had a human body, his behavior, characterized by lust, violence and destruction, was bestial.<sup>3</sup>

Hair becomes one of the strongest symbols uniting these two figures; however, it elicits different connotations in each tradition. In a religious context hair came to symbolize worldly concerns which one had to remove in order to devote oneself fully to God.<sup>4</sup> The tonsure, for example, became an important visible marker signaling adherence to religious orders and devotion to God and was a distinctive attribute of both real and literary clerics in the Middle Ages. Hermits, though not often tonsured, were nonetheless recognized as holy by their long white hair and beards. As signs of repentance, hermits and penitents either cropped their hair or allowed it to grow long to demonstrate their dedication to spiritual matters. Since the color white denoted high spiritual values, their white hair and beards were outward signs of their inner wisdom, virtue, and perfection.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the hairiness of hermits living in particularly wild conditions may suggest an exaggerated outward sign of their devotion to God. But excessive hairiness also carried connotations of wildness and life outside society, especially when connected to the wild men. While the figure of the wild man can be traced to early Greek literature, he was not regularly described or depicted artistically as hirsute until the twelfth century when hairiness became part of an iconographic tradition denoting an uncivilized living

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<sup>3</sup> Several book length studies have been completed on the medieval wild man. For a more detailed discussion of general characteristics of the figure see Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980); and Roger Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness*, trans. Carl T. Berrisford (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 69-73, 158; Robert Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4 (1994): 52-53, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 485-86.



condition, wild and unsavory behavior, and a debased mental state.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the hermit, then, the hairiness of wild folk was evidence of their savagery.

The forest represents the other unifying factor of the two figures. Medieval conceptions of wildness were greatly influenced by Jewish thought, which associated wildness with a place and moral condition of sin. Wildness manifested itself in physical appearance (being hairy or black and abnormally large), behavior (being aggressive and violent), and geographic location (wandering in the desert).<sup>7</sup> In medieval Europe, only the location of “wildness” changed considerably, transplanted from the desert to the forest.<sup>8</sup> The forest of the Middle Ages was not a remote area inaccessible to humans, but existed on the outer limits of society: “The ‘wild’ was not that which existed beyond the reach of man but that which was found on the fringes of human activity.”<sup>9</sup> The relocation of wildness from desert to forest affected the representations of both the hermit and the wild man in late medieval texts, affecting the latter more profoundly. While the hermits of the early Church who took to the desert-wilderness were difficult to find, they were nonetheless accessible to pilgrims in much the same way hermits of the forest-wilderness were accessible to knights errant in twelfth- and thirteenth-century romances. The wild folk of early Greek tales, while they too could be found, studied, and occasionally engaged in conversation or challenged in battles, were located in deserts along with the other monstrous races much farther removed from humanity. In the forest-wilderness, however, the wild folk lived in greater proximity to their civilized brothers and sisters, still far enough from the city not to represent an immediate threat, but close enough for the imagination to fear and for the unlucky

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<sup>6</sup> Husband, *The Wild Man*, 7-8, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Hayden White, “The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea,” in *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, eds. Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 13-16.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47-51.

<sup>9</sup> Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, 115.

villager, traveler, or hermit in literature to occasionally stumbled upon. This new proximity to civilization and the hermits of the forest perhaps explains why the figure appears with much more frequency in literature of the twelfth century onward and why these two distinct literary figures begin to converge. Though their hair symbolized two different things, it served to conflate two figures who lived in the woods for different reasons.

The blending of wild man and hermit into a wild saint represents the various kinds of intersections of secular and religious concerns in thirteenth-century literature and society. Religion played an increasing role in the daily lives of medieval people, and priests and laymen alike wrestled with how to lead a Christian life and also participate in the growing urban economy. Such concerns inevitably found their way into literary works of the time. The thirteenth century witnessed the production of many saints' lives and propaganda for Crusades. Even secular romance could be adapted for spiritual edification. The hagiographic romance, a genre that flourished in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, presented adaptations of early Latin saints' lives, notably those involving martyrdom or eremitism, embellished and amplified to emphasize the spectacular events that led to the protagonist's sanctification. This poetic renewal involved not only embellishing well-known elements of the tale, but also making up new miracles and attributing feelings and even dialogues to the protagonists. The edifying purpose of the Latin originals was not lost in the hagiographic romance, but the use of octosyllabic verse and descriptions of the protagonist's noble birth, exceptional beauty, courteous behavior, and ability to achieve feats of greatness more commonly attributed to knights betray the influence of twelfth-century secular romances and the courtly ideals found within them.<sup>10</sup> As Duncan Robertson explains, the saints in these romances are no longer solely

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<sup>10</sup> Brigitte Cazelles notes significant differences between hagiographic and secular romance. Notably, the excellence of the saint is derived from a denial of self and a desire to achieve salvation rather than earthly fame. She explains

objects of veneration, but rather heroes whose personality and sanctity develop through a series of adventures as if he or she were on a quest.<sup>11</sup>

Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* and the anonymous *Robert le Diable* were both influenced by the religious concerns surrounding their compositions and by popular secular romances. Both tales tell of lay people who spend their youth in rebellion against God before experiencing a miraculous and instantaneous conversion. After their conversions, both Marie and Robert spend the remainder of their lives in penitence for their sins and eventually become hermits, never joining religious orders. Marie undergoes the more traditional exile of penitents to the wilderness, while Robert spends ten years as an urban hermit before his ultimate reclusion in the woods. *Marie l'Egyptienne* belongs to the well-established tradition of saints' lives as the story dates back to the early Church fathers. An anonymous twelfth-century verse version of the tale, believed to have served as one of two base texts for Rutebeuf's story, is a prime example of the hagiographic romance.<sup>12</sup> Robert, on the other hand, is one of the few French "saints" invented in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century rather than taken from Latin literature, though the author was clearly knowledgeable of and indebted to the earlier hagiographic tradition.<sup>13</sup> Robert may never have been canonized, but the author treats him as a verifiable saint, going so far as to explain that his remains were buried in Rome until their relocation to France by a zealous duke who built an abbey around them.<sup>14</sup> The text is influenced by multiple traditions

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that saints should be admired rather than imitated as their lifestyles differed radically from those of their audience. For more on the hagiographic romance see Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 3-42; Duncan Robertson, "Poem and Spirit: The French 'Life' of Saint Mary the Egyptian," *Medioevo Romanzo* 7 (1980).

<sup>11</sup> Robertson, "Poem and Spirit," 316.

<sup>12</sup> For a study of this version, version T, see Duncan Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives: Spiritual Renewal and Old French Literature* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1995), 106-118; and Robertson, "Poem and Spirit."

<sup>13</sup> See Elizabeth Gaucher, "Robert le Diable ou le 'criminel repentant': La légende au miroir des récits de conversion," in *La légende de Robert le Diable du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle*, eds. Laurence Mathey-Maille and Huguette Legros (Orléans: Editions Paradigme, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> See *Robert le Diable*, ed. Elisabeth Gaucher (Paris: Champion, 2006), vv. 4689-4718.

including romance, epic, and hagiography, and even more than *Marie l’Egyptienne*, contains a mixture of both hagiographic and courtly elements. The blending of the sacred and secular in these texts exists on both an ideological and generic level. I will argue that both texts address the feasibility of lay holiness – of leading a devout life in the midst of society - in the stories of their ascetic saints, and combine both elements of the hermit and the wild man motif in order to do so.

The concern of blending the sacred and the secular was not solely a literary one.

Thirteenth-century society was marked with both admiration and aversion for the coexistence of religious and secular lifestyles, as the period witnessed an increase in the presence of religion and religious institutions in the everyday lives of Western Europeans. The Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215, made yearly confession of sins a condition for receiving a Christian burial. This required the presence and training of more priests to be able to meet the spiritual needs of their congregations – an ever-increasing congregation should it to be located in an urban center such as Paris, which tripled in population throughout the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Lateran IV also officially recognized the transformation of the Eucharist into the body and blood of Christ, meaning that it could only be administered by priests.<sup>16</sup> There was therefore an increased need for priests to be able to provide pastoral care to their flocks, especially in towns and cities. Thirteenth-century Christianity was further marked by a renewal of the apostolic lifestyle which advocated an imitation of Christ’s poverty and ministraton to the poor and needy. Some Christians saw a disconnect between the rich property holdings of the Church and Christ’s own poverty. The need for more trained priests and brothers with more freedom to minister to people

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<sup>15</sup> Philippe Lorentz and Dany Sandron, *Atlas de Paris au Moyen Âge. Espace urbain, habitat, société, religion, lieux de pouvoir* (Paris: Parigramme, 2006), 68.

<sup>16</sup> For more info on Lateran IV and its social impact, see F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2013); Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 85-94.

in cities led to the creation of the mendicant orders notably the Franciscans, or Friars Minor, and the Dominicans, or Friars Preacher. These orders were not tied to individual monasteries and mixed more freely with society than traditional monastic orders; they traveled, preached the Gospel to crowds, and lived off the generosity of their listeners. The mendicants offered spiritual guidance to those seeking ways to live a Christian lifestyle in a secular world, and their teaching appealed to large audiences in the thirteenth century. Consequently, many desired to have Franciscan or Dominican confessors and spiritual directors, a popular demand that increased antipathy between the orders and the priesthood. The mendicants participated in medieval universities, gaining chairs at the University in Paris. Although they had the support of the papacy, their increasing presence in thirteenth-century society generated tensions with the more traditional bastions of the Church.<sup>17</sup>

The growing importance of lay holiness can also be seen in the development of communities of beguines, lay women who lived a religious lifestyle in or near cities. The women modeled their lives after nuns but did not take religious vows. They lived together in beguinages located within or just outside of the city walls and often worked as seamstresses or bakers in order to provide for themselves and the beguine community. Since they did not take vows, beguines could leave their communities when they pleased to be married; they could also join a community after the death of their husbands, sometimes with their children accompanying them.<sup>18</sup> A similar blending of sacred and secular lifestyles was exemplified in the life of king and

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<sup>17</sup> For more on the mendicant orders see C.H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Mendicant Orders on Medieval Society* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Félix Vernet, *Les Ordres mendiants* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1933), 15-34.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the beguines see Tanya Stabler Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

later saint Louis IX.<sup>19</sup> Although lay holiness became a prominent lifestyle choice in the thirteenth century, it garnered intense criticism for its mixing of sacred and secular. Some saw Louis's position as king as incompatible with his ascetic life and piety. The poet Rutebeuf, for example, criticized the king in his poems the *Ordres de Mendians* and *Ordres de Paris*, among others, for his long stays away from Paris in the Crusades, his role in the exile of Rutebeuf's mentor Guillaume de Saint-Amour, and his support of the mendicant and other orders in Paris and throughout France.<sup>20</sup> Rutebeuf also criticized the beguines for what he interpreted as a contradiction in their devotion to a religious lifestyle. In his *Dit des béguines* he writes:

Se Beguine se maire,  
 S'est sa conversacions:  
 Ces veulz, sa prophecions  
 N'est pas a toute sa vie.  
 Cest an pleure et cest an prie,  
 Et cest an panrra baron.  
 Or est Marthe, or est Marie,  
 Or se garde, or se marie.  
 Mais n'en dites se bien non:  
 Li roix no sofferoit mie. (vv. 11-20)<sup>21</sup>

[If a beguine gets married, / that is just her way of life: / her vows, her profession  
 Are not made for life. / This year she cries, this year she prays, / and this year she  
 will take a husband. / Sometimes she is Martha, sometimes Mary, / sometimes she  
 saves herself, sometimes she marries. / But be sure to say only good things about  
 them / otherwise the king will not tolerate it.]

Rutebeuf criticizes the beguines for their inconsistency: sometimes they live the apostolic life symbolized by Mary and sometimes the secular life as symbolized by Martha. This boundary crossing made Rutebeuf and other critics of the beguines uncomfortable. Skeptics believed that women would be able to devote themselves to holy lifestyle for only a few years, and priests

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<sup>19</sup> See Cecilia M. Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris*, 14-35.

<sup>20</sup> Edward B. Ham, *Rutebeuf and Louis IX* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962).

<sup>21</sup> Rutebeuf, *Dit des Béguines*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Michel Zink (Paris: Lettres gothiques françaises, 2001). My translation.

tried to force women who identified as beguines to enter a beguinage in order to enforce some form of permanence on their status.<sup>22</sup> Even their supporters recognized the unusual mixture of sacred and secular, of solitude and society in the beguine's lifestyle.<sup>23</sup>

Concerns with the beguines and others who tried to practice a form of lay holiness rippled through thirteenth-century society and, I will argue, literary texts. Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* and the anonymous *Robert le Diable* explore the feasibility of blending sacred and secular lifestyles in their works with the figure of the wild saint, a mixture of hermit and wild man. I refer to the wild man or the motif of the wild man when discussing *Marie l'Egyptienne* and *Robert le Diable* to describe the traits of wildness or the animal appearance which infiltrate descriptions of the protagonists primarily in the second half of the stories during their period of penitence. Both Marie and Robert's association with the forest and solitude, their abnormal habits, and, above all, their abnormal growth of hair, link them to the creature. Neither Marie nor Robert ever become animals in their texts. Although each takes on animal characteristics (of a swan and a hound respectively), neither loses his or her humanity. Thus, the wild man, a liminal figure both human and animal, is well-suited to descriptions of people whose behavior connects them to animals when they look the most human in the first half of the tale, and who act the most human when they begin to resemble animals in the second half of the tale. Moreover, in the case of Marie, later artistic depictions of the saint in the fifteenth century tend not only to emphasize her long hair, but turn her into a wild woman as well (see figures 2.1 and 2.2). Such a tradition does not exist for Robert, perhaps because fourteenth-century versions of the tale significantly alter the ending so that rather than living in the forest until his death, Robert marries the princess, has children, and rules Rome.

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<sup>22</sup> Miller, *The Beguines of Medieval Paris*, 128.

<sup>23</sup> Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 35.



**Figure 2.1:** Saint Mary of Egypt, Book of Hours, detail of a miniature of Mary of Egypt, covered in golden hair, being handed a cloak by Zosimus, France, Central (Paris), c. 1440-c.1450. Reproduced from The British Library, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=5837>.



**Figure 2.2:** Saint Mary of Egypt. Detail of woodcut illustration from *Leben der Heiligen*, Germany, 1488. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Reproduced from Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 101.



The bestiality inherent in the motif of the wild man serves two purposes in Marie l’Egyptienne and *Robert le Diable*. First, it highlights the difference between internal and external beauty, since both stories underscore contrasts between external appearances and internal realities. More importantly, however, the animal traits such as hairiness inscribed onto the bodies of saints mark them as set apart for God, and show that such devotion is difficult if not impossible to maintain in an urban environment. Rutebeuf, an outspoken critic of the mixture of the sacred and the secular, tells the tale of a female saint whose transformation takes her far from the city. The inscription of animal traits on her once perfect body illustrates the incompatibility of true dependence on God with secular life. Consequently, Marie never again sets foot in a city; only her story returns to provide an edifying example for listeners. *Robert le Diable* explores more explicitly the mixing of the lay and the religious since Robert’s penance forces him to live in the middle of Rome. The third article of Robert’s three-part penance requires him to adopt canine behavior and appearance. The irruption of the animal draws Robert closer to God and serves to create a barrier between the hermit and the rest of society. Once Robert’s penance is lifted, however, the barrier separating him from society disappears, and Robert, like Marie, flees the city to live a life of solitude in the forest.

### ***Marie l’Egyptienne: The Beauty and the Beast***

The story of Saint Marie of Egypt appears for the first time in a Greek tale attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem, written circa 638. This version of the story, which focuses primarily on the learned priest Zozimas, was later translated into Latin, most notably by Paul the Deacon of Naples, and inspired two other Latin poems which constitute the sources of the French “*Vies*.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Peter F. Dembowski, *La Vie de Sainte Marie l’Égyptienne: Versions en ancien et en moyen français* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 13-16.

Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Égyptienne* rewrites the Greek and early Latin versions of the story by making Marie herself the protagonist and beginning with her life rather than Zozimas's. This Marie-centered tradition existed in French versions of the poem dating from the end of the twelfth century, notably in a shorter version of 140 octosyllabic verses contained in a collection of legends attributed to Adgar and a longer, anonymous version of around 1550 octosyllabic verses, version T. At least one Latin prose version of the tale and version T constitute Rutebeuf's primary sources; he replicates entire verses from the latter.<sup>25</sup> At a very young age Marie leaves her parents to lead a dissolute life of lust and debauchery. She accompanies and subsequently corrupts a group of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, where she remains until the Feast of the Ascension. Marie decides to abstain from sin for one day during the feast and go to church. When a supernatural barrier prevents her from entering the church, she confesses her sins to a statue of the Blessed Virgin and leaves the city to conduct her penitence in the wilderness. She remains undisturbed in the forest for over forty years until the priest Zozimas finds her near the end of her life. During their first meeting he gives her part of his cloak, listens to her story, asks for her benediction, and witnesses her floating in midair during prayer. He returns two years later and gives her Communion and once again witnesses a miracle as she walks across the Jordan to join him. The third time Zozimas finds Marie's body, miraculously protected from decomposition, and a letter in which he finally learns her name and origin. With the help of a lion, Zozimas buries Marie and returns to his abbey where he recounts her miraculous story for

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<sup>25</sup> I refer to the different surviving versions of the texts used by Dembowski. For more on the French versions of *Mary the Egyptian* see Dembowski, *La Vie de sainte Marie L'Égyptienne*. For a detailed study of the influence of the anterior Latin and French versions on Rutebeuf, see Bernadine A. Bujila, *Rutebeuf: La Vie de Sainte Marie l'Égyptienne* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949); and Suzanne Nash, "Rutebeuf's Contribution to the Saint Mary the Egyptian Legend," *The French Review* 44, no. 4 (1971).

the edification of all. Rutebeuf ends his tale by enjoining his listeners to learn from the life of the saint and to repent of their sins before it is too late.

Unlike his source text T, Rutebeuf provides minimal details about Marie's life in the city prior to her conversion. In the second half of the thirteenth century when Rutebeuf composed his work, hagiography was generally moving away from the verse romance of the twelfth century and back to their Latin sources and prose, and many of the later versions of *Marie l'Égyptienne* reflect this tendency.<sup>26</sup> Duncan Robertson considers Rutebeuf's *Marie* a last attempt to bridge the Marie-centered romance versions of the poem, such as T, and the Zozimas-centered prose versions. He speculates that the desire to reconcile two diverging treatments of hagiography motivate the omission of descriptions of Marie's beauty, life, and sexual activity in the city are absent from the beginning of the poem.<sup>27</sup> I would go a step further, however, and suggest that Rutebeuf focuses primarily on Marie's conversion and dedication to God in the wilderness because his story advocates against the mixing of sacred and civil life. Several reasons support this view interpretation of Rutebeuf's version of the tale. First, detailed descriptions of Marie in the first part of the poem detract from the moralizing purpose of the tale. Rutebeuf himself makes the argument when describing the priest Zozimas whom he compares to a second, unbelieving Zozimas:

Unz autres Zozimas estoit  
A ce tens, qui gaires n'amoit  
Ne Jesucrit ne sa creance,  
Ainz estoit plainz de mescreance. (vv. 535-38)

[There was another Zozimas / in those days, who hardly loved / either Jesus  
Christ or his faith, / rather he was full of disbelief.]

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<sup>26</sup> Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, 19-20. See Dembowski, *Sainte Marie l'Égyptienne* for a study of the different versions of the life composed in the Middle Ages.

<sup>27</sup> Robertson, *Medieval Saints' Lives*, 120.

Besides creating a parallel between the two protagonists, each of whom has a namesake in the text with behavior antithetical to their own (Marie the Egyptian and Mary the Blessed Virgin), the inclusion of this detail indeed seems superfluous, a remnant few verses from the Greek original that had been passed on from text to text losing whatever significance they once contained. However, these verses may explain why Rutebeuf does not describe Marie's debauchery. The presence of this second Zozimas underscores the existence of other, immoral people living in the city. Rutebeuf in essence tells his readers that though such notable sinners like this Zozimas exist, he will not talk about his sinful life, and he will therefore not talk of Marie's either:

Por ce c'om ne doit mentevoir,  
Home ou il n'a point de savoir  
Ne de loautei ne de foi,  
Por ce le laz, et je si doi. (vv. 539-42)

[For this reason, we should not mention him: / a man who has neither wisdom / nor loyalty, nor faith, / for this reason, I set it aside, as is my duty.]

The repeated "Por ce" emphasizes that rather than tell his readers about the life of reprobates, Rutebeuf aims to provide a noteworthy example for admiration and to some extent imitation. Thus, when dissolute or sinful actions and behaviors arise in the story, rather than run the risk of making them look appealing, Rutebeuf avoids describing them as much as possible.

The second reason for focusing on Marie's life post-conversion involves the nature of Marie's sanctity. Rutebeuf, an outspoken critic of the mixture of lay and religious lifestyles, emphasizes that a life radically dedicated to God requires a distance between the person and society. Rutebeuf's text begins in the city of Jerusalem where Marie lives a dissolute life, yet even here he does not permit mixing of the sacred and the secular. Once Marie repents and consecrates her life to Christ, Rutebeuf immediately removes her from the city where she begins

to lose her human appearance. Rutebeuf includes physical descriptions in the second half of the story that allow him to make parallels alluding to Marie's past without actually describing it. These same descriptions also incorporate an odd mixture of human and animal traits. Rutebeuf writes an animal presence onto the saint's body beginning with her hair in a way that does not fully displace her humanity but situates it well outside the bounds of civilized society. This animal presence serves a twofold purpose: it underlines Marie's transformation and it symbolizes how a true devotion to God like Marie's cannot exist in the heart of society. Such a life should serve as an example that can edify those living in the city, but it cannot be reproduced there. Though the reader should not imitate Marie's life, the principles separating religious and lay lifestyles can still apply to medieval society. Consequently, Marie herself never returns to the city, but her story does in her stead.

### **Marie's Flight from the City**

Marie's harlot to hermit transformation tale is a common theme in hagiographic literature dating back to the early Byzantine period. In order for a woman to achieve spiritual perfection, Brigitte Cazelles states that it was necessary that "she overcome her natural tendency to succumb to the world of the flesh."<sup>28</sup> Rutebeuf describes Marie as one who was sick but later healed. Her sickness is not physical but spiritual, and he associates her and her sexual sins with folly at least five times before her conversion at the Feast of the Ascension.<sup>29</sup> Jane Stevenson notes that this

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<sup>28</sup> Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, 48. Lust is indeed a trademark of the female conversion stories. The theme is present in three other saints' lives which, according to Robertson, influenced Mary's tale. For more on these and other saints' lives in the French tradition see Robertson, *Medieval Saints' Lives*; and Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*.

<sup>29</sup> Rutebeuf describes Marie as either "la fole," "fole," or compares her with other who are "fol" in lines 23, 113, 116, 169, and 171. Weiss also makes the connection between Marie's *fole* behavior and lust as she notes that "the clerical view of women held them to be more prone to folly than men, and, secondly, that licentious sexual behavior was called *folie* (as in *faire folie* and *fole femme*)." Judith Weiss, "The Metaphor of Madness in the Anglo-Norman Lives," in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, eds. Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 164.

tradition probably indicates men's fears about women's sexuality.<sup>30</sup> Anxiety surrounding female sexuality also pervades medieval literature comparing women to animals and myths of the wild woman. Medieval literature essentially limits this latter's role to tricking men into having sexual relations with her.<sup>31</sup> In the story, Marie is an entrapper of men, deliberately seeking to corrupt any who cross her path as illustrated in an early encounter with pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. When Marie initially learns of the group, she addresses her proposal, her body as payment for passage, to a member of the party who has arrived before the others. When this man, a "preudons" (wise man), hears her proposal, he is appalled and shuns her. Marie is resolute, however, and when the seduction of her body fails on the unyielding, she addresses those more susceptible to her charms. She finds two "jovenciaux" (young men) at the port who readily accept her proposal and take her on board the ship. Once at sea, no man can resist her. Thus, Rutebeuf illustrates the danger of mixing religious men with lay women, a warning all too familiar to readers of his satirical poetry.

Rutebeuf tends to maintain a clear distinction between secular and religious life, removing all ambiguity surrounding who and what Marie is. Marie makes no efforts to hide her sinful impulses as demonstrated by her very forward proposition to board the ship to Jerusalem. Similarly, as she walks through the streets of the city the narrator insists that there is no doubting her identity:

Ne cembra pas estre rencluze:  
Partout regarde, partout muze.  
Por conoistre li queil sont fol,  
Ne li couvient sonete a col:

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<sup>30</sup> Jane Stevenson, "The Holy Sinner: The Life of Mary of Egypt," in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography*, eds. Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 25; Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987).

<sup>31</sup> Bernheimer states simply that wild women are "obsessed with a craving for the love of mortal men and go out of their way to obtain it." Bernheimer, *Wild Men*, 34. For more on the wild woman see Bernheimer *Wild Men*; White, "The Forms of Wildness," 21; Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*, 102.

Bien fist semblant qu'ele estoit fole,  
Que par cemblant, que par parole,  
Car ces abiz et sa semblance  
Demontroient sa connoissance. (vv. 167-74)

[She did not seem like a nun: / she looks everywhere and wanders everywhere. /  
In order to recognize her folly, / there is no need for a noise maker around her  
neck; / she truly seemed like a fool, / both in her appearance and in her  
conversation / because her clothing and her appearance / revealed her for what she  
was.]

These eight lines are especially significant as they constitute one of the few instances where Rutebeuf's own inventiveness clearly appears in the poem; they do not correspond to specific verses in his sources.<sup>32</sup> The reader learns what Marie is in terms of what she is not, a nun. Besides representing a clever nod at her approaching conversion, the choice of comparing her to a nun is significant in that a nun's modest dress and behavior clearly identify her in a crowd, and Marie's clothing and behavior serve the same purpose. This perhaps represents a very subtle criticism of the beguines who live like nuns but who blend in with the rest of society since they took no vows of poverty and were not always easy to distinguish from other lay women. Marie herself will later admit that her sins were written clearly on her forehead for all to see.<sup>33</sup> Marie's beauty exists only on the outside; bestial sexual impulses govern her soul.

The dramatic conversion scene illustrates the border between the sacred and the secular seen throughout the poem. As she joins the procession heading to the church to worship the wood of the Cross, an invisible barrier on the threshold prevents her from entering:

Venue en est juqu'a l'eglize.  
Ele ne pot en nule guize  
Metre le pié sor le degrei,  
Mais tot aussi com se de grei  
Et volentiers venist arriere,  
Se trova a la gent premiere. (vv. 195-200)

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<sup>32</sup> Bujila, *Rutebeuf*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> See verse 229.

[She came to the church. / But she could in no way / place her foot on the steps. / But, as if of her own will / and voluntarily, she went backwards, / and found herself back with those at the beginning.]

The “degrei” holds a symbolic role in terms of humility and holiness in medieval literature, especially in hagiographic literature; it symbolizes extreme humiliation and a denial of earthly aspirations in favor of spiritual aspirations in the afterlife.<sup>34</sup> In this scene the profane and holy are not permitted to mix. Marie can and indeed has corrupted men on pilgrimage and even tempts them right outside the church, but her corruption is not allowed inside: she may not place even a foot on the steps of the sanctuary until she prays to the Blessed Virgin.<sup>35</sup>

After praying to the statue of the Virgin and pledging to lead a virtuous life for the remainder of her days, Marie immediately sets out from Jerusalem to complete her penance in the forest. Her flight occurs in stages, and like many female saints, the development of her relationship to God is symbolized in her relationship with food, most notably with bread.<sup>36</sup> First, a pilgrim gives Marie three small coins, a “trinity” of money which she uses to buy three small loaves of bread, indicating an awareness of physical needs in addition to spiritual ones. While still in the city, Marie quite naturally seeks to feed herself with money from the devout, like the mendicants. She heads toward the St. Jean monastery, where she desires to make her confession, but does not quite reach her destination. That night she eats half of one of her loaves. Afterwards, she spends the first of many a difficult night outdoors:

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<sup>34</sup> H. Akkari, “*Par desuz et par desoz li degréz: fonctions et symboles de l’escalier dans le château au moyen Age*,” in *Château et Société castrale au Moyen Age*, ed. J. M. Pastré (Rouen: Publications de l’Université de Rouen, 1998), 228.

<sup>35</sup> Rutebeuf explains that, in addition to maliciously joining the pilgrimage, Mary tempted young men on their way to church but never entered it: “A l’eglize s’aloit montreir / por les jovenciaux encontreir / et les sivoit juqu’a la porte / ci com ces anemis la porte” (vv. 179-82; She went to make herself seen at the church / to meet the young men / and she followed them up to the door, / following the devil’s inspiration).

<sup>36</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum has shown that food asceticism and devotion to the Eucharist was more characteristic of female saints than male saints. She describes a connection between food and physical desires which many female saints, including Marie, had to suppress. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).



Lasse se sent et travilliee;  
N'ot point de couche aparilliee  
Ne draz de lin ne orillier:  
A terre l'estut soumeillier. (vv. 393-96)

[She felt very tired. / She did not have a nicely made bed / with linen sheets or a pillow. / She had to sleep on the ground.]

Marie's suffering from the absence of material comforts indicates that she was accustomed to having them before her transformation. Marie sleeps on the ground without sheets or a pillow not because she is no longer concerned with such material items, but because she does not have them. The description serves a two-fold purpose. It emphasizes Marie's transformation by providing a glimpse into her past, and it likewise illustrates the difficulties of the asceticism that characterizes her new life.

The next morning Marie continues her trek away from civilization, stopping at the monastery of St. Jean, located on the banks of the Jordan. This monastery seldom receives visitors and the monks who live there spend their days in solitude to complete better their own penance. Rutebeuf presents this monastery in direct opposition to monasteries such as the one founded by the priest Zozimas, a place where men of letters come to exchange ideas and goods, and that constitutes an important part of society. The St. Jean monastery is too far from society to attract many learned clerics to its doors, as illustrated later by the abbot's surprise at Zozimas's arrival. As for the buying and selling of goods, Rutebeuf assures the reader that unlike similar establishments, these monks "N'avoient pas rentes a vivre / chacune de centainne livre. / Ne vendoient pas blei a terme" (vv. 655-57; They did not have rents to live by, / each one with a good hundred *livres*. / They did not sell wheat for profit). More than a jab at monastic orders that made a profit, this statement illustrates how these brothers, and hence Marie, are a step further removed from society and the circulation of goods, particularly grain. Marie also receives the

body of Christ, or the Bread of Life, at the St. Jean monastery. As she moves farther from the city she relies less on physical bread and more on this spiritual bread. Immediately after taking Communion she crosses the Jordan and enters the forest. Henceforth this spiritual bread will sustain her when her three loaves are long forgotten. Rutebeuf makes this dependency on God clear when he describes what Marie takes with her to the forest:

Or n'a que .II. pains et demi:  
Mestiers est Dieu ait a ami.  
De ceulz ne vivra ele mie  
Se Dieux ne li fait autre aïe. (vv. 415-18)

[She had nothing more than two and a half loaves of bread. / She has a great need to have God as her friend. / Those loaves will not suffice to sustain her life, / if God does not furnish her with some other aid.]

The crossing of the Jordan is both a literal and symbolic division in Marie's life.<sup>37</sup> It is a physical barrier that will separate her from society for the next 47 years, and it symbolically marks the pivotal transformation away from dependence on mankind and society for sustenance, to the total dependence of hermits on God. While she continues to nibble on the remainder of her bread, when it becomes as hard as rock she is reduced to digging for roots and praying to the Virgin in order to survive. As the years pass and Marie's sanctity becomes evident, her human appearance begins to alter.

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<sup>37</sup> In medieval texts, crossing a body of water is often symbolic of entering another world or state. Albrecht Classen argues that "Courtly literature heavily relied on the concept of crossing a natural barrier as a symbolic rite of passage leading to the exploration of love, to the discovery of oneself, and to the establishment of selfhood, whether this was a dangerous water, a dark forest, or a daunting mountain challenging the protagonist." Albrecht Classen, "Storms, Sea Crossings, the Challenges of Nature, and the Transformation of the Protagonist in Medieval and Renaissance Literature," *Neohelicon* 30, no. 2 (2003): 166. This is the case for Mary as each body of water she crosses represents a step away from herself and towards unity with God. Her first sea voyage represents the climax of her debauchery, but it also brings her to Jerusalem where she will miraculously be converted. She crosses the Jordan the first time to begin her penance and her transformation into a hermit. The third and last crossing is a miracle which occurs immediately before her death and which also serves to strengthen the claim made for her sanctification.

### Writing the Animal on Mary: “Qui le cors pert por garder l’arme”

Marie’s transformation from beautiful sinner to unsightly hermit begins the moment she enters the forest. The more Marie’s heart is transformed as she approaches sainthood, the less recognizably human she becomes. No matter how bestial the description, however, Rutebeuf never allows her to descend fully into an animal state. In his 100-line description of her transformation, Rutebeuf masterfully brings Marie to the very edge of humanity but prevents her from crossing over to bestiality through careful thematic and linguistic manipulation of the language characterizing her diet and physical appearance. Since Marie’s flight from civilization is linked to her relationship with bread, Rutebeuf links her descent into savagery with food and drink as well:

Tant chemina, que vos diroie?  
A tout la soif, a tout la faim  
Et a petit d’yaue et de pain,  
Toute devint el bois sauvage.  
Sovent reclainme son hostage  
Qu’ele ot devant l’image mis:  
Mestiers est Diex li soit amis. (vv. 430-36)

[What shall I tell you? She wandered so much, / accompanied by thirst and by hunger, / with little water and little bread, / that, in the woods, she became completely wild. / Often, she invokes the pledge / given in front of the statue: / she has great need to have God as a friend.]

Rutebeuf clearly links Marie’s lack of bread to bestiality, stating that she is “sauvage” without food fabricated by people. However, despite her wild state in the woods, Marie remembers the Virgin and implores the latter to remember her in return. This wildness serves a higher purpose: it signals her need and subsequent reliance on God and the Virgin for her survival in the wilderness as opposed to the bread she procured by begging alms in the city.

Marie's physical transformation resulting from her life in the forest reveals a masterful mix of human and animal elements within one description. As she wanders the forest during the day, little by little branches tear her clothing. Finally, not a single stitch remains intact and Marie wanders in the nude. Life in the woods without food and clothing necessarily takes a heavy physical toll on her, and Rutebeuf describes this devastation in the first physical description of the saint in his rendition of her life. Rather than providing two parallel descriptions of his protagonist, before and after conversion, Rutebeuf describes her this one time, making subtle allusions to her past behavior and allowing his readers the freedom to fill in the gaps:

Sui chevoil sunt par ces espauls.  
 Lors n'ot talent de meneir baules.  
 A poignes deïst ce fust ele  
 Qui l'ot veüe damoizele,  
 Car ne paroît en lei nul signe.  
 Char ot noire com pié de cigne.  
 Sa poitrine devint mossue,  
 Tat fu de pluie debatue.  
 Les braz, les lons doiz et les mains  
 Avoit plus noirs, et c'ert du mains,  
 Que n'estoit poiz ne arremens.  
 Ces ongles reoignoît au dens.  
 Ne cemble qu'ele ait point de ventre,  
 Por ce que viande n'i entre.  
 Les piez avoit creveiz desus,  
 Desouz navreiz que ne pot plus. (vv. 447-64)

[Her hair falls over her shoulders. / She no longer desires to go dancing. / Those who had seen her as a demoiselle / Would hardly have been able to say it was her. / For there appeared in her no sign of her former state. / She had skin black like the foot of a swan. / Her chest became mossy, / being so often beaten by the rain. / Her arms, her long fingers, and her hands / were blacker, to say the least, / than pitch or ink. / She bit her nails with her teeth. / You would have said she did not have a stomach / because no food ever entered it. / Her feet were cracked on top, / injured on the bottom as much as they could be.]

This is essentially an anti-portrait of female beauty, describing the lady in question from head to toe. With it, Rutebeuf gives the reader two descriptions in one: describing what she looks like

now, he alludes to what she once was. The passage corresponds in many ways to the description of the giant herdsman guarding the wild bulls in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* who critics often qualify as a wild man. Dorothy Yamamoto has pointed to the fact that in *Yvain* each feature is picked, not to adhere with its neighboring features, but rather "to provide a contrast to a particular aspect of 'right-looking'—a negative image against a positive one."<sup>38</sup> While Rutebeuf's description of Marie coheres more than Chrétien's description of the herdsman, it uses similar techniques in the amalgamating distinctly human with distinctly animal traits.

The blending of the human and animal begins with Marie's hair. Immediately preceding the description of her hair, Rutebeuf recounts the disintegration of Marie's clothing which has been ripped on trees and degraded by exposure to the elements. Her hair thereby functions as a replacement, albeit a poor one, for her clothes. It almost substitutes for a veil, an echo of the earlier comparison of Marie with a nun which likewise referred to her garments. Paul Bretel likens the nun's taking of the veil to the cleric's tonsure because it covers a symbol of worldly aspirations.<sup>39</sup> Marie's hair, unkempt and weathered, has lost its worldly appeal, and can now fulfil this new function, endowing it with an element of holiness. Thus far the description situates Marie within traditional descriptions of hermits. Though her hair goes beyond the length of a veil and being covered in hair rather than clothes carries bestial connotations, at this point, there is no question of Marie being completely hirsute. Rutebeuf clearly refers to the hair on her head, "sui chevoil," rather than to a thick coat of hair covering her naked body. The following lines confirm that Marie is not covered entirely in hair; Rutebeuf describes her still visible skin as black and "mossue," literally covered or blanketed by moss. The reference to rain seems to confirm the

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<sup>38</sup> Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 162-3.

<sup>39</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 72-3.

reality of “mossy,” but “mossue” was also a synonym for “velu,” which is reserved primarily for describing the hairiness of animals. Rather than animal hairiness, the word “mossu,” usually describes old people and specifically their ears.<sup>40</sup> Rutebeuf alludes to Marie’s body becoming covered in hair, this time in body hair, like a wild woman or animal. He does not go so far as to describe her as completely hirsute; in fact, the words “chevoil” and “mossue” prevent us from making the leap from human to animal precisely because they refer distinctly to human hairiness. Nevertheless, Rutebeuf extends their meaning beyond average human norms and the resulting image is abnormal, to say the least. This description gestures toward both the holy hairiness of the hermits and the uncivilized hairiness of wild folk. On the one hand, head hair and ear fuzz become like miraculous substitutes for clothing, protecting Marie from the elements and, to some extent, preserving her modesty. On the other hand, an undeniably sensual tone haunts this portrait. Female portraits in courtly romances usually serve to justify a lover’s choice of lady and his subsequent plea for “douce merci.” Though this is an anti-portrait, it alludes to Marie’s former beauty and also reminds us that Marie is entirely naked, if becoming fuzzy; her nakedness is obscured, not covered. This duality sets the scene for the subsequent blend of bestial and penitent imagery in the remainder of the passage.

The text describes Marie’s still visible skin as black as the foot of a swan. Describing her skin as black in opposition to the desired white skin of the medieval lady is not entirely novel: *chansons de geste* usually portray Saracen men with black skin and some eremitic saints, also usually men, experience blackening of the skin. The decision to compare Marie’s skin to the foot of a swan not only adds an element of bestiality to the description, but also alludes to the former

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<sup>40</sup> Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.v. mossu. In *Yvain the herdsman* is described as having “oreilles moussues et grans.” Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier au lion ou le roman d’Yvain*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994), v. 297.

whiteness of her skin which concealed a blackened soul. Continuing down the body, Rutebeuf describes Marie's arms, hands, stomach, and finally her feet, all the while maintaining this blend of human and wild physical traits. He specifically mentions her long fingers, a traditional trope associated with female beauty, but he immediately detracts from their beauty by calling them blacker than either pitch or ink, a more common comparison with less bestial overtones than the earlier comparison to swan's feet. The trope of wildness returns in the following line, though, as Marie uses her teeth to keep the nails trimmed on her once long and delicate fingers. Mentioning that she has almost no food refers to both her lack of bread and to an earlier description of Marie grazing as a beast of the field for sustenance. Finally, he ends at Marie's feet, ravaged top and bottom, because unlike an animal's, her feet have no protection from thorns. The mortification of her feet links her to itinerant hermits because the lacerations and physical harm resulting from constant wandering was an important component of their ascetic life.<sup>41</sup>

The physical description of Marie highlights the transformation in her life. She has literally lost her beautiful body to save her formerly ugly soul. The reader witnesses a literal turning inside out of the saint who once had a beautiful exterior and a bestial interior, and who now has a rather bestial physical appearance that covers a saintly soul. Marie is a wild hermit who wavers between humanity and animality, sanctity and savageness. Her appearance functions as a shifting sign ("signe" [sign] / "cinge" [swan]) of her changing inner state. The swan is the only animal mentioned in this description, appearing when the poet that no one who had known Marie before would recognize her now:

A poignes deïst ce fust ele  
Qui l'ot veüe damoizele,  
Car ne paroît en lei nul signe.  
Char ot noire com pié de cigne. (vv. 449-52)

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<sup>41</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 84.

[Those who had seen her as a demoiselle / would hardly have been able to say it was her. / For there appeared in her no sign of her former state. / She had skin black as the foot of a swan.]

Rutebeuf's linking of "signe" (sign) and "cigne" (swan) is perhaps more than repetition of a commonly used rhyme in medieval poetry, for as Michel Pastoureau notes, the swan almost always means more than it appears to mean.<sup>42</sup> The immaculate white color of the swan intrigued medieval authors and the animal could symbolize purity, song, metamorphosis, and death. The idea of metamorphosis clearly connects with Marie's transformation which is so extreme that none of her former acquaintances would recognize her. Since not many animals possess the immaculate white plumage of the swan, it made some medieval observers suspicious that it hid something more sinister, like black skin, beneath it.<sup>43</sup> This belief allows Rutebeuf to use the swan as a sign of Marie's conversion. The swan, like Marie prior to her conversion, is beautiful on the outside; but the immaculate white feathers – skin in Marie's case – visible to the outside world, are actually a whitewash. Now a penitent in the forest, Marie is turned inside out: the immaculate, white skin which covered her blackened soul, becomes "noire com pié de cigne," (black like the foot of a swan) hiding a pure and immaculate soul. The "cigne" becomes the "signe" of Marie's repentance and separation from society.

In addition to a symbol of her repentance, Rutebeuf perhaps also uses the idea of the swan's purity as symbolized by its plumage, as a clever way to refer to the traditional whiteness of Marie's hair which he otherwise neglects to mention. The encyclopedist Bartholomaeus

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<sup>42</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 155. The swan itself was associated with the figure of the wild man through the legend of the *Chevalier au Cygne*, though this story did not appear in French as a stand-alone text until the fourteenth century. The swan of the medieval bestiary tradition appears to play a more significant role in the case of Marie.

<sup>43</sup> In his study of medieval bestiaries, Michel Pastoureau summarizes the doubts that plagued some medieval authors concerning the swan: "Que cachent cette blancheur, cette pureté, cette lumière? Le cygne n'est-il pas trop beau? Pour certains assurément, il l'est: sous une robe blanche il abrite une chair noire; c'est un dissimulateur, un hypocrite, un félon. A la beauté extérieure correspond la laideur intérieure." Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 155.



Anglicus, for example, likened a bird's feathers to human hair which adorns the head and protects it from extreme hot and cold.<sup>44</sup> Rutebeuf does not describe Marie's hair as growing long enough to cover her entire body, but he was aware of the tradition because his source text T employs it in narrating Zozimas's first sight of her:

De Marie vit le figure,  
 Apertement sans couverture.  
 Enfiron li estoit se crine,  
 Tant blanche conme flor d'espine.  
 Li blanc cavel et li delgiés  
 Li avaloient dusc'as piés;  
 El n'avoit alutre vestement,  
 Quand ce li soslevoit le vent,  
 Dessous paroît le char bruslee  
 Del soleil et de la gelee. (vv. 839-48)<sup>45</sup>

[He saw Marie's face, / openly and without cover. / Her hair was all around her, / All white like the flower of the hawthorn. / The white, fine hair / descended all the way down to her feet. / She has no other garment / when her hair was lifted by the wind / her skin would appear from underneath, / burnt by the sun and the frost.]

In version T Marie's white hair covers her entire body and only glimpses of the black skin underneath can be seen. Version T never describes a swan, but the image of her hair covering her entire body and only occasionally giving glimpses of the black skin beneath it lends itself nicely to the medieval bestiary description of the swan whose feathers almost entirely covered its black skin. Rutebeuf takes this image of Marie, condenses it, and subtly refers to it in an entirely different way than does his source text. Marie's skin, black like the foot of a swan, appears beneath her head hair and her "mossy" body hair which tradition, if not Rutebeuf, tells readers is white, the color of holy piety and the swan's purity.

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<sup>44</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus relates the two in book V chapter 65 on body hair in *De proprietatibus rerum*.

<sup>45</sup> *La vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski (Geneva: Droz, 1977). My translation.

The comparison of Marie to a swan may seem like a stretch, but a few lines after this physical description Rutebeuf, providing only minimal details about how Marie survived in the woods, refers to her as an animal:

Sui pain sunt faille et mangié,  
Ne por ce n'a pas estrangié  
Le bois por faute de viande.  
Autres delices ne demande  
Fors que l'erbe dou prei menue  
Si com une autre beste mue.  
De l'iaue bevoit au ruissel,  
Qu'ele n'avoit point de vaissel. (vv. 475-82)

[Her bread is gone and eaten, / but she did not leave / the woods, for this lack of food. / She asks for no other delicious thing / aside from shoots of grass from the field, / just like another (mute) animal. / She drank water from the stream / having no dish.]

Marie is not only “sauvage” in the woods, but now she is “une autre beste mue,” grazing for food, drinking directly from the stream, and not speaking. Much like Chrétien de Troyes’s knight Yvain, the less “civilized” food she has, the further she descends to the bestial. For Rutebeuf, however, these bestial qualities of Marie serve to bring her closer to God. Marie is not the only hermit in the woods, and these actions are echoed 200 lines later when the monks of the St. Jean monastery depart for the wilderness in complete silence during Lent:

En leu de potage et de pain  
Paissent de l'erbe par le plain  
Et des racines que il truevent:  
Ainsinc en quarenme s'espruevent. (vv. 685-88)

[Instead of soup and bread, / they graze the grass of the plains / and eat the roots that they find: / in this manner they put themselves to the test during Lent.]

The monks participate in the same activities and Rutebeuf emphasizes the devotional aspect of their behavior, an imitation of Jesus’s forty-day temptation in the wilderness. Like the monks, Marie’s actions constitute part of her penance, humility, and asceticism. Their spiritual cleansing

lasts forty days while Marie's lasts forty years, a clear demonstration of her sanctity. Moreover, just as the saint earlier slept on the ground for lack of a bed with sheets and pillows, she drinks water from the stream because she does not have a cup, not because she can no longer use one or desires one. Marie's penance leads to her deprivation of these objects (bedding and cups) because they represent the life of sex and drinking that she has willingly left behind. Additionally, it is the lack of these objects and the food readily available in towns and cities that enables Marie to draw nearer to God and the Virgin through her total dependency on them. Rutebeuf makes no overt criticism of women like the beguines who likewise claim dependency on God and seek to draw nearer to Him in the midst of the material comforts that Marie lacks. However, he subtly presents a life of material comforts in opposition to Marie's life of material lack which necessitates her continual prayers to God and the Virgin, upon whom she depends entirely for survival.

To the average person, Marie's behavior is excessive, even crazy, and the devil who comes to tempt her tells her so over the course of seventeen years:

“Marie, qu'iez tu devenue,  
Qui en cest boiz est toute nue?  
Laisse le bois, et si t'en is.  
Fole fuz quant tu y veniz.  
Bien as getei ton cors a gaste  
Quant ci viz sanz pain et sanz paste.  
Tenir le doit a grant folie  
Cil qui voit ta melancolie.” (vv. 491-98)

[“Marie, what have you become, / completely naked in these woods? / Leave the woods, get out of here! / You were crazy to come here. / You mistreat your body / by living this way with neither bread nor dough. / Anyone who sees your melancholia / would have to consider it a great madness.”]

The devil's argument seems logical; it certainly sounds crazy to run around naked in the woods eating grass rather than bread. He even links the behavior to melancholia, or black bile, the

humor, which, according to Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*, was linked to making men believe they were animals as illustrated by Nebuchadnezzar's infamous madness which drove him from the court to eat grass like cattle, and to become covered in dew to the point that his hair grew like feathers.<sup>46</sup> Such an argument would probably represent one heard in many religious houses in defense of a life of moderation in the city where they can serve people, as opposed to one of greater asceticism and seclusion in a monastery or the wilderness. Though the text does not advocate that people follow Marie's example (it only encourages them to learn from it), it is nonetheless striking to find this argument in the mouth of the devil. The text does not encourage its audience to drop everything and take to the forest; however, it makes it clear that true devotion to God makes a person look different, makes her stand out in a crowd. To reuse Rutebeuf's own terms, this saint does not play the roles of both Mary and Martha. In his rendition of *Marie l'Egyptienne*, Rutebeuf illustrates this difference by writing animal characteristics onto Marie's hair and her body. The more Marie looks and acts like an animal, the closer she gets to God, and the less she resembles ordinary people. The text leaves little doubt that her sanctity could not exist in the city. The farther she gets from Jerusalem and human society, the more reliant she becomes on divine grace, and the less human she appears.

### **Marie's Gift to Society**

Since Marie's life should not be replicated by the average person, and since it takes her out of the city, what role can her story play in the increasingly urbanized society of Rutebeuf's thirteenth-century audience? After over forty years God allows Zozimas to meet this

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<sup>46</sup> The Biblical rendition is found in Daniel 4. See also Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). For more on Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* see chapter one.

“sauvage” hermit, a human being no doubt, but one with animal traits etched onto her once beautiful body through years of suffering and penance.<sup>47</sup> In Rutebeuf’s version of the *Marie l’Egyptienne* there is no questioning the humanity of Marie when Zozimas first glimpses her and “un ombre vit, son essiant, / un ombre vit d’oume ou de fame” (vv. 748-49; He saw a shadow, or so it seemed, / he saw a shadow of a man or of a woman).<sup>48</sup> Once the two establish contact, no doubt lingers over Marie’s identity. She states plainly: “Une fame sui toute nue” (v. 791; I am a woman and completely naked), and asks Zozimas for a piece of his cloak, not to protect her body from the elements, but to protect her modesty.

Marie’s time in the wilderness has strengthened her connection with God, as evidenced in the many miracles she performs before Zozimas. Although he would like her to return with him, Marie chooses to remain in the forest and entreats Zozimas to keep her existence a secret:

Peire Zozimas, dit Marie,  
Juqu’a tant que soie fenie  
A nelui ne me descouvrir  
N’a ton abei pas ne l’ouvrir.  
Par toi vodrai estre celee  
Ce Diex m’a a toi demontree. (vv. 933-38)

[Father Zozimas, says Marie, / until I am dead, / do not reveal my existence to anyone; / do not say anything to your abbot. / I would like for you to hide me / even if God has shown me to you.]

Marie zealously guards her solitude, perhaps fearing that should others learn of her existence they too would seek her out. Zozimas enjoins her to pray for the church since she desires to remain in the forest. The two meet again at the Jordan two years later so Zozimas can administer the Eucharist to her. If departure and return marks courtly romances, departure and surpassing of

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<sup>47</sup> Rutebeuf insists that God led Zozimas to Mary and Mary herself says the same. See lines 751-54, 806, and 938.

<sup>48</sup> This differs slightly from his source text, which adds a bit of questioning and anticipation as Zozimas remains momentarily unsure of whether the shadow he sees is human or animal.

the point of origin marks the hagiographic romance.<sup>49</sup> Marie's return to her point of definitive departure from human society does not indicate that she has come full circle, for she never re-enters society; rather, she has surpassed it in her quest to be reunited with God and the Virgin.

Where she once had to use a boat to cross the Jordan, she now walks through it:

De sa main destre seigna l'onde,  
Puis entra enz, outre passa,  
C'onques de rien ne c'i lassa  
Ne n'i moilla onques la plante. (vv. 1032-35)

[With her right hand she made the sign of the cross over the water, / then she entered it and passed to the other side / without the slightest trouble, / and without even wetting the soles of her feet.]

This miracle speaks to Marie's sanctity. Not a bit of her body becomes wet, not even the very bottoms of her feet that once could not even cross the threshold of a church. After administering the elements of Communion, Zozimas offers Marie some of his provisions and she desires only one thing, three grains of wheat. The saint left society with three loaves of bread fabricated by man which went stale and were unable to sustain her. Now she consumes only the grains that are produced by nature and that are symbolic of the spiritual food which nourished her during her time in the forest. After Marie eats the grains, God miraculously transports her back to the forest.

Immediately upon her return, Marie prays to Jesus and the Virgin asking them to take her with them to heaven. Her prayer complete, she lies down in the dust, her bed for the past 47 years, and finally dies.

Lors c'est a la terre estendue  
Si com ele estoit, presque nue.  
Ces mains croisa seur sa poitrine,  
Si s'envelope de sa crine. (vv. 1133-36)

[She then lies on the ground / just as she was, almost naked. / She crossed her hands on her chest, / and wrapped herself with her hair.]

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<sup>49</sup> Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 128.

Marie readily solicits her own death, and in this again resembles the swan, the medieval symbol of a happy death.<sup>50</sup> Her hair plays an important role in her final moments. As before, Rutebeuf mentions it in conjunction with a lack of clothes. Initially serving as a substitute for garments during her penance, her “crine” now serves as a substitute for her burial shroud. The connotations of “crine” are ambiguous because the noun can refer to either human hair or the mane of a horse or lion (it is the origin of the word “crinière” [mane] in modern French).<sup>51</sup> Thus, even when describing her dying moments, Rutebeuf retains the ambiguity of Marie the wild hermit whose penance brings her into a privileged relationship with God.

Zozimas returns and finds Marie’s body a year later, miraculously untouched. Above her head he sees a text identifying her as Marie the Egyptian. After burying her with the help of a providential lion, Zozimas return to the St. Jean monastery and recounts her tale which serves to edify the brothers there. Rutebeuf in turn tells the same story in order to encourage his audience to repent of bad behavior before it is too late and to encourage them to pray to Marie for both him and themselves. Marie never returns to society to be emulated, only her story does. Just as the swan’s most remarkable attribute is its song, the most remarkable aspect of Marie’s life is her story which encourages people to repent, not to abandon society.<sup>52</sup> From antiquity, the swan was believed to sing its most beautiful song before its death; Marie’s song becomes more beautiful upon her death because God allows it to be shared with the world through poets such as Rutebeuf.<sup>53</sup> The inscription of bestial traits onto the body of saint Marie serves a practical and edifying purpose of illustrating the power of redemption in the life of sinners. The animal

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<sup>50</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 155.

<sup>51</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “crine.”

<sup>52</sup> The authors of saints’ lives rarely encourage their readers to follow in the footsteps of their protagonists because such spiritual discipline is unattainable for the average person. Instead they encourage their readers to emulate the virtues of the saints. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 85.

<sup>53</sup> The swan’s song was sometimes compared to a preacher’s sermon. Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 154.

presence also illustrates the incompatibility of secular and sacred lifestyles in the thirteenth century.

### ***Robert le Diable: Hermit or Hound?***

*Robert le Diable* likewise explores the blending of holy and lay life, but rather than taking his protagonist outside society, the author places him in the midst of it. Exasperated after fifteen years of sterility in her marriage, the duchess of Normandy asks the devil to grant her a child. That very day the duke returns from a hunting trip and she conceives Robert. They baptize the child immediately after his birth, but from that day on he does nothing but wreak havoc in his father's household and later kingdom. After one particularly bloody incident directed against the Church, Robert questions the motives behind his own destructive nature. Upon discovering the truth of his birth from his mother, he dedicates his life to seeking absolution for his sins in Rome. When the Pope is unable to assign penance, Robert visits a saintly hermit who prays and subsequently receives the terms of the sinner's penance written directly by the hand of God. Robert must feign insanity and daily endure the torments of the masses, he must never speak, and he must only take his food from the mouth of dogs. Robert carries out his penance for seven uninterrupted years at the emperor's court, when suddenly a Saracen invasion threatens the city. A messenger of God appears to Robert, equips him, and allows him to defend Rome, so long as his identity remains unknown. Only the emperor's mute daughter witnesses the miracle, but no one believes her when she narrates it in signs. This cycle repeats three years in a row, but in the third year the emperor attempts to capture the mysterious knight in order to offer him the princess in marriage as a reward. During the botched capture one of the emperor's men wounds Robert in the thigh. A traitorous seneschal attempts to usurp Robert's reward by replicating the



wound, but God miraculously grants the princess the ability to speak. She unveils the truth and the hermit returns to inform Robert that his penance is complete. Rather than marry the princess or return to rule his kingdom in Normandy, Robert decides to spend the remainder of his days in the forest with the hermit where he is eventually revered as a saint.

Like *Marie l’Egyptienne*, this story explores the differences between appearances and reality, and offers an example of how one can develop a sincere relationship with God through penance. When Robert is a young, handsome youth and eventually a knight, his behavior defies all the expected actions of a man of his condition and noble appearance. When he appears nothing more than the king’s fool, however, his piousness and devotion enable him to save the kingdom.<sup>54</sup> By stressing the internal nature of his hero’s sin and redemption, the narrator of *Robert le Diable* warns his audience about the danger of relying exclusively on appearances and teaches them an edifying spiritual truth about the power of private confession, repentance, and sincere faith. Unlike Marie, however, Robert’s penitential transformation brings him closer to God while simultaneously forcing him into contact with people. Marie leaves the city in order to devote herself to God in the wilderness, whereas Robert spends his official time of penance in the city and the emperor’s court. Robert belongs to a small class of hermits known as urban hermits, the most well-known of whom is Saint Alexis, who also lived for a time in Rome. Urban hermits live in seclusion in the middle of the city. Paul Bretel describes this exile as “le refus de s’intégrer à la société urbaine, c’est d’être seul au milieu des hommes, c’est sa marginalité.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, despite living among men, urban saints lead a marginal existence; their marginality is often expressed through their physical appearance, their material existence, and their moral rectitude.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For more on the *Vitae* of holy fools see Peter M. Antoci, “Scandal and Marginality in the *Vitae* of Holy Fools,” *Christianity and Literature* 44, no. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1995): 275-88.

<sup>55</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 102.

<sup>56</sup> Bretel, *Les ermites et les moines*, 102.

This marginality represents the key to living a life devoted to God among lay men and women. The story of Robert offers an extreme example of how a marginal existence creates a space for dedicating one's life to God in the middle of a crowded city, as Robert's penance causes him to live like a beast among men.

In his seven-year atonement for the sins of his youth Robert leads a liminal life thanks to the animal characteristics of his penance. The first article forces him to interact with the crowds in the streets of Rome, but it creates a barrier between them because Robert must act insane. He accomplishes this by running through the streets of Rome making animal noises. The second and third articles of penance likewise separate Robert and the crowd because he cannot talk to or like his tormentors, nor is he allowed to eat like them since he must eat scraps of food from the mouth of dogs. As Robert completes his penances and draws nearer to God he looks and acts less like a human and more like an animal. This third article of penance creates a space for Robert's spiritual growth. Scholars view the acts of penance as a connection between Robert's life after his conversion and his actions in the first half of the story. In order to make up for the folly of his youth and ignorance of God, the first article of penance forces Robert to become a fool for God. In atonement for his mother's blasphemy, the second article prevents him from speaking, forcing him to develop a sincere relationship with God through gestures and silent prayer. Robert receives the opportunity to redeem his violent attacks against the Church by defending it three times against Saracen invasion.<sup>57</sup> The third term of penance, taking his food from the mouth of dogs, is more difficult to explain. In a footnote to her bilingual edition of the story, Elisabeth Gaucher relates this punishment to Robert's nursing with a cone-shaped device as an infant because he would bite his wet nurses' breast, once actually biting off a nipple. Gaucher

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<sup>57</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of the correspondences between Robert's behavior in the first half of the tale and his penance in the second, see Elisabeth Gaucher, *Robert le Diable* (Paris: Champion, 2006).

maintains that this biting, clearly bestial behavior, is expiated in the act of eating from the mouths of dogs.<sup>58</sup> In considering this one specific aspect of Robert's childhood, Gaucher's discussion of Robert's bestiality is much too limited. Every other article of Robert's penance corresponds to a major transgression, ignorance of God and blasphemy. Biting off his wet nurse's nipple, while gruesome, is far from his worst acts of violence.<sup>59</sup> Robert dedicates his entire youth only to the satisfaction of his impulses and drives; therefore, much of his penance, and particularly the third article, aims at recuperating his humanity through the practice of extreme humility and self-abasement. The third article of penance, which most fully ties Robert to the animals, connects to larger questions of animality in Robert's childhood as evidenced in the article's explicit connections of animality to appearance, food, and violence. This article of penance, moreover, allows Robert to claim a space at the emperor's court and the freedom to develop a sincere relationship with God in the middle of society. Finally, the conclusion of the story explores the consequences of Robert's decision to leave the city for the forest once his penance is complete and the implications of this decision on the question of blending lay and religious lifestyles.

### **Animality in Robert's Childhood**

The third article of Robert's penance imposes on him a liminal position between humans and animals during his time as a city-dwelling hermit as it obliges him to nourish himself exclusively with food wrested from a dog:

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<sup>58</sup> *Robert le Diable*, ed. Gaucher, 99n20.

<sup>59</sup> According to Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council men and women are required to confess their sins once a year after having reached the age of discretion. Since Robert's biting of his wet nurse's nipple occurs as an infant one could argue that this is not a sin that must be confessed or one for which penance is necessary. Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 66.

Le tierch commant, felon et aigre,  
 Qui vous fera velu et maigre;  
 Or oiiés que Dieux vos commande.  
 Gardés que de nulle viande  
 Ne goustés, pour fain qu'il vous viegne  
 Ne pour enfreté qui vous tienge,  
 Se vous ne le taulés au chien,  
 Car ce ne seroit mie bien  
 A vostre ame ne sauvemens. (vv. 1143-51)<sup>60</sup>

[The third obligation, cruel and violent, / will make you hairy and skinny; / hear now what God commands. / Be sure that no food enters your mouth, / no matter how much hunger assails you / or what sickness takes hold of you, / unless you have taken it from a dog, / for this would not be good / for you soul or your salvation.]

This final article of penance links animality to Robert's eating habits, appearance, and violence. Eating food destined for dogs call into question Robert's humanity. The hermit informs Robert that this act of penance will cause him to become "velu et maigre." The adjective "velu," covered in fur, usually describes the hairiness of animals.<sup>61</sup> This prediction of furiness arises only once in the text, but medieval listeners would have quickly linked it both to hermit and to wild men stories. The hermit also describes this final term of penitence as "felon," which can be translated as terrible, cruel, violent, or malicious, and "aigre," intense, impetuous, and violent.<sup>62</sup> The reference to violence that these adjectives contain applies not only to the nature of the penance, which does imply some amount of violence in the act of taking food from a hungry dog, but it likely also refers to the nature of the crimes that justified it. The rhyme scheme at the end of lines 1143 and 44 clearly indicates that "felon" (cruel or violent) and "velu" (hairy) should be considered in relationship with one another. While they do not rhyme as "aigre" (violent) and "maigre" (skinny), both begin with a labiodental fricative, [f] and [v] respectively, have an [l]

<sup>60</sup> Middle French quotations are taken from *Robert le Diable*, ed. Gaucher. All English translations are my own.

<sup>61</sup> Frédéric Godefroy, *Complément du dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.v. "velu."

<sup>62</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.vv. "felon," "aigre."

preceding the final syllable, and occupy the same position in their respective lines. Thus, the poet links hairiness, violence, and food to animality in his articulation of Robert's third article of penance and then links this animality to Robert's salvation: he must become an animal to save his soul. This third article of penance, like the first two, contains parallels to the first half of the story, where anxiety surrounding the animality and unnaturalness of Robert's food habits, his violent behavior, and his appearance foreshadow this third article.

As Elizabeth Gaucher notes, the the third act of Robert's penance deals primarily with food. It is thus most readily associated with the infant Robert biting off the nipple of the most beautiful of his nurses as an infant. This event necessitated the invention of a cone-shaped feeding device to nourish the baby since no other wet nurses were willing to risk losing a nipple or more to the child. This rather gruesome event renders literally the medieval belief that infants were nourished on the blood of their mothers or wet nurses. According to medieval systems of medicine, a baby in the womb was nourished by its mother's menstrual blood. After the baby's birth this blood traveled up to the breasts where it turned white and continued to nourish the child as breast milk.<sup>63</sup> The mutilation of the source of nourishment highlights the bloodthirsty nature of Robert by mixing the wet nurse's actual blood and flesh with the white "menstrual blood" that sustains all babies. Even before Robert had the teeth to draw his wet nurse's blood, the idea that he actually drained them of their blood is supported by the fact that he nursed so much that they became pale as he grew.<sup>64</sup> This unnatural consumption does not go beyond infancy, but it represents a moment where the narrator draws attention to the precarious position Robert maintains between humans and animals since all human infants supposedly consumed a

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<sup>63</sup> See Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. Wolfgang Richerum (1601; repr., Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964), V.34.

<sup>64</sup> See vv. 156-158.

purified form of blood, while only animals consume raw, human flesh and blood. For audiences familiar with popular romances, the image would perhaps recall Chrétien de Troyes's knight Yvain, who eats raw flesh during his time as a wild man.<sup>65</sup> This image of Robert nourished by the blood of his wet nurse indicates the bloodthirstiness that will characterize his actions and behavior throughout his adolescence and knighthood prior to penance.

Additional references to eating are sparse in the first half of the story, but in the midst of descriptions of Robert's uncontrollable adolescence the narrator includes a second description that ties Robert's behavior specifically to the behavior of a dog or a werewolf:

Quant il eut .XV. ans assommés,  
Ja nus clers, tant fust renommés,  
N'iert si hardis qu'a court venist;  
Car, se il as mains le tenist,  
Dusqu'as piés tout le desquirast,  
Et s'un seul petit s'ahirast,  
As dens le nés li sakast hors  
U anuy li fesist du corps. (vv. 194-98)

[When Robert reached fifteen years of age, / there was no clerk, no matter his renown, / who was brave enough to come to the court / because if (Robert) got his hands on him, / he would have ripped him apart from head to toe. / And if the (victim) fought back even a little, / with his teeth, (Robert) would tear off his nose / or inflict some other punishment upon his body.]

This description of Robert using his teeth to rip off the nose of his instructors is striking in its resemblance to the violent punishment inflicted by the werewolf in Marie de France's

"Bisclavret." In his only truly bestial act of the lay, Bisclavret bites off his wife's nose when she comes to the king's court. The probable allusion to Bisclavret in *Robert le diable* underscores the

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the associations of a preference for raw flesh and blood see Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 150. In Chrétien de Troyes's *Le chevalier au lion*, Yvain loses his mind after his lady love revokes her affection. Yvain regresses to life as a wild man living naked in the forest and eating raw the animals he captures with his bare hands. Yvain's progressive return to civilization is symbolized by his consumption first of raw meat, then of bread provided by a hermit, and finally of smoked meat. *Le chevalier au lion*, vv. 2824-75.

bestiality characteristic of human and animal hybrids such as werewolves and wild men.<sup>66</sup> The reference again draws attention to the animal-like quality of Robert's mouth, linking it to the werewolf's that attacks human flesh. Through imposed penance this same mouth will essentially undergo a transformation from a human mouth to a canine's snout during ten years of silence and wrestling meat from dogs.

The last reference to consumption in the first half of the romance links food, excess, and sexual sin in a way characteristic of many female saints' lives. The duke exiles his son as punishment and Robert lives in the forest, the lieu par excellence of wild animals, the *homo sylvestris*, and people who voluntarily or reluctantly exist on the fringes of society.<sup>67</sup> There he becomes the leader of a group of "mal faisans et des gens gloutes" (v. 256; evil doers and vicious [gluttonous] men). Together they lead a liminal existence of senseless violence killing all clerics, priests, monks, hermits, pilgrims, and recluses who cross their path. Gaucher translates "gens gloutes" as "bandits" (robbers or bandits) in modern French.<sup>68</sup> This translation accurately conveys the activities of these men and the semantic range of the medieval word "glouton," which, in addition to meaning gluttonous, could be used as an insult describing someone mean or vicious.<sup>69</sup> By translating the term as bandits, however, Gaucher loses an element of excess, or lack of moderation, associated with the descriptor "glouton." Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins and it is commonly linked to food; moralists often compare gluttons to animals for their lack of moderation in their self-satisfaction.<sup>70</sup> The men in *Robert le Diable* are gluttons not of food,

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<sup>66</sup> The reference to the werewolf also carries with it distinctly diabolic undertones. Due to their ability to change forms, *wer* animals were believed to be servants of the Devil, the ultimate shape-shifter and deceiver. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 79.

<sup>67</sup> Bernheimer, *Wild Men*, 24, 64-65; Russell, *Lucifer*, 73.

<sup>68</sup> *Robert le Diable*, ed. Elisabeth Gaucher, v. 256.

<sup>69</sup> Godefroy, *Complément*, s.v. "glouton."

<sup>70</sup> For more on gluttony in early modern Europe see William Ian Miller, "Gluttony," *Representations* 60 (1997); Anna Maranini, "Le Glouton et les éditions de la Renaissance," *Faventia* 26, no. 2 (2004).

but of violence and blood. This adjective “gloutons” links Robert’s violence during his youth to the image of Robert as a baby or young boy satisfying his bloodlust in the only way available to him, through nourishment. The narrator relates Robert’s activities to gluttony multiple times. His mother hopes that training him as a knight will help him to be less “glouton” (v. 351), and when Robert confesses to the pope he describes himself as “glous et lechieres” (v. 850; gluttonous [vicious] and immoral). Robert’s gluttony is figurative, linked both the bloodlust and sexual lust with the adjective “lechiers,” commonly used to describe men who live for the pleasures of the flesh.<sup>71</sup> In the Middle Ages the sin of gluttony paved the way to lust, and the combination of food and sex is common in thirteenth-century genres such as the fabliaux.<sup>72</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the only description of Robert’s penchant for lust accompanies his time with these “gens gloutes:”

Et s’il troeve dame u pucielle  
 Que tant ne quant li samble bielle,  
 Ja n’iert de si cointe parage  
 Ne feme de si hault lignage  
 N’en face trestout son voloir,  
 Qui que s’en doive après doloir;  
 Et plus de .C. en enforça,  
 Comme chiz qui moult de force a. (vv. 303-10)

[If he came across a lady or a young girl / who in any way seemed beautiful to him, / she could belong to the most respectable family / or descend from the highest lineage, / that did not stop him from having his way with her / without a care for the consequences. / He raped more than 100 women, / as one who possesses much strength.]

Like Marie, Robert’s sexuality deviates from social norms and disrupts society. It links him to the beasts through exclusive preoccupation with the pleasures of the flesh. Robert rapes scores of young, noble women; his libido is the libido of the wild man or animal; it is a monstrous force

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<sup>71</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “lecheor.”

<sup>72</sup> Miller, “Gluttony,” 95.



“unleased to assail civilization with a bestial humanity, and who enwrapped whoever he so desired within his colossal embrace.”<sup>73</sup> Robert’s lust as an adult is much like his appetite as an infant; it is inexhaustible and affects beautiful women. It seems little coincidence that the act of penance most clearly associated with expiation of bestial behavior is itself centered on nourishment. His “gluttony” is punished in a literal way; his limited food consumption becomes the means of controlling his unnatural appetite for blood, sex, and violence.<sup>74</sup>

The description of Robert’s third term penance additionally underscores its violent nature. The narrator describes it as “felon et aigre” (v. 1143; cruel and violent). In addition to the act itself, these descriptors also refer to the behavior that solicited the punishment. The adjective “aigre” also describes Robert’s violent and unnatural growth as a child that drained his wet nurses of their beauty and strength. The adjective “felon” occurs this one time; however, the narrator uses the noun form “fel” to describe Robert and his murderous actions three times prior to his conversion.<sup>75</sup> The description of Robert’s childhood spans lines 145-90, from just after his baptism to somewhere around the age of fourteen. In this span of time the narrator foretells many of Robert’s future violent actions and hints at his bestiality. As a baby, Robert’s disturbing character manifests itself through constant crying and insomnia:

Mais tant par fu de mal affaire  
Que de son mauvais voloir faire  
Ne veult cesser onques nul heure:  
Toute jour crie et brait et pleure;  
Avoir li couvient mainte gaite;

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<sup>73</sup> Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*, 100. Robert’s libido represents one aspect of the story where the figure of the wild man and the devil diverge, because, despite the title of the story, Robert’s sexuality is not the sexuality characteristic of demons and devils. Unlike the devil who takes advantage of his mother’s anger towards God to facilitate Robert’s conception, or incubi who often resort to tricks to impregnate women, Robert takes his victims whenever and wherever he desires them.

<sup>74</sup> Unlike female saints, male saints, including Robert, do not abstain from food completely, much as men are not expected to abstain from sexual relations in the same way as women. Bynum, *Holy Feast Holy Fast*, 92-112.

<sup>75</sup> Robert is described as a “fel” or “traitor or perfidious, cruel person” in lines 207, 560, and 583.

Ne puet dormir nes quant alaite. (vv. 149-54)<sup>76</sup>

[But he was of such a violent character / that he was unable to hold back, / even for a moment, his evil ways. / All day long he wailed, brayed, and cried. / He required constant attention; / he was never tired, even when being nursed.]

Use of the word “braire” to describe Robert’s crying does not necessarily constitute a reference to animality. While the modern word exclusively describes the braying of a donkey, the Old French word could describe the crying of both humans and animals.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, this word gestures toward Robert’s wildness since it immediately precedes Robert’s blood consumption and the narrator will employ this verb again in conjunction with the verbs “henir” (neigh) and “beeler” (bleat) when Robert runs through the streets of Rome during his penance. Robert’s childhood is a warning to the Normans, and its description foreshadows the violence and havoc he will wreak.

From the age of fifteen onward Robert’s behavior takes a violent turn that marks the beginning of his uncontrollable violence against the church and its representatives:

Ja prestres ne clers ordenés  
Ne fust si fiers ne si osés,  
Se Robiers le tenist en l’iestre,  
Que pour son pois y vausist iestre  
Del millour or qui onques fust,  
Que ja ne trovast si grant fust  
Ne l’en donnast sor sa coronne.  
E! Dieux, tante riche personne  
Ocist le fel a ses deux mains! (vv. 199-207)

[No priest or consecrated cleric, / no matter how determined and bold, / Who, if Robert got ahold of him in the castle, would want to face him, / even if he were to receive his weight in gold. / Because he (the boy) would find a stick, no matter the size, / and would hit him (the cleric) on his head. / Oh God! So many good men / Robert the cruel killed with his two hands!]

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<sup>76</sup> Elisabeth Gaucher suggests that Robert’s insomnia may be a reference to the lay of *Tydorel* where insomnia functions as an indicator of the protagonist’s diabolical origins. Gaucher, *Robert le Diable*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “braire.”

Robert now beats his teachers with a wooden rod rather than the other way around.<sup>78</sup> However, because the narrator chooses the word “fust” rather than “verge,” the term more commonly associated with discipline, the description also likens Robert to a wild man or a giant.<sup>79</sup> A “fust” is often a synonym for wood, a piece of wood, or a beam, and sometimes a metonymy for the tree itself.<sup>80</sup> Wild men were known for carrying either a large tree or a wooden club, ignorant of more sophisticated arms. This choice of “fust” rather than “verge” could represent nothing more than a rich rhyme with the verb “être”; deliberate or not, however, the word also bears connotations of wildness.

Robert’s violence should be characterized as bestial, because of its irrational, meaningless, and uncontrollable nature which makes it unacceptable to life in society. While man is capable of violence, in discussions concerning his distinction from the beasts, medieval theologians generally classified human violence as logical or at least motivated by some external factor.<sup>81</sup> The text indeed seems to classify violence according to a similar measure. Frustrated by his son’s crimes, the Duke of Normandy gathers a group of knights to hunt down and kill the young man. In the face of her son’s death sentence, Robert’s mother offers an alternate solution that suggests that she recognizes a distinction between rational and irrational violence. She proposes that Robert be made a knight and convinces her husband that the institution of knighthood, with its rules and codes, will transform their son’s irrational violence into an acceptable form conducive to life in a feudal society:

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<sup>78</sup> For more on the iconography of rods and their use in education and discipline in the classroom and the monastery see Christiane Mattke, “Verges et discipline dans l’iconographie de l’enseignement,” *Médiévales* 27 (1994).

<sup>79</sup> Elisabeth Gaucher links Robert’s finding of the “fust” to giants who also carry clubs and contrasts it to the pilgrim’s staff he takes to Rome after his conversion. *Robert le Diable*, ed. Gaucher, 101n24.

<sup>80</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “fust.”

<sup>81</sup> Salisbury notes that when medieval authors speak of bestial violence it is a violence of savagery, brutality and irrationality. Such violence is distinguished from human violence because, “apparently [sic] human violence was understandable; it seemed to have motives and goals. It was logical violence, where animal violence was thought to be irrational.” Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 5.

Robiers en sa bachelerie  
A fait le mal: le bien fera  
Si tost con chevaliers sera;  
Trestout le fera remüer  
Li chevalerie et müer  
Les mauvais vices de s'effance,  
N'en soiiés ja en desesperance. (vv. 356-62)

[In his early days, Robert / did evil: he will do good / as soon as he becomes a knight. / Knighthood will soon make him / change his ways and transform / the bad penchants of his childhood. / Do not lose hope.]

Knighthood is a violent institution; its participants search for adventure, fight in tournaments, and, when necessary, wage war. Robert's mother does not seek to eliminate Robert's violent behavior, but to redirect it. The chiasmus in the above lines before and after the colon makes it clear that "le mal," Robert's bad violence, is associated with his youth, "sa bachelerie," and that "le bien," Robert's good violence, will be associated with knighthood. He will still be violent, but it will be an acceptable violence controlled and approved by one of society's most reputed institutions. Just as Robert's wet nurses created a funnel which did not stop Robert's biting but controlled it, Robert's mother desperately hopes that society's ordering structure will function as a second funnel of sorts which will not stop Robert's penchant for violence, but will curb it in such a way that he can become a functioning member of society.

Unfortunately, Robert's entry into knighthood only provides new opportunities to indulge his bloodlust, and the narrators maintains a clear opposition between Robert and all other knights. At his first tournament Robert proves ignorant of the rules of knightly conduct, massacring more than thirty of his fellow knights after they have surrendered in an unheard-of feat of strength and brutality that ends this and all tournaments. Knighthood awakens an even more insatiable desire for bloodshed, the description of which now takes on warlike overtones. Faced with the impossibility of satiating his desires in tournaments, the narrator describes how

Robert returns to “la guerre” (the war) that he wages against members of the church. He ravages the countryside, a one-man army, and reconnects with his bandits, one of whom informs him of the location of a nearby abbey. What follows represents the climax of Robert’s violence before his conversion, and he prepares for this moment as if he were going into the heat of battle rather than to an abbey full of nuns.<sup>82</sup> This is perhaps a commentary on medieval anxieties surrounding the institution of knighthood, an institution that thrives on bloodshed and violence that borders, but should not cross into, the bestial. Whether or not Robert’s actions reflect poorly on the institution or simply reflect his own hybrid, bestial nature, the actions of this “fel” (perfidious man) are in part expiated by the “felon” and “aigre” third article of penance.

The third bestial aspect of the penance requiring Robert to take food from the mouth of dogs involves physical appearance. The hermit informs Robert that he will become “velu” and “maigre” as a result of the punishment. Several hermits in medieval literature become hairy as a result of their extreme penance, showing their separation from civilized society as they begin to look like animals without actually being like them. In *Marie l’Egyptienne* there was a clear discrepancy between outward appearance and inner realities. Rutebeuf provided very little physical description of his protagonist prior to her conversion, and what he alluded to made it clear that Marie’s appearance in no way resembled that of an animal or wild woman. While the same discrepancy between inner and outer beauty exists in *Robert le Diable*, the narrator does not completely relegate potentially bestial descriptions to the second half of the tale. Robert’s appearance becomes more alarming and abnormal in relation to his bestial behavior from childhood to adolescence and into knighthood. Robert’s unnatural behavior is foreshadowed in

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<sup>82</sup> See vv. 558-67.

the first of three physical descriptions prior to his conversion. As a child, Robert is described, like most romance heroes, as one of the most handsome children of the duchy:

Or embarnist Robers et croist  
Plus qu'uns aultrez enfes assés.  
Mais de biauté a tous passés  
Les enfans qui sont el ducame. (vv. 176-79)

[Robert grew in strength and size / much quicker than any other child. / But in beauty, he surpassed all / the children of the duchy.]

From the outset, Robert's body seems to reach the outer limits of normality. He grows faster, taller, and stronger than other children in the realm, but he is not ostracized during his childhood for these traits, nor does the narrator use any language with sub-human connotations in the description. Robert's pleasing face hides a troubling temperament that only truly blossoms during his adolescence, a time when the anxiety surrounding his physical appearance also increases.

Immediately following the enumeration of some of Robert's new, more violent activities, the narrator provides a second physical description of Robert at twenty which shows a marked increase in anxiety about his strength and size:

Or croist Robiers en hault et lieue.  
Sa croissance a maint homme grieve:  
Mieulz amaissent qu'il descreüst  
Que si grant force en luy eüst.  
Quant Robiers ot .XX. ans d'aage,  
On ne trovast en nul parage  
Si grant homme, si com moy samble,  
S'il et Robers fussent ensamble,  
Que Robers ne fust .I. pié graindre,  
Ne se force ne puet ataindre  
Nulz homs qui soit de mere nés;  
Trestout ce li fu destines.  
En tous les lieux ou il venist,  
.V. des plus fors, s'il les tenist,  
Portast il hors de la maison:  
Trop par est fors a desraison.

Avoec la force et la grandece  
K'en lui avoit et la proece,  
S'estoit si bialz que dusqu'a Romme  
Ne trovast on .I. si biel homme  
De corps et de chief et de vis:  
Plus ert biaux que ne vous devis. (vv. 227-48)

[Robert grew and rose. / His growth worried many men: / they would have preferred to see him shrink / rather than accumulate more strength. / When Robert was twenty years old, / you could not find in any family, / so it seems to me, a man so tall / that if he and Robert were placed together, / that Robert would not surpass by a foot. / His strength could not be attained / by any man born of a woman. / Such was his destiny. / No matter where he went, / he could take hold of five of the strongest men / and carry them out of the house; / he was that unreasonably strong. / On top of the strength, size, / and bravery that were found in him, / (Robert) was so handsome that even as far as Rome / one could not locate a man / with a comparable body, head, or face. / His beauty surpasses anything that I could describe.]

In this passage the narrator alludes to the supernatural origin of Robert's strength, it is his destiny that "no man born of a woman," no mere mortal, can match it. While Robert's body is nowhere near as shocking as that of a giant, a wild man or even the giant herdsman's in Chrétien's *Yvain*, the description of his prodigious strength and size associates him with wild beings who grow bigger and stronger than civilized men.<sup>83</sup> Rather than elaborate this similarity and link Robert's external appearance more explicitly to his inner violence, the narrator again refers to Robert's incomparable beauty that confounds his countrymen in its discordance with his personality. Robert's physical body becomes a point of contention in a way that Marie's never did; his appearance suggests a noble character inconsistent with his behavior, while her pre-conversion appearance made her character very clear. The narrator both alludes to and shies away from the abnormality of Robert's appearance by making these characteristics visible enough to cause concern on the part of the Normans, but appealing enough to be admired.

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<sup>83</sup> Bernheimer, *Wild Men*, 3. Above average strength and size do not necessarily link Robert to the devil, a master shapeshifter not particularly known for feats of strength.

The third physical description occurs just after Robert massacres forty nuns and burns down their abbey preceding his miraculous conversion. In this climactic scene Robert's appearance reflects the beast within:

Les mains en a sanglentes toutes  
Et ses chaues de grosses gouttes  
Del sanc qui esproha deseure;  
Et li fiers et toute la meure  
Del fier et de la glaive toute  
Est si sanglente qu'en degoute  
Li sans a ses piés contreval;  
Et tous li chiés de son cheval  
Est si chargiés trestous de sang  
Que poy y pert partout de blanc.  
Quant le mal ot fait, si s'en ist  
Sor le cheval, qui cler henist,  
Siques li forest en resonance. (vv. 585-97)

[His hands were entirely covered in blood, / as well as his pants which were splattered / with large drops of blood. / The blade of his sword and his entire lance / are so covered in blood, that from them drips / blood, all the way down to his feet. / And the head of his horse / is so steeped in blood / that one could hardly distinguish its white coat. / His evil feat once accomplished, he left the place / mounted on his horse who whinnied so loudly / that it resounded in the entire forest.]

The anxiety surrounding Robert's physical appearance reaches its peak, and those in the castle hide from him when he returns because it seems as if his face and body were on fire. The image of Robert covered in the blood of his victims finally reflects the bloodthirsty exterior that has been partially concealed by a beautiful face prior to this scene. In this description the narrator no longer attempts to bridge the gap between Robert and average men; there is something overtly bestial and monstrous in this description where Robert and his horse become one assemblage united by blood.<sup>84</sup> This description of Robert does not go from head to toe like normal medieval

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<sup>84</sup> For more on the amalgamation of knight and horse see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 78-115.



portraits, but rather, from horse's head to Robert's toe. The narrator describes Robert's hands, his clothing, his weapons, and even his feet covered and dripping in blood, but never mentions his head. Instead, it is the warhorse whose head is covered in blood and who "speaks" for the bloody assemblage of human and horse parts. As they ride away the horse whinnies so loudly that the entire forest resonates with the sound.<sup>85</sup> As a penitent Robert will run through the streets of Rome whinnying to attract attention as he is chased and beaten by the populace. Robert does not become an animal, but his physical appearance surpasses the norms of humanity and throughout his penance he will consequently look, act, and even sound like a beast.

When no one comes to take his horse upon his arrival at the castle, Robert finally questions the motivation, or lack thereof, behind his violent impulses and instincts. He stays with his horse and leans against it. Now, rather than Robert being likened to the horse, the horse is personified and becomes almost like a companion leading Robert to his conversion.<sup>86</sup> Convinced that the answer relates to his birth, he interrogates his mother, threatening to kill her if she refuses to reveal the truth. Upon hearing the story of his conception, Robert determines to find absolution from the pope, and his first act before departing is to remove his hair:

Lors eskeut son brac et son poing,  
 S'espee si jete moult loing,  
 Puis trenche ses caviaus et taille  
 D'un coutelet que on li baille.  
 Quant il ot ses caviaux ostés,  
 Lés .I. piler s'est acoutés,  
 Si se descauce isniel le pas,  
 Puis s'en va biellement le pas  
 En une chambrete petite  
 U il prist une viés carpite:

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<sup>85</sup> Gaucher interprets the horse's whinny as a sort of divine intervention, a trope often used in the *chanson de geste*. This device is not unknown in stories of the wild man. In *Valentin et Orson* Valentin's horse is uncomfortable around the wild man and likewise makes his displeasure known. *Robert le Diable*, ed. Elisabeth Gaucher, 123n57. See also J.-Cl. Vallecalle, "Gesta Dei per equos. Remarques sur le rôle providentiel du cheval dans les chansons de geste," in *Le cheval dans le monde médiéval*, *Senefiance* 32 (Aix-en-Provence: Publications du CUERMA, 1992).

<sup>86</sup> Gaucher comes to the same conclusion in her comments on this scene in the story. *Robert le Diable*, ed. Gaucher, 125n59.

Se reube y laist, que plus n'en porte. (vv. 729-39)

[So, shaking his arm and fist, / he throws his sword far away / then, cuts his hair / with a small knife that was brought to him. / When he had gotten rid of his hair, / he leaned on a pillar, / quickly removed his shoes, / then briskly entered / a small room / where he took an old coat / leaving there his clothing which he never again wore.]

Robert's first act upon learning the disturbing truth of his birth is to cut off his hair and don the pilgrim's habit. In one sentence, Robert separates himself from both sword and hair. As earlier noted, the removal of hair often signals a renunciation of the world and the desire to consecrate oneself entirely to God. Tonsure and hair removal became synonymous with renunciation and penitence. Robert is thus consciously marking his physical body to indicate that an internal change has occurred, even before he removes his noble garments to adopt the rough pilgrim's habit and staff. By cutting off his hair, Robert symbolically separates himself from the wild, uncivilized, foolish and ungodly impulses that have governed his life to this point, impulses symbolized in his hair. Just as shearing his hair and changing his clothes separate Robert from society, becoming "velu" and acting like a wild animal during his penance will physically and morally marginalize him from the emperor's court and the Roman populace.

### **Animality: Creating a Space for Sanctity**

Robert desires to dedicate the latter half of his life to God and the Christian faith. His penance, however, requires him to occupy a space in the middle of a bustling city. Robert is tasked with navigating and interacting with the crowds of Rome in accordance with his penance while also creating a more private space permitting his own personal devotion. It is the animal aspects inherent in all three articles of Robert's penance that marginalize him enough from the rest of the city that he can cultivate his personal devotion. Though all three articles create the

animal atmosphere, it is the third article which more completely relegates Robert to the bestial realm, making him the near-equivalent of a dog. More than his refusal to speak or act like a courtier, eating from dogs' mouths will secure Robert a permanent residence in the castle as the emperor's fool. It is also the only article of Robert's penance the narrator describes multiple times throughout the remainder of the story at his arrival and after each battle against the Saracens. The narrator never again mentions Robert's hairiness, perhaps because a second reminder is hardly necessary given the overt bestiality of Robert's actions in the remainder of the story. Ultimately, Robert's physical appearance and his dog-like behavior create a physical barrier between Robert and the denizens of Rome. This physical separation becomes the means by which Robert succeeds in drawing near to God and away from society while simultaneously thrust in the middle of it.

The reader first witnesses Robert fulfilling the third term of his penance at the emperor of Rome's court. After having spent the morning agitating the lower classes of Rome and enduring their harsh treatments, he seeks refuge at the emperor's court. He evades the guards and throws himself at the emperor's feet where it is his turn to be beaten with large sticks. The emperor recognizes Robert as a fool and instructs his guards to leave him in peace and his servants to bring the fool food. Robert obstinately refuses all food offered until the emperor throws a bone to his favorite hunting hound. Thanks to his abnormal strength, Robert is able to wrest the food from the dog with his own mouth. Though the emperor recognized Robert's folly prior to the bone-snatching, the act of taking food from the mouth of the dogs confirms his insanity and earns him a place at the court:

Celle part vint et si l'engoule,  
Mais moult petitet s'en saoule,  
Car Robiers pres de luy s'acoste,  
Qui moult tost hors des dens li oste;

Puis a pris l'os et puis le runge,  
 N'a si fors dens qu'il n'y desjoinge,  
 Car moult l'argüe li famine:  
 Or puet mangier a bonne estrine.  
 Entour l'os tent et sace et tire.  
 L'empe[re]re commence a rire  
 [Et] dist: "Or voy jou grant merveille;  
 Onques mais ne vi sa pareille,  
 Que chis sos, qui tant a musé,  
 A le biel mangier refusé,  
 Et .I. oissiel u il n'a rien  
 A pris dedens la bouche au chien,  
 Si le mengüe par tel rage.  
 Chis est drois sos et par usage." (vv. 1365-82)

[He (the dog) rushed forward and put it (the bone) in his gullet, / but he hardly had the time to satisfy his appetite / because Robert dashed beside him / and very quickly tore it from his teeth. / Then he took the bone and he begin to chew it, / he didn't hate it enough to let go of it / pushed by such an ardent hunger. / What good luck; now he can eat his fill. / All around the bone he scraped, tore, and tugged. / The emperor began to laugh / and says, "Now here is a strange spectacle, / never have I seen its equal. / The fool, with his muzzle in the air, / refused all the good morsels, / and one little bone, with nothing on it, / he took from the mouth of the dog, / feasting on it like one who is rabid (furious). / This is truly a mad man; his behavior shows it."]

This initial description of Robert confirms the bestial aspects of the third article of penance.

Violence and animal behavior dominate Robert's actions, as he attacks the bone like a rabid dog tearing it from the canine's mouth with his own. In addition to the cleaning, tearing, and sucking on the bone, the verb "runger," when used to describe eating, usually describes the eating habits of animals.<sup>87</sup> The word "mengüe" also generally refers to food consumed by animals.<sup>88</sup> The verb "muser," linked to the word "musel," or muzzle that describes Robert's refusal of the good food offered, connects Robert and his eating habits to the beasts. By the end of the scene it is Robert who has a snout and the dog who a "bouche," or mouth. The role of the mouth in Robert's

<sup>87</sup> The verb also can be translated as to ruminate in some texts when describing someone dwelling on past actions. Godefroy, *Complément*, s.v. "rongier."

<sup>88</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. "mangeue."

penance cannot be overstated since Robert's fallen state proceeds directly from his mother's mouth. In order to redeem his mouth, it becomes both silent and savage.

Despite the bestial quality of Robert's actions, they cannot be removed from the context of atonement. As was the case in *Marie l'Egyptienne*, human and animal traits coexist in descriptions of this third penitential act. While fighting for scraps, Robert demonstrates compassion for the dog and feeds him from his own mouth:

Quant Robiers ot mangiet assés  
Et fains li fu tous trespasés,  
Del pain prent moques et rouillons,  
En sa bouche en met grans buillons,  
Puis va catonnant viers le chien,  
Ki gentieulx iert sor toute rien.  
Les morsiaux de la soie bouche  
A la goule del chien atouche. (vv. 1435-42)

[When Robert had eaten enough / and his hunger had subsided, / he took crumbs and pieces of bread / and put a large amount in his mouth, / then goes on all fours to the dog, / the noblest beast that ever was. / He put the pieces from his own mouth / into the maw of the dog.]

The animal elements are not lost; Robert puts food in his mouth rather than using his hands as the emperor's servants do, and he crawls on all fours to the dog. The verb "chatoner" means to walk like a cat, walk on all fours, or crawl.<sup>89</sup> This verb adds comic effect to this scene and underscores Robert's animal behavior which goes above and beyond the requirements of his penance.<sup>90</sup> This scene ironically serves to humanize Robert because it describes his first charitable acts toward another living being. In terms of physical description, the situation

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<sup>89</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. "chatoner."

<sup>90</sup> Feeding his scraps to the dogs may not be required of Robert by his penance, but it may still refer to well-established forms of penance known to have taken place in Italy in the twelfth century. In her work on penance and humiliation in the thirteenth century, Mary Mansfield cites examples of people begging for food and feeding leftovers to dogs to show the horror of their crimes. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners*, 104.

described earlier of Robert having a muzzle is reversed as he once again has the “bouche” and the dog has the “goule.”

Robert’s “bouche” or “goule” retains a prominent role in his penance as it daily wavers between being a human mouth and an animal muzzle in both this and the other two acts of his penance. Robert wanders Rome barefoot, wearing minimal clothing, and carrying a club. These traits announce his insanity to the public and tie him to figures such as the wild herdsman of *Yvain* who, like most wild men, also wields a club.<sup>91</sup> As in his youth, Robert’s actions in addition to his physical appearance connect him to the bestial realm. In order to attract attention to himself without speaking, Robert runs through the street making animal sounds:

Par les maistres rues de Rome  
S'en court a loy de diervé home:  
L'un heure court, l'autre sautielle,  
Henist et brait, saut et beelle,  
Car ne se vault mie celer. (vv. 1541-45)

[Throughout the principal streets of Rome / he went to run like one who had lost his mind: / one moment he runs, the other he hops, / he neighed and brayed, jumped and bleated / because he did not want to remain unnoticed.]

Animality reigns in this description of Robert’s insanity which drives him to run, jump, and mimic animals. Robert takes up not only the braying of his childhood, but also bleats and whinnies, a subtle reminder of Robert’s massacre of the nuns which was followed by the loud whinnying of his horse. The physical connection of horse and man united in blood is strengthened by the man who now acts and sounds like a horse in the streets of Rome. Robert’s mouth once again becomes associated with animals. The last sentence in the description serves to

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<sup>91</sup> In his study on the characteristics of madness in the Middle Ages, Philippe Ménard often cites Robert’s performance as fulfilling most of the motifs of madness (true or feigned). Philippe Ménard, “Les fous dans la société médiévale,” *Romania* 98 (1977). Both Richard Bernheimer and Timothy Husband have pointed to the close relationship between wildness and insanity. Bernheimer cites the mad Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as a potential source for the connection between wildness and insanity. See Bernheimer, *Wild Men*, 12-13; Husband, *The Wild Man*, 8, 10.

remind the reader that Robert's actions are in line with his penance, which required him to attract attention to himself daily, the bestiality of the description surpasses the expected behavior of saints. Since Robert's violence as a youth surpassed the expected behavior of young nobles and knights, his behavior as a saint is likewise exaggerated.

While the animal elements clearly dominate these scenes, they simultaneously allude to Robert's humanity. The dog that Robert takes food from serves to illustrate both Robert's animal traits and his newfound humanity. After his first meal with the dog, Robert follows the canine who goes to sleep "par dessoubz un degré" (v. 1451; under a staircase). The emperor assumes that this is another aspect of Robert's madness and follows his fool. When he sees that Robert is asleep, the emperor orders straw to be brought so that his fool can sleep "dessoubz le vaute, ou le chienaille" (v. 1476; under the vault with the dogs). The "degré" holds a symbolic role in terms of humility and holiness in medieval literature, especially in hagiographic literature, as illustrated by the legend of Saint Alexis. Alexis voluntarily chooses to live and die under the stairs of his own father's house in Rome rather than attain the riches and glory that were his to inherit. Life under the stairs thus came to symbolize extreme humiliation and a denial of earthy aspirations in favor of spiritual aspirations in the afterlife.<sup>92</sup> Yet in choosing this symbolically-laden place of humility, the narrator reminds us that Robert is essentially another of the emperor's hunting dogs.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Akkari, "Par desuz et par desoz li degréz," 228. The legend of Alexis bears many similarities with *Robert le Diable*, especially in terms of Robert's penance since he too sleeps under the steps in a wealthy Roman residence to attend to his spiritual well-being and redemption.

<sup>93</sup> For more on the role of the dog in Robert's penance see Laurence Erussard, "The Watchdogs of the Soul: The Role of Dogs in the Spiritual Salvation of *Robert the Devil*," in *The Book of Nature and Humanity: In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. David Hawkes and Richard G. Newhauser (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

Robert's liminal position as both man and dog situated both in the court but apart from it since he lives under the stairs, allows Robert the space he needs to reflect upon his past actions and develop his relationship with God. Every morning Robert follows the same routine:

Robiers li dous, li deboinaire,  
La messe de bon coer escoute,  
Car en Dieu a se cure toute.  
A genoulz est soulz les degrés  
Ou il estoit couchiés de grés  
Et el couviert ses pechiés pleure. (vv. 1528-33)

[Robert, the soft and humble, / listened to the service with a pure heart, / because his only care now is God. / He kneels under the stairs, / where he had voluntarily bedded down, / he covered his sins with tears.]

Robert's living arrangement under the stairs allows him to listen to mass and pray in silence without being disturbed. After his morning of prayer and contemplation, he leaves to run through the streets where he has no time to think about anything other than avoiding the rocks, stick, mud and bones that the crowd hurls at him. When he can no longer endure the torment, he returns to the dog and the stairs and sits keeping a silent vigil "en pais, sans noise et sans tenchier" (v. 1557; in peace, without noise and without disturbance) until the emperor eats his meal. Robert's penance forces him to interact with the crowd. The bestial aspects of this penance both attract attention to Robert and create a space for sincere repentance. The third article of Robert's penance ensures that he become hairy like a dog, acts like one, and ultimately sleeps with the dogs in the straw under the stairs. It is also the article of penance that guarantees Robert a haven where he can contemplate God and reflect on his sins over the course of ten years; behavior that ultimately earns him the title of saint.



## The Difficult Mixture of Sanctity and Laity

At the end of ten years of sincere penance carried out in silence and secrecy, Robert finds himself in front of the emperor, his court, and his daughter, who has miraculously obtained a voice and revealed Robert's role in saving Rome three times from Saracen invasions. Robert refuses to speak for fear of eternal damnation, but is pressed from all sides to explain himself. At that moment the hermit who assigned Robert his penance arrives before the court and frees the penitent from the constraints of his penance, instructing him to speak. Robert offers a brief account of his past actions and ten years of penance and again falls into silence. The emperor offers the hand of his daughter to the savior of Rome and envoys from his homeland of Normandy arrive and beg their lord to return with them to rule since his father and mother have passed away. The saint refuses all gifts and titles offered, choosing instead to dedicate his life to his spiritual well-being:

Car je suy ceulx qui jamais n'iere  
Au siecle .I. jour tant que je vive,  
Ains garderay m'ame chetive,  
Que nus [ne] me puist mais sousprendre  
Ne faire a vanité entendre;  
Ne voel pas pierdre paradis. (vv. 4574-79)

[Because I will not spend a single day / in society as long as I live, / but I will watch over my poor soul / so that no one can have a hold over me / and lead me into vanity; / I do not want to lose paradise.]

No longer protected from medieval urban society, Robert chooses to leave the city. He is no Louis IX, and feels that he cannot rule either Rome or Normandy and simultaneously devote himself to God. Thus, Robert turns down both offers of wealth, power, and influence, to live with the hermit in the woods (vv. 4601-04) refusing to spend another instant "au siècle."

Robert lives in the woods with the hermit until the latter dies. Upon his death, Robert takes over the duties of the small chapel in the woods and is occasionally visited by penitents and

pilgrims. While in the woods God uses him to do many miracles and all who sought him out revered him as a saint (vv. 4680-86). Upon his death, the faithful of Rome head to the forest to take Robert's body back to Rome and bury it in the Saint Jean church. His corpse remains in Rome until a Duke from Puy enquiring about the saint's life takes the bones home with him where he founds an abbey known as the abbey of Saint Robert (vv. 4705-18). Much like Marie, Robert himself never again sets foot in the city once his penance is complete. While Marie's story returned to the city to the great edification of all, Robert's bones return and become the source of edification. This story illustrates that leading a truly religious life in full devotion to God is difficult to do in the heart of society.

Both *Marie l'Egyptienne* and *Robert le Diable* offer edifying stories of saints, historical and fictional, whose admirable deeds and asceticism separated them from society. Neither text seeks to address directly the feasibility of mixing laity and religion; yet both do so by inscribing bestial traits onto their protagonists that separate them from society. Hair represents one key aspect of the animality prevalent in these texts because it links both Robert and Marie to wild men and hermits. The animality these saints undergo during their penance sets them apart from the average person and serves two primary purposes. The trope of the wild man, indirectly seen through the abnormal hairiness of distinctly human beings, represents a way for these authors to highlight the internal change that true repentance can have on people. The animal appearance and internal piety of the second half of these hagiographies contrasts greatly with the bestial behavior and noble physical appearance of the first half. However, because hairiness can signify both wildness and sanctity in the later Middle Ages, the bestial qualities found in these texts also serve an edifying purpose. For Robert this animality provided a way of creating a space for saintly behavior in the middle of a crowded city and court. When the animal aspects of his

penance were lifted, he was obligated to leave the city to seek the traditional solitude of hermits in the forest. For readers of Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* animality revealed the incompatibility of her extreme asceticism and city life. These wild hermits do not mix with lay society, instead their stories return in the form of poems and bones to provide compelling examples of the power of repentance.

### Chapter 3

#### Humans in Animal Clothing

Although human bodies were not typically covered in hair, medieval people routinely covered themselves in the fur coats of animals sewn as linings onto garments. Fur linings became symbols of status, wealth, and power in France in the Middle Ages, and the king regulated the consumption of furs in order to control who had access to these symbols. Studying the use of animal furs for clothing therefore reveals class dynamics in the Middle Ages. Medieval literature often includes descriptions of nobles wearing dazzling garments at court. Yet in the thirteenth-century text *Guillaume de Palerne*, nobles cover their bodies not only in rich, fur-lined clothing, but also in animal disguises. I will argue that the author of *Guillaume de Palerne* emphasizes the integrity of the smooth-skinned human body at the expense of the furry animal body as a means to establish noble identity. By studying animal hides at moments when they disturb the boundary between humans and animals, we will better understand how the author uses clothing and human ingenuity to define humanity, especially nobles. Ultimately, the author of *Guillaume de Palerne* illustrates the importance of the processes that transform animal hides into noble garments, as a means of restoring humanity. By doing so, he reveals that at least a part of the noble identity is constructed, not by the nobles themselves, but by the trappers, furriers, and artisans who oversee this transformation. Such a revelation shows a vulnerability of the noble identity which must continually be covered up by animal bodies in both society and literature.

*Guillaume de Palerne* survives today in only one manuscript: Paris, Arsenal FR. 6565 which also contains Jean Renart's *L'Escoufle*. The manuscript itself dates from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Based on the dedication to a countess Yolande and some allusions to

historical events and people, specialists date the text anywhere from the 1220s to as late as 1280. The small manuscript presence might suggest that the romance was not very well received; its adaptation, however, into several prose versions in French in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its translation into both Middle English and Irish indicate greater popularity, especially in the later Middle Ages, than its sole remaining manuscript implies.<sup>1</sup> The plot of *Guillaume de Palerne* revolves around the recuperation of two sovereign's lost noble identity and their proximity with the animal world. The heir to the Spanish throne, Alphonse, is turned into a werewolf and he subsequently kidnaps heir to the Palermitan throne, Guillaume, to save him from a murder plot. Discovered in the forest by the emperor of Rome, Guillaume lives in the Roman court and falls in love with the emperor's daughter Melior. The two lovers eventually flee Rome disguised as bears in order to avert Melior's arranged marriage. Though the boundary between humans and animals in this story becomes blurred, as in most medieval romances, the narrator ultimately restores human identity. Studying the moments of human and animal interaction and the re-establishment of humanity will reveal how humans separate themselves from animals, and how nobles set themselves apart from commoners. As both protagonists lose their identity, the narrator emphasizes the threat of illegitimate violence, both human and animal, directed against the human body when men become beasts and the hunters become the hunted. The threat of both human and animal violence against noble bodies creates an atmosphere of fear that undermines man's God-given dominion over the natural world and over human subjects. The human body is further threatened as Guillaume and Melior, disguised beneath animal skins,

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the manuscript and composition of *Guillaume de Palerne*, see Alexandre Micha, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne: Roman du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1990), 7-23; Leslie A. Sconduto, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 1-6; and Christine Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), 7-48.

are hunted during their travels from Rome to Palermo. During their journey, however, the author emphasizes both the use of animals for clothing and the fabrication of this clothing in order to re-establish human dominance both over the animal and the human world. Descriptions throughout this journey reveal the hidden hands of the workers who help make elaborate noble clothing possible. Clothing plays a key role in the reintegration of Guillaume and Alphonse back into the court as animal skins are discarded and removed to reveal smooth human skin. By highlighting the vulnerability of the human body, the treatment of animal hides as clothing, and the intermediaries that transform the hides, the author highlights Guillaume and Melior's humanity during their journey and shows that an integral part of the noble identity is fabricated. The narrator reveals a split at the seams of noble identity because if it can be made it may not be entirely innate or stable; if it can be put together it can also be taken apart.

My reading of *Guillaume de Palerne* argues with more recent readings of the tale that present Guillaume, Melior, and Alphonse as regaining their nobility by incorporating nature via animals into their identity, or that see a partnership between sovereignty and beasts. Such interpretations emphasize the narrator's respectful treatment of animals and sometimes argue that Guillaume and Melior symbolically or literally become animals. In his comparative study of the French original and the fourteenth-century Middle English translation, *William of Palermo*, Randy P. Schiff argues that both versions of the tale demonstrate the "predatory nature of aristocratic power" and the desire of nobles on either side of the channel to preserve their hegemony through violent suppression of non-nobles.<sup>2</sup> He claims that Alphonse's treatment of peasants and the depreciatory language used to refer to laborers demonstrates class solidarity. For Schiff, Guillaume and Melior's journey represents a noble rite of passage incorporating

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<sup>2</sup> Randy P. Schiff, "Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal: Primal Courtliness in *Guillaume de Palerne* and *William of Palerne*," *Exemplaria* 21, no. 4 (2009): 418, 426.

animality into their sovereign identity. Alphonse, an agent of the future sovereigns in Schiff's reading, takes actions against non-nobles and demonstrates the animal-like aggression lying at the core of feudal power.<sup>3</sup> Schiff brings to light a key element of *Guillaume de Palerne* (and many medieval romances) by showing that the noble elite constructs its identity on the victimization of humans perceived as inherently less valuable than themselves. However, Schiff ignores the presence and role of animals in the text that disrupt the social order, blur the boundaries among species, and must be suppressed to reinstate order. Looking at the description of actual animals and humanoid animals before, during, and after the lover's journey leads to an argument against such readings. This journey, where humans turn their fur-coats inside out and walk like animals, is not simply a noble rite of passage incorporating animality into the sovereign identity. Rather, the narrator describes Guillaume and Melior in a satirical way by mixing the sacred and the secular and by emphasizing the abnormality and ugliness of animals that imitate humans. Guillaume, Melior, and Alphonse ultimately reject the incorporation of nature into their identity. Instead, they rebuild their human identity using their *engien*, ruse or ingenuity, in order to establish and legitimize their power over both animals and people. They objectify the animal hides, tear and distort them, wear them, and eventually put them in their proper place in medieval clothing: hidden on the insides of garments. This process then becomes immortalized through the act of speaking, telling and retelling the story within the text. Ultimately, since *Guillaume de Palerne* is written on parchment, the story is inscribed into the animal body itself when written down for posterity.<sup>4</sup> In the end, the hides that blurred the boundary between humans and animals

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<sup>3</sup> Schiff, "Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal," 427.

<sup>4</sup> I will not enter into the details of the imbrications of text and animal skins in this romance. Peggy McCracken briefly addresses seams in both the manuscript copy and the story in *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 83. For a detailed study on the relationship between stories and the hides they are written on see Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

firmly re-establish it, showing not that the interrelation of animality with sovereign power establishes the noble identity, but rather that the human manipulation of both animals and peasants sustains the noble identity and establishes sovereign power.

### **Clothing, Skins, and Broken Bodies**

Medieval romances may not always directly address human domination over animals; they do nevertheless illustrate acts of violence committed against animals which ensure human dominion.<sup>5</sup> In his later writings on animals, Jacques Derrida explores how humans distinguish themselves from animals through domination, manipulation, and even destruction of animals as human property. He shows how the singular word “animal,” used to refer to a whole range of living beings on the other side of an abyssal divide from humans, emphasizes human subjugation by designating a multitude of living beings under one all-encompassing term. Derrida claims that subjection of animals has not changed, but that the increased volume of killings in modern society due to industrial farming and biological experimentation constitutes an animal genocide.<sup>6</sup> Karl Steel continues this line of questioning in his monograph, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages*. Steel argues that human violence against animals becomes constitutive of the very category of human in the Middle Ages. For Steel, “human” is not an essential quality; rather, it is category that humans construct in order to more easily represent their domination of animals.<sup>7</sup> He explains that medieval claims to physical, spiritual, and moral

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<sup>5</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida’s use of terms such as “genocide” and “holocaust” create a sense of unease because they are words that describe the loss of human life. Such usage dismantles hierarchies of human over animal, giving value to animal life and human life. Jacques Derrida, *L’Animal que donc je suis* (Paris: Galilée, 2006), 43, 46-47, 50.

<sup>7</sup> “The human is an effect rather than a cause of its domination of animals; that the humans cannot abandon the subjugation of the animal without abandoning itself; and that the human can therefore be said not to exist except in its action of domination.” Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 19.



uniqueness are based upon the domination of an animal other and serve to establish the traditional hierarchy which recognizes human loss of life as grievous and punishable and animal loss of life as generally acceptable. This hierarchy of rational man over irrational animal “requires a continual reenactment of subjugation to attempt a stabilization it can never attain.”<sup>8</sup> For Steel, acts of violence against animal bodies, perceived as fundamentally different from human bodies, enact and reenact subjugation. Like Derrida, Steel points to human consumption of animals as the primary means by which humans assert their dominance over the animal through violence and suffering: “The human monopoly on legitimized violence requires that all such threats from independent animal violence in the presence of humans be marked as illicit. Because the routine conversion of animals into meat is the clearest physical expression of human mastery, it is therefore especially important that such violence be policed and monopolized.”<sup>9</sup> Consumption of animals for food may be the most enduring expression of human mastery, but it was not the only one heavily policed in the Middle Ages. Humans also routinely broke animal bodies for clothing, which itself was an essential component of representations of sovereignty in medieval stories like *Guillaume de Palerne*.

In the prologue of *Guillaume de Palerne*, the narrator exhorts those with knowledge not to keep it hidden and promptly begins his story. In Apulia, king Embron and his wife Felise enjoy their orchard with their four-year-old son Guillaume. The familial bliss comes to an abrupt halt when the werewolf Alphonse breaks into the orchard and snatches Guillaume. He outruns the king’s men in his escape to Rome, and temporarily leaves the child in the forest where a cowherd finds Guillaume, and he and his wife raise the child until Emperor Nathaniel of Rome sees the boy during a hunting trip. Convinced of Guillaume’s noble origins, the emperor takes

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<sup>8</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 89.

him to court and makes him steward to his daughter Melior. Melior falls in love with Guillaume, although she remains greatly conflicted due to his unknown identity and perceived lower social status until Alixandrine, Melior's cousin and confidante, facilitates a meeting between the two in the castle's orchard. The emperor meanwhile promises Melior to the son of the Greek emperor, so Alixandrine sews the lovers into two white bear skins and they flee the court. In the forest, the werewolf Alphonse aids them, bringing provisions and guiding them to Apulia. After quarry workers in Benevento discover and nearly capture the lovers, Guillaume and Melior abandon their bear hides and Alphonse returns to them with a freshly killed stag and doe. Upon their arrival in Palermo, the narrator reveals that King Embron has died, and his widow Felise is defending the realm from Alphonse's father's army. The queen looks out her window where she sees Guillaume and Melior in the orchard; their deer disguises have shrunk enough to reveal their clothing. The queen disguises herself in a deer skin and convinces Guillaume to fight for her. After three battles, Guillaume captures the Spanish king and his son Brandin. The king appears before Felise and the two reach a tentative peace. During this audience, Alphonse arrives to pay homage to the queen, but when he sees his father, he tearfully approaches him kissing his hands and feet before knights chase him away. The king realizes that the werewolf is his long-lost son and they send for Queen Brande, Alphonse's stepmother. Brande admits to changing her stepson into a werewolf to disinherit him, receives a pardon, and transforms Alphonse back into a man. Alphonse reveals Guillaume's royal identity as Felise's long lost son. Guillaume marries Melior, Alphonse marries Guillaume's sister Florence, and Brandin, Alphonse's stepbrother, marries Alixandrine.

The setting of the poem, Sicily (well-known throughout the twelfth century for its weaving, needlework, and rich silk fabrics), emphasizes the importance of clothing. The

Coronation Mantle of the Norman King of Sicily, Roger II, later to become the Coronation Mantle of the Holy Roman Empire, made in Palermo in 1133/34 and housed today in Vienna, provides an example of Sicilian craftsmanship. The poem describes characters who daily wear garments like this richly ornamented mantle worn, in reality, only to reinforce the image of wealth and power on special occasions.<sup>10</sup> On the day of his daughter's ill-fated arranged marriage, the Emperor Nathaniel, for example, wears garments of a mysterious and indefinable quality:

Son cors si richement vestu  
D'un dras qui sont de tel vertu  
Que ja nul jor n'enviesiront  
Ne por vestir n'empièrront.  
Ne vos puis mie tot describe  
Ne le façon conter ne dire,  
Qui li douna, qui les fist faire,  
Car trop i aroit a retraire. (vv. 3467-74)<sup>11</sup>

[His body so richly dressed / in garments which are of such high quality / that they will never age / nor will the worsen for wear. / I cannot describe everything to you / nor the construction recount, or tell / who gave it to him, who had it made, / for there would be too much to relate.]

The poet emphasizes the finished product whose mysterious and indescribable construction make it appear as if it does not age. This agelessness serves to introduce the emperor whom the narrator describes as handsome at the age of eighty. The garments is a sort of heritage object, representing the institution of nobility which will neither age and nor decay even if the individual members of the institution suffer such a fate. The rhyme in lines 3467 and 3468 emphasize that the emperor is literally “vestu” (clothed) in the “vertu” (high quality or virtue) of the nobility.

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<sup>10</sup> Blanche Payne, *History of Costume: From the Ancient Egyptians to the Twentieth Century* (New York, Harper & Row, 1965), 122, 153-4, 163-64.

<sup>11</sup> All quotations in Old French are taken from Micha's transcription of the original manuscript: *Guillaume de Palerne: Roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Alexandre Micha (Geneva: Droz, 1990). English translations come from Leslie Sconduto's English translation, based on Micha's transcription, unless otherwise noted: *Guillaume de Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance*, ed. Leslie A. Sconduto (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004).

Garments such as those worn by Nathaniel exemplify and hyperbolize the greatness of royal and noble identities.

Clothing as a noble symbol leads poets like the anonymous author of *Guillaume de Palerne* to focus on either finished products. The narrator praises the “dras” (garments) and conceals the hands that make them. In the above quotation, the poet rhymes the denied act of recounting, “retraire,” with that which he refuses to relate: the production of the garments, which he only describes with the ambiguous verb “faire.” The verb “retraire” can also mean to take away or remove something. In this description, the poet essentially removes the making or fabrication. The fashion historian Sarah-Grace Heller, argues that the effacement of the artisan’s hand as characteristic of romances; the use of ambiguous vocabulary such as “faire” to describe production becomes a means of placing the clothing and its wearer in a realm entirely removed from quotidian life.<sup>12</sup> These and numerous other descriptions of gold-cloaked Greek ambassadors or of Guillaume and Melior wrapped in silken cloth and ermine-lined coats bordered in orphrey represent pauses in the text which emphasize the image of nobility. As Margaret Scott notes, romances overstate the quality and number of the outfits worn by members of the court to emphasize a social distinction rather than to accurately reflect reality.<sup>13</sup> Clothing and representations of clothing represent one attempt at preserving the conservative aristocratic hegemony that was increasingly threatened in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the growing bourgeois classes.

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<sup>12</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, “Obscure Lands and Obscured Hands: Fairy Embroidery and the Ambiguous Vocabulary of Medieval Textile Decoration,” *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 5 (2009): 27.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress & Fashion* (London: British Library, 2007), 60. See also E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

In an earlier scene, the narrator of *Guillaume de Palerne* describes over thirty lines the extravagant arrival of ambassadors from Greece seeking the hand of the Roman emperor's daughter Melior. Of these thirty lines, eighteen describe their physical appearance and twelve their clothing and accessories: gold garments, cloaks, golden hats, rich rings, and straps of gold lined with gems covering their hands (lines 2563-92). Their extravagant dress allegedly causes the room around them to shimmer and sparkle. Such descriptions add little to the action of the story and even less to accurate recreation of the courts they supposedly describe. Rather, they emphasize that nobility should glitter like gold and stand out in a crowd. Few would dispute the importance of clothing to the nobility as a visible status symbol implying wealth in medieval literature and reality. Heller remarks that "Laws and stories alike reveal that the ambitious sought to expand their personal visibility, thereby seeking to promote their worth in the social hierarchy."<sup>14</sup> Nobles fiercely guarded both their position near the top of the social hierarchy and the symbols of that position. Medieval sumptuary laws of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, regal edicts that regulated the consumption of luxury goods, especially clothing, also protected noble identity. In her study on the two principal thirteenth-century sumptuary laws, the French edicts of 1279 and 1294, Heller demonstrates that both aimed to maintain a distinction between the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. Unlike later laws which regulated the particularities of fashion, including cuts and styles, these earlier laws attempted to control personal expenditure on clothing, cloth, and fur linings in relation to social status and income. According to Philippe III's 1279 sumptuary law, for example, dukes, barons, counts, and prelates with an annual revenue of 7,000 livres or more could buy five sets of robes, or outfits, per year, while those earning less

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<sup>14</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance in Thirteenth-Century Sumptuary Laws and the *Roman de la rose*," *French Historical Studies* 27, no.2 (Spring 2004): 312.

than 7,000 could buy only four. A bourgeois, no matter his income, was permitted to buy only two robes per year.<sup>15</sup>

Clothing not only distinguished between social classes; it also separates humans from animals. Without clothes, humans are naked. According to Christian theology, animals cannot be naked because they have no knowledge of good and evil. When the serpent deceived Eve and she and Adam ate the forbidden fruit in Genesis, the first thing they discovered was their nakedness, and they quickly sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. After describing their punishment God clothed Adam and Eve in animal skins and exiled them from paradise.<sup>16</sup> The act of covering one's nakedness represents one of the many things unique to mankind alongside speech, reason, laughter, and so on.<sup>17</sup> However, as Peggy McCracken notes, after the fall humans lost their peaceful domination of animals: "In the postlapsarian world, survival and relations of dominion are intertwined: the making of clothes from animal skins, like the consumption of animals for food and the use of their labor, is a technology of sovereignty that defines practical survival as inseparable from relations of dominion."<sup>18</sup> Humans cover up their smooth bodies with the furry bodies of animals; wearing animals on one's clothes became a symbol not only of human dominance of the animal world, but of status and positions of power over other humans.<sup>19</sup> In the Middle Ages men and women often lined their outer garments with animal furs for warmth and, in the case of the nobles, for fashion and status. The white winter coat of the ermine, a member of the weasel family found in the Arctic Circle in parts of modern Russia and Finland, was the most desirable and expensive imported fur of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries because

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<sup>15</sup> Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance," 317-19.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 3:6-7, 3:21-23.

<sup>17</sup> Derrida, *L'Animal que donc je suis*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*. See especially chapter one, "Wearing Animals: Skin, Survival, and Sovereignty," 12-36.

the color was a rarity.<sup>20</sup> In addition to limiting the number of outfits, sumptuary laws attempted to restrict the consumption of fine fur such as ermine and vair for lining. In the 1294 laws clerics could not wear fur on their garments unless they were prelates or had an established benefice or dignity (usually meaning they came from a higher class); however, they were permitted to line their hats with such furs.<sup>21</sup> Hides were worn on the inside of garments because fur on the outside reminded wearers and those around them of the slain animals, hirsute wild men, and the wearer's own suppressed animal nature.<sup>22</sup> Only hermits and the poorest of peasants who, in the mind of the elite, were already closer to animals, wore pelts on the outer surface of their garments. To remove the stigma of the animal from their elegant garments, beginning in the eleventh century, nobles wore furs, only on the inside of their clothes, the small lining visible on the outside thus alluded to the luxury beneath.

### **The Endangered Human Body**

The nobility's elaborate clothing and accessories become some of the few things comparable to a noble's natural beauty. At the beginning of *Guillaume de Palerne*, for example, Emperor Nathaniel notices Guillaume, a young boy living with a cowherd, and recognizes him as noble first by his appearance and later by his clothes:

Mais or me di en quel ator  
 Estoit il quant tu le trouvas,  
 C'avoit vestu ne com fais dras.  
 - Sire, fait il, tos les plus biax  
 C'onques eüst nus damoisiax,  
 Trestous vermax et pains a flor

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<sup>20</sup> Paul B. Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 98.

<sup>21</sup> Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance," 325, 333.

<sup>22</sup> Marie-Christine Pouchelle explains that animality and sin were linked in the Middle Ages because since the Fall in the garden of Eden, mankind constantly battles his own bestial nature. Pouchelle surmises that this fear and fascination of the animal other may have played a role in the suspicion surrounding pelts as merchandise. Marie-Christine Pouchelle, "Des peaux de bêtes et des fourrures. Histoire médiévale d'une fascination," *Le Temps de la réflexion* 2 (1981): 412-14.

Et mainte roie d'or entor.  
Onque nus hom plus biax ne vit. (vv. 514-23)

[“But now tell me what garments / He was wearing when you found him, / what he was clothed in and how the fabric was made. / - Sire” he says, “truly the most beautiful / that ever had any young nobleman. / Entirely vermilion with flowers / and a great number of stripes of gold around it. / No man ever saw anything more beautiful.”]

The only thing that can rival Guillaume’s rose-colored mouth and golden locks are the beautiful vermilion cloth decorated with flowers and stripes of gold used to make the clothing the foundling wore as a child. A connection exists between noble bodies and the clothes that cover them. As both Guillaume and Alphonse find themselves disinherited from their thrones and put into contact with the animal world, both their bodies and their clothing, or lack thereof, become the site of blurring between humans and animals and the ultimate reinstatement of the human.

The human body, made in the image of God, represented an avenue for medieval Christian intellectuals to distinguish humankind from the beasts. The corporeal tradition maintained that body shape reflected a being’s humanity or, conversely, its bestiality. Medieval theologians and the ancient philosophers before them posited that a human’s bipedalism and their possession of hands reflected their intellectual capacities and implied their supremacy over animals.<sup>23</sup> Ovid’s description of Prometheus’s creation of man led medieval philosophers to interpret man’s upright posture as a proclamation of his capacity for reason and his intelligence:

Into a shape not unlike that of the god.  
But one way or another, man arose—erect,  
Standing tall as the other beasts do not, with our faces  
Set not to gaze down at the dirt beneath our feet  
But upward toward the sky.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 44-45.

<sup>24</sup> Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. David Slavitt (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), I. 79-83. Cited in Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 45.



Animal bodies, by contrast, confirm the terrestrial nature of their owners because their quadrupedal position causes animals to focus on the ground. Man's possession of hands was not, therefore, simply interpreted as a sign of reason; for some, they actually facilitated man's reason. Abbot William of St. Thierry, for example, postulated in the twelfth century that without hands man, too, would have to graze for his food. Such a situation would have resulted in thicker teeth, an altered mouth, and an elongated neck which, in turn, would have inhibited articulation and modulated speech. Without hands, the capacity to write would also be out of the question.<sup>25</sup> Such statements connected speech and writing to bodily form and assumed that reason could not exist outside of these acts, and certainly did not exist in the *bestes mutes*, or mute beasts. The tradition was not without its ambiguities and authors did not always have a uniform conception of what corporeal features truly distinguished humans from the beasts, especially beasts such as apes which, too, were bipedal. Despite its flaws, the corporeal tradition was influential on medieval conceptualization of humans, animals, and their differences.<sup>26</sup>

In *Guillaume de Palerne's* tale of sovereignty lost and found, the narrator weaves together human loss of political control with a loss of control over their own bodies and over the natural world. The story begins in a Sicilian orchard where King Embron and his family enjoy an afternoon in a place surely meant to be well-ordered and controlled, much like the *verger* (orchard or garden) in the first half of the *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>27</sup> Humans admire their domesticated domain as Guillaume, aged four, cuts flowers, and his parents admire the trees

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<sup>25</sup> Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 48-9. For Abbot William of St. Thierry's quotation see page 26 of the introduction.

<sup>26</sup> Steel has shown the unpredictability of the corporeal tradition when faced with animals such as apes or category-defying monsters, claiming that most authors chose somewhat arbitrarily which creatures to include and which to exclude from the human category. For more on the corporeal tradition in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries see Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 44-60.

<sup>27</sup> In that garden, Déduit chose not only what plants to allow within the garden's walls, but also what kind of people to exclude from it. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Armand Strubel (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992), vv. 593-4.

whose planting they surely supervised. Much as Guillaume and Melior's clothing will later burst through the seams of their disguises and show their true identity, the cracks in this façade of domesticated nature and domestic tranquility appear when Alphonse breaks into the orchard and snatches Guillaume, to the horror of the entire royal household. Alphonse's unauthorized entry and the plotted regicide reveal Embron's inability to govern his kingdom effectively. The well-ordered garden links domestication of nature to political power, and Alphonse's invasion reveals the fragility of Embron's power. This event initiates Guillaume's personal journey of self-discovery and has larger political ramifications since it leads to the frightful state of the kingdom upon his return. Guillaume's kidnapping by a werewolf results in King Embron's eventual death leaving no known male heir, an unmarried daughter, and his widowed queen to defend the realm. In the opening lines of the story the connection between subjugated nature and political authority in the orchard remains implicit. This connection becomes more apparent during the Spanish siege when the invading army destroys not only the towns and villages under the political control of Palermo, but also illicitly hunts and kills the animals in King Embron's park:

.I. vergier voient sos la tor,  
Clos et fermé de mur entor.  
Ce fu li pars au roi Embron.  
Most i ot bestes a fuison,  
Mais cil de l'ost les orent prises  
Et fort chacies et ocises,  
Molt en ot poi remés el clos. (vv. 4671-77)

[An orchard they see beneath the tower, / enclosed and fenced in with walls all around. / This was the park of King Embron. / There were many beasts there in abundance, / but those in the enemy army had taken them / and had hunted and killed many/ very few remained in the enclosure.]

Unable to take the castle and capture its inhabitants, the invaders attack its symbolic weakest point: the orchard where Embron's weakness as king was first revealed. This deliberate attack on the king's orchard and unauthorized slaughter of the animals within it results in both a real and

metaphorical crack in the castle walls. Guillaume and his lady will eventually reenter his father's orchard through the literal and symbolic cracks in his ancestral kingdom's walls that his unexpected and violent departure created.

Animals become a source of fear when they act in ways that harm humans or defy their will. The animals kept in king Embron's park, for example, were more than likely artificially stocked and controlled through organized hunts.<sup>28</sup> Alphonse, on the other hand, bursts into the realm of human control, seemingly undermining the king's authority and threatening the body of his son. The narrator emphasizes the travesty of the human body harmed by a wild beast. Though a werewolf acting in Guillaume's defense, Alphonse appears to the members of the court as a fierce, wild beast; no one knows he is actually a werewolf. Although the queen refers to him as a werewolf while lamenting the loss of her child, the first eight references to the animal are either *leus* (wolf) or *beste* (beast), emphasizing his appearance as an ordinary wolf. Christine Ferlampin-Acher notes that, "S'il apparaît *goule baee* (v. 86) pour ravir le nourrisson, s'il effraie à juste titre l'assistance, ce n'est pas tant le garou, victime d'une métamorphose, que le loup, bestial, qui suscite la terreur quand il apparaît au début du texte: ce n'est encore qu'un loup."<sup>29</sup> Guillaume's mother grieves and laments the loss of her son's perfect body. She describes his body, from his rose-colored mouth to his beautiful legs and feet, and cannot believe that such perfection could be lost to a beast:

Lasse, quel duel et quel pechié!  
Ja devoies tu estre fais  
Por devises et por sourhais,  
Or es a leu garoul peuture,  
Li miens enfes. Quel aventure!  
Mais je ne cuit por nule chose  
Beste sauvage soit si ose

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<sup>28</sup> For more on the medieval practice of creating, maintaining, and stocking deer parks see John Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 57-60.

<sup>29</sup> Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 50.

Qui ton gent cors ost adamer,  
Plaier, sanc fair ne navrer;  
Ne cuit que ja Damedieu place  
Ne que tel cruauté en face. (vv. 148-58)

[Woe is me, what grief and what a regrettable event! / Indeed you were supposed to be made / for pleasure and for desire; / now, you are food for a werewolf, / my child. What a horrible adventure! / But I do not believe for anything / that any savage beast might be so bold / as to dare to harm your beautiful body, / to wound it, make it bleed, or injure it. / I will never believe that it would please God / Nor that He would cause such cruelty to be done.]

Though she labels Alphonse as a “leu garoul,” which would position him as human and animal, he is primarily a “beste sauvage” in the eyes of the queen. Years later, when she recounts the story to Guillaume, unaware of his true identity, she no longer claims that her child was carried away by a werewolf, but by a “leus” (v. 5877). As such, harming Guillaume’s body, spilling his blood, signals not only a misfortune, but also evokes a sin which God should not allow (and, as plot developments reveal, does not). The queen describes her son’s body as “gent,” a word that implies not only beauty, but nobility of birth, rank or blood.<sup>30</sup> Her insistence on her son’s nobility implies that the noble body’s becoming “peuture,” or food for animals, is somehow more grievous than if this had been the body of a commoner.<sup>31</sup>

The queen’s reaction to Guillaume’s kidnapping corresponds with Schiff’s argument that the text preserves the noble identity and establishes a hierarchy at the start of the story privileging the noble body over the common. The emperor’s decision to take Guillaume back to his castle further illustrates this preference. The foundling’s “biauté” (beauty), “semblance” (appearance), and “noble contenance” (noble countenance) shock Nathaniel because such a noble body could not possibly belong to a peasant (vv. 419-20). A similar corporeal hierarchy affects

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<sup>30</sup> Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.v. “gent.”

<sup>31</sup> *Peuture* can refer to food in general, but it eventually came to refer to food given to animals. In modern French, *pouture* refers to barley flour which is fed to horses and other livestock. Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “peuture.”

the people Alphonse attacks in his desire to aid Guillaume and Melior as they escape from Rome years later. As Felise predicted, God does not allow Guillaume's noble body to be harmed. Though he scares the child, Alphonse takes great pains to ensure his comfort by digging a den and embracing him with his four legs to put him to sleep. During the escape, when Alphonse kidnaps the provost's son to save Guillaume and Melior, the provost echoes the queen's concern, checking the integrity of his son's body when he retrieves the boy:

Par tot le cors li met les mains,  
Mais tous estoit et saus et sains.  
Quant il n'i voit plaie ne sanc  
En brach, en cuisse ne en flanc,  
Molt s'esjoïst de l'aventure. (vv. 4221-25)

[He puts his hands all over his body, / but everything was both safe and sound. /  
When he sees neither wound nor blood / on his arms, on his thighs and on his  
side, / He rejoices greatly about the adventure.]

The provost uses a similar vocabulary in verifying that his son's body is fully intact, but without the reference to its nobility. Although an agent of the king, the provost and his son occupy a lower position in the social hierarchy. Alphonse's treatment of the boy reflects this ranking. The werewolf does not harm his body in any way; he goes to great lengths to ensure his safety. Nonetheless, in contrast to how he left Guillaume, Alphonse leaves the provost's son in such a state of shock that he does not know whether his father or the beast holds him.

Things change when Alphonse seeks provisions for the young lovers. He procures wine from a cleric by scaring the man so much that he drops the wine and runs: "Et li garox le barril prent, / qui du clerc n'avoit pas talent / qu'il li face nul autre mal" (vv. 3345-47; And the werewolf picks up the cask, / for regarding the cleric he had no desire / to do him further harm). Alphonse has no desire to physically harm the cleric, but his treatment of the man is decidedly

less than courteous. The peasant carrying meat home to his wife and children, however, receives the worst treatment. Alphonse knocks the man to the ground and holds him there by his clothing:

Et li garous vers lui s'avance,  
As dens l'aert et saut d'encoste,  
Tres bien le tient par le hargote;  
Tot estendu le vilain rue. (vv. 3266-69)

[And the werewolf advances toward him, / with his teeth he seizes him and jumps to the side, / he has a good hold on him because of the pleat in his garment; / he throws the peasant flat on the ground, all stretched out.]

Though Alphonse does not harm the peasant, the tone of the encounter differs radically from those with Guillaume, the provost's son, and even the cleric, most notably in terms of the werewolf's treatment of their bodies. Alphonse throws the peasant to the ground and holds him there by his everyday clothes (hargote), but when he no longer needs the provost's son, "jus l'a mis si cortoisement / que li enfes nul mal ne sent" (vv. 4203-4; On the ground he put him down so courteously / that the child feels no discomfort). Alphonse treats the provost's son with the courtesy due the son of an official of the king, while the clerk, and especially the peasant, merit no such treatment. Schiff highlights this as an important element in the story because, despite his status as a werewolf, Alphonse remains the son of a king and he very clearly elevates the noble body above the common one as the standard humanity should strive for. The class-conscious desire to elevate the noble body from the rest of humanity is undoubtedly at stake, as evidenced by Felise's qualification of her own son's body at the tale's opening as "gent" and the emperor's reaction to Guillaume. This class consciousness, however, exists alongside the fear of illicit animal violence committed against noble, human authority. However, Schiff ignores a very real

presence in the story of an animal, a wolf, that threatens the human body. This violence instills such fear in men because it has the potential to literally destroy the human body.<sup>32</sup>

The attack against the human body becomes more blatant in the story of Alphonse, the young prince turned werewolf by his stepmother. Alphonse's story maintains some key folkloric elements found in most werewolf lore; notably, his transformation takes place at the hands of a "male feme" (evil woman).<sup>33</sup> Brande uses her magical powers to prevent Alphonse from ascending to the Spanish throne; she vows that she will either kill her stepson or put him in such a position that he can never rule:

D'un oingnement li oint le cors  
Qui tant estoit poissans et fors;  
Tant par estoit de grant vertu,  
Si tost com l'enfes oins en fu,  
Son estre et sa samblance mue,  
Que leus devint et beste mue.  
Leus fu warox de maintenant;  
Ce que de lui fu aparant  
A tout perdu, son essiënt. (vv. 301-9)

[She anoints his body with an ointment / which was very strong and powerful; it was so very potent that / as soon as the child was anointed with it / his condition and appearance changed; a wolf he became and he was transformed into a beast. / at once he became a werewolf; / everything that was visible of him / he has lost, he believes.]

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<sup>32</sup> The fear of becoming food for an animal also posed serious theological concerns for the Resurrection of the body. While medieval theologians proposed several different solutions, the question represents a potentially dangerous symbolic breakdown of the barrier between humans and animals. Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 108-18; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 229-78.

<sup>33</sup> Brande's role in initiating the transformation does not fully correspond to werewolf tradition because she is Alphonse's stepmother rather than an unfaithful wife as was usually the case. Alphonse's age adds another new twist to the tale. For more on the folkloric elements of the werewolf myth in *Guillaume de Palerne* see Leslie A. Sconduto, "Rewriting the Werewolf in *Guillaume de Palerne*," *Le cygne: Bulletin of the International Marie de France Society* 6 (2000); Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 48-65; and Irene Pettit McKeehan, "Guillaume de Palerne: A Medieval 'Best Seller,'" *PMLA* 41, no. 4 (Dec. 1926).

Brande imposes the transformation on Alphonse. It is not linked to his animal nature or attributed to a magic object as in other werewolf stories.<sup>34</sup> Human skin represents a fairly impermeable barrier separating the humans from their surroundings, and its smoothness differs radically from the vast majority of the furry mammals. Queen Brande's ointment undermines the boundary by rendering the skin symbolically porous. Alphonse's body loses all semblance of human appearance as it becomes hirsute and quadrupedal. In addition to the change in Alphonse's "samblance" (appearance) he also loses his "estre" (social condition). Appearance, internal nature, and social condition were intertwined in the Middle Ages as evidenced by the popularity of physiognomy, the art of reading one's appearance in order to learn about their nature. If the connection among the three sometimes proved false in reality, it rarely did so in courtly literature. Alphonse simultaneously loses his position of sovereignty and his human appearance. Alphonse's nature apparently remains unchanged: aside from two deadly outbursts directed against Brande, which are tempered with knightly language and qualified as a "guerre" (v. 314), Alphonse's nature remains primarily human as seen through his care and concern for Guillaume. Although Alphonse is a friendly werewolf, the narrator nevertheless emphasizes how the transformation produces a ferocious being. In the above line, "Leus fu warox de maintenat," the syntax, separating the "leus" from the "warox," is unusual. The "warox," the form often used alone to describe Alphonse, denotes the friendlier aspect of Alphonse, a euphemizing of the traditional ferocious *leus garox*.<sup>35</sup> The *leus*, however, still exists, at least on the outside; this violent side frightens nobles, clerics, and peasants. A werewolf's nature is fundamentally divided between humanity and animality. In *Guillaume de Palerne* Alphonse seems to keep his human nature, but his outward appearance belongs to the frightening *leus*. The opening of the story

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<sup>34</sup> See Sconduto, "Rewriting the Werewolf," 31.

<sup>35</sup> Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 50.



destabilizes the boundary between the human and animal, specifically in physical appearance and social condition. This results in a discord of “nature” and “estre” with “samblant” that the end of the romance must rectify.<sup>36</sup>

The first 340 lines of the romance serve to introduce the two male protagonists and the events that disrupt the ordered, noble world of the romance. The fear of the animal and the described assault on the human body rouses a latent fear that the noble, human body is not exempt from the harm it so regularly inflicts on others. This fear is essentially that of the hunter hunted and evokes what Pierre Bureau calls the “phénomène de l’écorcheur écorché” found in certain branches of the *Roman de Renart* where prey, usually the fox Renart, deflects violence from itself and back on the predator, usually a human.<sup>37</sup> Treated comically in the *Roman de Renart*, the hunter hunted is one of several techniques which allows the continual renewal of the story because each time Renart or any of the other characters survive with their skin intact, the potential for them to lose it the next day becomes the subject of another story.<sup>38</sup> The renewal of the story results from the animal saving his skin, sometimes just barely, at the expense of the human hunter. In the opening scenes of *Guillaume de Palerne*, the situation is reversed, and humans are the ones who barely save their skins from being devoured by animals. Alphonse’s intrusion, “goule baee” (mouth gaping open), into King Embron’s orchard launches both Guillaume’s personal journey and leads to the disastrous state of his kingdom upon his return. The animal takes control of the story, re-writing it not with his mouth’s words but with its actions. The hunter becomes the hunted: in the very space where the king and perhaps the queen

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<sup>36</sup> For more on *nature*, *norreture*, *samblant*, and *estre* see Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 72-83.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Bureau, “Les valeurs métaphoriques de la peau dans le *Roman de Renart*. Sens et fonctions,” *Médiévales* 22-23 (1992): 137. See branch III for a good example.

<sup>38</sup> Bureau, “Les valeurs métaphoriques,” 143.

break animal bodies for food and pleasure, the queen laments the destruction of her son's body which she believes had become "peuture" for a wolf. Similarly, the earlier attack on Alphonse's body interrupts the inheritance to the Spanish throne, and the resulting replacement of Alphonse by the king's stepson Brandin leads to the unjust and disastrous war against Queen Felise.

The fear of the alteration or destruction of the human body by animals sets the stage for political instability and the destabilization of the boundary separating humans and animals. The boundary confusion culminates in Guillaume and Melior's voyage from the Roman court to the Sicilian orchard where Guillaume was kidnapped. This journey signals the beginning of the second half of the story and of Guillaume's self-discovery. The role of the animal in this journey cannot be overstated. Apart from references to the werewolf, nearly all references to animals in the second half of the text occur in this part of the story.<sup>39</sup> The lovers' decision to escape wearing hides, first of bear and later of deer, is of course the most notable interaction between humans and animals. Concealed in the advice given to the lovers by Alixandrine lies the fear of the hunter becoming the hunted which makes their escape possible:

Laval en cele grant quisine  
A escorcié bestes pluisors,  
Chevrex et dains et cers et ours;  
Ce sont bestes c'on molt resoigne,  
Nus ne les voit qui ne s'esloigne  
Ains que vers eus ost aprismer,  
Tant sont cruel et fort et fier. (vv. 3012-18)

[Down in the great kitchen / they have skinned several animals, / goats and deer  
and stags and bear; / those are beasts that are greatly feared. / No one sees them  
who does not distance himself / rather than dare approach them; / they are so cruel  
and strong and fierce.]

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<sup>39</sup> Apart from werewolves, the only animals in the text outside this episode are warhorses, notably Brunsaudebriel, the king's charger.

Alexandrine's suggestion that the lovers leave disguised as these animals, feared for their cruelty and strength, turns them into hunted animals that threaten the social order. Her plan succeeds: when Guillaume and Melior escape Rome through the emperor's orchard, the Greek soldier who spots them instantly fears being killed, flees, and recounts, pale-faced and ashen, how he was nearly devoured by two white bears. In planning her friends' escape, Alixandrine puts into words the fear that gripped both the peasant and the nobles in their encounters with Alphonse: the fear that the hunters could become the hunted. Rather than breaking and skinning animals in the kitchen, humans may be broken and mutilated by beasts.

### **Undignified Animality**

Though some readers characterize Guillaume and Melior's transformation into the hunted animals as a noble rite of passage incorporating animality into the noble identity, this reading remains unconvincing. Guillaume and Alphonse find themselves stripped of their power and positions in part because of the inability of those nearest them to dominate animals. Schiff's argument that "while non-nobles can be treated in these romances with such disdainful glee, wild animals receive profound respect, as the transitions between human and animal worlds disclose the interrelation of aristocratic hegemony and violence," mischaracterizes the actual treatment of animals in the tale.<sup>40</sup> Schiff's argument exemplifies Derrida's qualification of the word "animal" as an act of subjugation because it classifies many living beings and their varied experiences under a single term. Some animals like Alphonse or the horse Brunsaudebriel may be treated with respect under certain circumstances, but that does not mean that wild animals as a whole receive profound respect in this story. Examining in detail Guillaume and Melior's trip from

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<sup>40</sup> Schiff, "Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal," 425.

Rome to Sicily, it becomes clear that what initially appeared a noble foray into the otherworldly realm of the *merveilleux* turns into a carnivalesque journey characterized by a bizarre intermingling of the human and animal. Their trip begins with a key element of a marvelous journey: a white animal or object. The hides that Alixandrine procures for the lovers are white, like the mysterious white hind of Marie de France's "Guigemar" or the hunt of the white hind in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide*. Rather than representing another literary example of the *merveilleux*, however, this second half of the story illustrates a deconstruction of the *merveille*: the marvelous elements are present, but demystified.<sup>41</sup> The journey into an otherworldly realm with a werewolf guide is anchored in an actual geographical reality (Sicily and southern Italy) distant enough to evoke a sense of the exotic and mysterious to the French audience, but close enough to be known. Ultimately, the world is turned upside down when the lovers turn their fur-lined cloaks inside out and walk on all fours, adding a new level of complexity to the already contested boundary between the human and animal world.<sup>42</sup> The lovers will eventually use clothing and *engien* to recover their identity, but before that the narrator subverts the standard incorporation of animality and nature into noble identity. The narrator does not turn Guillaume and Melior into animals, but describes them in ways that mix human and animal traits in an entirely irreverent way, blending sacred and secular imagery. Further, any time he emphasizes the animal traits of their disguises, he denigrates the animal as a mere imitation of the human.

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<sup>41</sup> Christine Ferlampin-Acher, "Guillaume de Palerne: une parodie?" *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales* 15 (2008): 64-67.

<sup>42</sup> Possible intertextual allusions to the *Roman de Renart* bolster this parodic, or playful, interpretation of the journey as seen primarily in a concern for food both before and during the lover's journey. *Guillaume de Palerne* is saturated with intertextual allusions, so much so that it is impossible to determine a sole literary, generic, or folkloric source of the story. For studies on the intertextual allusions made in *Guillaume de Palerne* see Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*; Ferlampin-Acher, "Guillaume de Palerne: une parodie?;" McKeehan, "Guillaume de Palerne: A Medieval 'Best Seller.'"

Ultimately, the text treats respectfully neither the nobles nor the animals whose disguises they wear.

### **Humans Imitating Animals Imitating Humans**

If the animal has the metaphorical first word of the tale, it does not have the last. Alphonse may initiate the story, but Guillaume gives his name to it. The fear of the beast that immobilized the Sicilian kingdom and disrupted the Spanish one takes an ironic turn when Guillaume and Melior decide to put on animal hides. The fear of the hunter being hunted initially permits Guillaume and Melior's escape; however, the lovers incorporate none of the fierce qualities of the bears that Alixandrine described. A tension abides at the core of the escape plan because while the disguised lovers do inspire fear in the unsuspecting, they are also dressed as animals that are routinely and successfully hunted, placing them in a potentially vulnerable position.<sup>43</sup> Schiff argues that the lovers "become animal," that is, they incorporate the animal into their noble identity: "the lovers choose to become animal, intuiting that by appropriating, indeed incorporating the 'state of nature' at the heart of sovereign power, they will survive the imperial hunt."<sup>44</sup> If this were the case, Guillaume and Melior would incorporate the strength, ferocity, and cruelty of the animals described by Alixandrine in order to survive their ordeal.<sup>45</sup> Stories of "berserkers," warriors who donned the skin of a freshly slain bear and incorporated its

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<sup>43</sup> Deer represent the ultimate royal game. Bears, though less popular and rarer in northern France, Germany, and England, were hunted south of the Pyrenees and throughout the Iberian Peninsula. They were not considered fit to eat, but their fur and grease were highly valued. See Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*, 120-31.

<sup>44</sup> Schiff's conception of becoming animal is influenced by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's study of identity machines which posits that social identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed through the assemblage of humans and animals. Schiff, "Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal," 421. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Even if Schiff's statement were meant to be taken figuratively, and primarily concerning Guillaume, his knightly prowess in the Saxon war would have already demonstrated a sufficient incorporation of the "animal."

ferocious qualities into his own nature, were popular in the thirteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The hides Guillaume and Melior wear, however, give them no access to ursine qualities. The lovers become humanoid animals without acquiring any of the characteristics that enable animals to survive. Though Guillaume suggests that he and his love can live on acorns and nuts rather than meat, a diet very similar to that of an actual bear when other prey is scarce, they prove to be as poor gatherers as they are hunters and rely exclusively on cooked meat procured by Alphonse.<sup>47</sup> Real bear hunts were known to last for days with the bear often outrunning and outlasting even the best hounds.<sup>48</sup> By contrast, Guillaume and Melior are easily fatigued and only able to outrun the hunters and their hounds because Alphonse leads the dogs astray. Guillaume and Melior may look like fierce and strong beasts, but neither seems to incorporate into their identity any of the qualities described by Alixandrine.

When Guillaume puts on his hide, for example, his appearance frightens Melior so much that, despite knowing who stands before her, her heart trembles in fear (vv. 3082-99). Trembling in fear is, in fact, the most common state of both lovers throughout their time in disguise. Rather than being empowered by the skins and their ability to inspire fear, the young nobles become crippled by their own fear of being hunted:

Cil les chacent  
 Qui molt les heent et manacent  
 Et de la mort les asseürent:  
 Se il sont pris, mar s'i esmurent. (vv. 3759-62)

[Those who are hunting them / hate them very much and are threatening them /  
 and assuring them of death: / if they are taken, it will be unfortunate if they die.]

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<sup>46</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 68-69. For more on the berserker, see Stephan Grundy, "Shapeshifting and Berserkerang," *Disputatio* 3 (1998).

<sup>47</sup> Unlike Yvain or Orson, other knights who undergo a wild episode in the forest, Guillaume and Melior never eat raw meat, acorns or grass; they never fully descend into the animal world.

<sup>48</sup> Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*, 122.

This fear is nowhere clearer than in Guillaume's powerlessness in the grotto in Benevento.

Outside the grotto, the provost assembles all the armed men of the city. Despite knowing that the bears inside are people, the men do not enter the cave immediately and must be incited and goaded by the provost as if this were a real bear hunt. The commotion and the noise alert the lovers to the hunting party's presence and "des ex plorent andui molt fort, / car grant paor ont de la mort" (vv. 4029-30; both of them are weeping greatly, / for they are in great fear of death).

Guillaume tells Melior that:

Se j'avoie mes garnemens,  
Cheval, escu, espee et lance,  
Par tans verroient ma puissance,  
Saroient au commencier l'uevre  
Quel beste ceste piax aceuvre. (vv. 4050-54)

[If I had my armor, / my horse, shield, sword and lance, / soon they would see my strength, / they would know at the beginning of the action / what beast this skin covers.]

Though enveloped in the bear's fur, unlike a "berserker" Guillaume does not possess the bear's natural strength or power to fight off his enemies. Guillaume cannot be both knight and bear at the same time: having put on the hide, he no longer has access to his "garnemens" of war, the basis of the knight's strength.<sup>49</sup> Fortunately, the hesitation allows Alphonse enough time to snatch the provost's son, and the fear created by an act of illegitimate animal violence again allows the story to continue. The provost, whose men hunt the lovers and who threaten to strike Guillaume's "char nue," now fears for the flesh of his own son and checks its integrity like a buyer would check the integrity of furs brought from a hunt.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Leslie A. Sconduto, "Blurred and Shifting Identities: The Werewolf as Other in *Guillaume de Palerne*," *Romance Languages Annual* 11 (2000): 122.

<sup>50</sup> Pouchelle, "Des peaux de bêtes," 408-409; Robert Delort, *Le Commerce des fourrures en occident à la fin du Moyen Age*, vol. 1 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1978), 65.

The disguises inspire fear one more time; however, they do so in a perhaps unintended way, as deer. The maiden who stands guard at the entrance to the orchard experiences a similar emotion as the guard in Rome when faced with two deer and a stag:

Quant chascuns fu drois sor ses piés,  
Molt par vos esmerveillissiés,  
Ses veïssiés en tel maniere.  
Guillaumes s'est mis tos derriere  
Et la roïne va devant  
Et la pucele au cors vaillant.  
A la posterne viennent droit,  
Ou la pucele encore estoit  
Que la roïne i avoit mise.  
Quant el les voit en itel guise  
Les .III. bestes vers li venir,  
De la paor s'en volt fuïr,  
Mais la roïne le rapele.  
"Que c'est, fait ele, damoisele?  
Avés vos donc paor de moi?  
– Ma dame, oïl. – Et vos por coi?  
– Qu'ensamble o vos en viennent deus  
Dont li uns est grans et hisdeus,  
Ne sai quex merveilles ce sont."  
Et la roïne li respont:  
"Por eus veoir ving je ça fors.  
Sor tes membres et sor ton cors  
Te deffent bien c'on ne le sache."  
La damoisele ot la manace  
De la roïne, si s'arreste,  
Mais tant redoute la grant beste  
Que n'ose vers lui aprochier. (vv. 5303-29)

[When each one was up on his feet, / you would have been very astonished, / if you had seen them like that. / Guillaume put himself at the rear / and the queen goes to the head / and then the maiden with her noble body. / They go directly to the postern gate, / where the maiden whom the queen / had put there was still waiting. / When she sees the three beasts / coming toward her in such a manner, / she is about to flee from fear, / but the queen calls her back. / "What's wrong, damsel, says she? / Do you fear me then? / - My lady, yes – And why do you? / - Because along with you are coming two others, / one of them is large and hideous, / I do not know what wondrous creatures they are." / And the queen replies to her: / "To see them I went out there. / At the price of your limbs and your life, / I forbid you from telling anyone about it." / The damsel hears the



menace / of the queen, then stops, / but she fears the great beast so much/ that she does not dare approach him.]

The young damsel, knowing that the queen left sewn into a deer hide, should not have been surprised at her return in the same state; nevertheless, she can hardly control her fear upon Felise's arrival. The girl's fear arises in part from the presence of two additional deer, but this does not account for her continued anxiety after the queen's explanation of their presence. She fears these stags and instinctively desires to run away. Seeing the maiden's desire to flee, the queen threatens her with the very thing she fears most: bodily harm. The queen explicitly warns the girl that if she were to leave and tell anyone of what she has seen, it would be at the expense of her "membres" and her "cors." The young maiden does not, however, fear the animals in this scene because they are naturally frightening creatures, but rather because of the "maniere" in which they return: "drois sor ses pies." Queen Felise left the girl at the entrance to the garden walking "a .IIII. piés comme autre beste" (v. 5172; On all fours like other beasts). The girl refers to the animals as "merveilles"; walking upright represents a human trait not attributed to the vast majority of the animal kingdom. The animal's potential to cause bodily harm is not the sole source of anxiety for humans. The maiden fears the animals because they have appropriated human characteristics that they should not possess. A bipedal stag followed by two bipedal deer transgresses norms, and represents an understandable cause for alarm. The comingling of two distinct categories, human and animal, in one body results not in the fear of three animals, but in the fear of three large and hideous monsters.

This reference to bipedalism is not unique. When Guillaume and Melior leave the Roman court in their bear skins, they walk on all fours during the day, but upright at night. Schiff interprets the decision to wear bear skins, aristocratic prey, as one that ensures the lovers entrance into the discourse of courtly love. He suggests that because the sexual proclivities of

bears was believed to approximate that of humans, “Alixandrine eases the lovers in their transition into aristocratic courtship, allowing them to begin their ritual passage on the surer footing of similitude: the lovers become bears that are quasi-human as much in their bipedal as their coital habits.”<sup>51</sup> Setting aside whether this indeed represents a passage into courtly love, the choice of bear skins should represent a comforting similarity to humans. The narrator’s descriptions of their bipedalism, however, paints a less comforting picture:

Mais une riens sachiés por voir  
Que molt plus lait sont a veoir  
Quant il sor les .II. piés estoient  
Que quant a .IIII. se metoient. (vv. 3387-90)

[But know one thing to be true: / That they are much more ugly to see / when they are walking upright on two feet / than when they get down on all fours.]

While bears have the ability to walk upright like humans, the narrator specifies that the lovers are much uglier on two feet than on four.<sup>52</sup>

References to their ugliness and bipedalism bring to mind bestiary descriptions of monkeys. Of the three animals most closely resembling humans, bears, pigs, and monkeys, the latter were considered the closest by Aristotle and Pliny. The monkey’s (and presumably the bear’s) resemblance to man was problematic for the medieval Christian scholars who believed that man alone was made in the image of God.<sup>53</sup> This threat to human distinctiveness perhaps explains why late medieval authors of bestiaries invariably considered monkeys the epitome of ugliness, and thirteenth-century scholastics determined that they resembled man not by nature but by artifice. The bear underwent similar treatment, going from an animal of royalty in the

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<sup>51</sup> Schiff, “Cross-Channel Becomings-Animal,” 431.

<sup>52</sup> The ability to walk upright and the belief that bears were the only other animal to copulate face-to-face resulted in the bear being considered as a cousin to humans, at least to the wilder variety of humans: wild men and wild hermits. Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 63.

<sup>53</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 63, 86-88.

early Middle Ages to being associated with four of the seven cardinal sins, from esteemed prey to circus diversion.<sup>54</sup> Rather than address the similarities with man, scholars dismissed them as feigned, explained how hunters could take advantage of a monkey's desire to simulate humans, and linked this desire to ugliness and entertainment. In the case of both the upright bears and the deer in the orchard, the narrator characterizes the unsightly appearance of bipedal animals as either "lait a veoir" or "hisdeus." The emphasis falls on the visible aspect of the animals seen by the noble audience. The bears and deer are not ugly or beautiful in themselves; they are objects qualified as such by the nobles. In the orchard, the ugliness and size of Guillaume in particular when he walks upright partially explains the young servant's anxiety and desire to flee. When animals take the bodily form of humans, rather than gaining access to rationality, they become grotesque imitations and facsimiles of humanity. The lovers fail not only to incorporate any desirable animal qualities, but also inadvertently call into question their humanity.

### **Body Confusion and the God Who Made Us All**

Despite the fear and questioning of identity, an atmosphere of religious piety shrouds the trip due to the many prayers scattered throughout Guillaume and Melior's journey.<sup>55</sup> Cloaked beneath this pious devotion, however, ludic combinations of man and animal contradict the corporeal tradition and accentuate the shakiness of man's claim to distinction from the beasts. For example, when the lover's escape the castle on all fours covered in bear skin, Alixandrine swoons in despair, recovers, and then offers up a prayer asking God to protect her lady and lord:

Biau sire Diex, si vraiment  
Com ciel et terre et tout formas  
Et en la vierge t'aombras

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<sup>54</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 86-88, 64-65.

<sup>55</sup> Micha, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 35.

Et preïs incarnation,  
Sire, par sainte anoncion,  
Et forme d'ome et char humaine  
Et garesis en la balaine  
Jonas qu'ele avoit englouti,  
Si voir, sire, par ta merci  
Ces .II. enfans gart et deffent  
D'anui, de mal et de torment  
Et remet en prosperité,  
Sire, par ta sainte bonté. (vv. 3132-44)

[Good Lord God, if truly / You formed heaven and earth and everything / and in the Virgin You became incarnate / and were made flesh, / Lord, through Your holy annunciation, / and through the form of man and human flesh, / and if You protected in the whale / Jonah who had been swallowed, / if all this is true, Lord, then through your mercy / protect and defend these two children / from distress, from evil and from torment / and return them to prosperity, / Lord, through Your holy goodness.]

The reference to Jonah, who had to rely on God's protection when literally inside an animal, cleverly relates Guillaume and Melior's odd predicament to a Biblical story. Before Jonah, though, Alixandrine invokes Jesus's Incarnation, the embodiment of God the Son in human flesh, and the Annunciation to Mary that she would carry the Son of God in her womb, as a reason to protect Guillaume and Melior. She prays this, however, just moments after Guillaume and Melior's own "incarnation" as animals in the "womb" of the animal hides from which they will eventually emerge, reborn as nobles. The prayer also occurs moments before the narrator relates how the lovers escape the castle thanks to their disguises and their ability to walk convincingly on all fours like hunting dogs. Additionally, Alixandrine refers to Guillaume and Melior as ".II. enfans." This word evokes a sense of innocence implying that they are worthy of divine protection. Yet etymologically, the word comes from the Latin *infans*, denoting one who cannot speak, is mute, or lacks eloquence, in addition to referring to an infant who cannot yet

talk.<sup>56</sup> Thus, when Guillaume and Melior put on the animal hides, they are implicitly categorized among the *bestes mues* who cannot speak. Couched between examples of Guillaume and Melior's relinquishment of their God-given bipedal form to walk on all fours under the flesh of bears, the prayer, referring to Jesus's decision to surrender his deity to become a man, takes on an almost sacrilegious tone.<sup>57</sup>

Guillaume and Melior, too, pray numerous times while disguised as bears and deer. In v. 3182 Guillaume asks God, who formed the first man, to save them; in vv. 3234-35, Melior insists that God, who created man in His image, will protect them; and finally, in vv. 4936-37 Guillaume prays that God, "en cui samblance / nos somes fait et figuré" (in whose semblance / we are made and shaped), will permit him to help the queen. Such prayers echo the lament of Queen Felise who denied that God could allow an animal to harm a noble body because He cherishes the sole creation made in His image. These seemingly sincere prayers are, in fact, laced with irony because Guillaume and Melior are covering with animal furs the humanity that they claim as the very source of their salvation. Guillaume, Melior, and the queen all place their confidence in God's willingness to assist them on the basis that He recognizes and especially values, above all other forms, the physical human body, its *samblance*. The characters, however, have the *samblance* of animals while they make these claims. These images tap into the fear that the human form may not be stable, and that, perhaps, humans are not as unique a creation as they consistently claim to be in this romance.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "infans."

<sup>57</sup> Ferlampin-Acher also notes that the comparison of Guillaume to Christ. She refers to the legend of Saint Eustace. Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 57. Deer were a symbol both of Christ and of the resurrection in the Middle Ages because their antlers fell off and returned every year. Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 66.

<sup>58</sup> Humor permeates these prayers and references to God. Christine Ferlampin-Acher has noted, "prises au pied de la lettre, elles [les prières] entrent en contradiction avec l'étrange situation et ce décalage transforme ce qui aurait pu être un miracle en un jeu de mots." Ferlampin-Acher, "*Guillaume de Palerne*: une parodie?" 67.

When Alphonse brings Guillaume and Melior to Palermo, the two lovers have abandoned their bear skins for the hides of a stag and doe, and they are tired and unsure what their future holds. Though Guillaume desires to help the Queen of Palermo defeat her enemies, he swears not to leave his skin unless instructed to do so by the werewolf. Peggy McCracken cites this as proof of the interconnectedness of sovereignty and bestiality since Guillaume and Melior surrender their authority to the beast that aids them.<sup>59</sup> While there is no questioning the lovers' dependence on their werewolf guide during their journey, the queen's entrance into the story represents a reinstatement of human authority and puts an end to their reliance on the werewolf. The queen, too, desires Guillaume's military assistance. She decides to sew herself into a deer skin and to go down to the lovers in disguise. Her decision is never explained, and McCracken cites a lacuna in the text which may have offered an explanation to this odd behavior.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the queen feared the lovers would flee if approached by a human being. It is also possible that the queen's adoption of a similar disguise as the lovers represents a transition away from dependence on the werewolf who is more beast than human, and back to human sovereignty in the familiar form of a hybrid creature who is more human than animal. Initially, the queen's disguise convinces the lovers that she is a deer, so when she speaks to them, total confusion ensues. Guillaume and Melior cross themselves with their right hands, or hooves, still in their deer skins. Then, they ask this *beste* whether God or another spirit gave it the ability to speak. The queen assures them that:

Ja n'i arés nul mal par moi  
 Et de par Dieu paroïl a toi  
 Le roi du mont qui nos fist tos.  
 Si sui tex beste comme vos,  
 D'autel samblant, d'autel nature. (vv. 5221-25)

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<sup>59</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 84-85.

<sup>60</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 177n49.

[Never will you have any trouble because of me / and I speak to you through God,  
/ the King of the world who made us all. / I am a beast just like you, / of similar  
appearance, of similar nature.]

The queen, Guillaume, and Melior are one and the same “beste.” All come from the same God, the God who made “nos tos.” Since the queen looks and even beds down like a deer when she makes this claim, prompting the question that has been implicitly asked in all these utterances: who exactly is “nos tos?” The queen specifies that she is the same “beste” as Guillaume and Melior: “d’autel samblant” (similar external appearance), “d’autel nature” (similar nature or essence). The repetition of “d’autel” in Felise’s statement clearly links physical appearance to (noble) human nature rather than opposing them, which has been the problem plaguing the main characters for the majority of the romance. Yet she makes this connection while all three look like deer; the “samblant” to which she refers is not the bipedal human one God provided, but an animal one. Instead of being covered in rich clothing, their noble nature seems to correspond with animal hides. Does the queen’s “nos tos” refer to all animals or only to humans who possess the God-granted ability of speech mentioned one line earlier? After all, the characters in the scene are all humans who speak to one another and are only hiding under animal skins. Rather than clarify the protagonists’ situation, Queen Felise’s statement serves to further blur the convolute the boundary between humans and animals and question the authority of human dominance.

### **Alphonse: The Wolf or the Knight?**

The queen’s offer of aid to Guillaume and Melior marks the decline of Alphonse’s importance in the lover’s journey and the beginning of his exclusion from the court, leading the reader to wonder whether the werewolf can be included in the Queen Felise’s “nos” or excluded

because he is a *mute* beast, a “beste mue” that does not have the ability to speak. In contrast to their vow, the lovers immediately follow the queen back to the castle without seeking the approval of their four-legged companion. Alphonse’s relationship with the animal world is much more complex than Guillaume and Melior’s, since he becomes a wolf rather than merely disguising himself. Unlike Guillaume, Alphonse does incorporate the ferocious qualities of beast whose skin he is trapped in. This does not mean, however, that the wolf as an animal is ultimately treated with profound respect and incorporated into the noble identity. Scholars have argued that the narrator confers dignity and importance for Alphonse either by describing him as a knight or by granting him human speech. The narrator assigns Alphonse value in the forest, the world outside of human sovereignty and authority, but when brought back into the noble realm of the court, Alphonse’s actions are denied the importance they possessed in the animal kingdom.

Throughout the text, the poet describes the werewolf acting and gesturing as a human, but the animal acts are always juxtaposed against human features. When Alphonse believes he has lost Guillaume at the start of the tale, he weeps, howls, and wrings his paws like a grieving mother; the narrator specifically points to the animal traits in this familiar scene of grief (vv. 236-39). The werewolf also fights, goes on adventures, and aids the lovers in their distress. Leslie Sconduto interprets these and other descriptions of Alphonse which juxtapose the human and the animal as questioning the notion of knighthood, an institution limited to noble men. She argues that Alphonse assumes a knightly role since the narrator portrays him multiple times “en aventure,” a phrase that commonly designates the activity of knights, thereby granting membership to an animal hybrid.<sup>61</sup> For example, when Alphonse leaves Guillaume at the

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<sup>61</sup> Sconduto, “Blurred and Shifting Identities,” 123.



cowherd's, the narrator says that, "Parfont encline et vait sa voie, / ne sai quel part, en s'aventure" (vv. 266-67; The werewolf bows down low and goes on his way, / I know not where, off on his adventure). Sconduto links this verse to a similar one in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Énide* and interprets the addition of the possessive adjectives "sa" and "s'" as an individualization of the adventure on the part of the poet. In light of this knightly vocabulary, and bolstered by Alphonse's noble lineage and motives for kidnapping Guillaume, she interprets the wolf's courtly gestures as accentuating his knightly identity.<sup>62</sup>

At first glance, Sconduto's argument appears both convincing and attractive in that it posits a medieval poet broadening the concept of knighthood to include someone or something other than an upper-class, white man. Indeed, during their flight from Rome to Palermo Alphonse is a better knight than Guillaume. One key moment in the story, however, prevents us from interpreting Alphonse's actions while still in his werewolf state as those of a knight. When Alphonse regains his human form, the very first thing that his stepmother Brande brings to his attention is that he had never been knighted:

"Bien sai, biau sire, s'il vos plaist,  
Que chevaliers onques ne fustes  
N'adous ne garnemens n'eüstes.  
Hui les arés a tele honor  
Comme il convient a tel signor." (vv. 7772-76)

["Well do I know, good sir, if I may say so, / that you were never dubbed a knight  
/ nor did you ever have any arms or armor. / Today you will receive them with  
such honor / as befits a lord like you"]

Alphonse may have acted like a knight, but in the eyes of the society in which he lives, he is not one until given arms and clothing by Guillaume. Though he attributes knightly actions and vocabulary to Alphonse, the poet excludes the werewolf from the institution of knighthood with

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<sup>62</sup> Sconduto, "Blurred and Shifting Identities," 123.

Brande's statement. The narrator prevents his readers from overestimating the actions of the werewolf by excluding them from human systems such as knighthood which confer honor, value, and glory.

In fact, Alphonse's courtly gestures are consistently questioned if not outright misinterpreted throughout the story. When the narrator describes Alphonse leaving on "s'aventure," for example, the reader could also understand the possessive as devaluing the werewolf's adventure rather than praising individuality. The werewolf's "aventure" is something similar but inherently inferior to a knight's pursuit of glory; *his* version of "aventure" must be qualified because he is not a knight. The narrator describes Alphonse running after Guillaume "a esperon:"

Si met a la terre le nés;  
Tout si com l'enfes ert alés,  
Desi ou le mist li vilains  
Le siut li leus de rage plains.  
Tant l'a suï a esperon  
Que venus est a la maison  
Ou li enfes portés estoit. (vv. 247-53)

[And put his nose to the ground; / just exactly as the child had gone, / from that spot to where the peasant took him, / the wolf follows him full of rage. / He charged after him at such a high speed / that he came to the house / where the child had been carried.]

Sconduto interprets this and other scenes that introduce marked chivalric phrases as examples of how the narrator depicts Alphonse as a knight while also recognizing his animal otherness as a wolf or hunting dog following the trail of his prey. Such descriptions highlight his animal nature, while the phrase "a esperon" brings to mind descriptions of knights spurring their horses in battle.<sup>63</sup> This phrase, however, does not always confer knightly status. It also frequently appears in the *Roman de Renart* in order to describe Renart, who flees on his own imaginary horse in a

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<sup>63</sup> Sconduto, "Blurred and Shifting Identities," 124.

satire of the institution of knighthood. Finally, Sconduto likens the multiple descriptions of Alphonse's "goule bace" (mouth gaping open) to the chivalric sword of the knight, saying that it emphasizes the duality of Alphonse as both animal and knight. Alphonse defends Guillaume and Melior with his mouth when he attacks the men outside Benevento and each time he attacks people to procure the lovers food or drink. Emphasizing that Alphonse must use his mouth for such activities rather than a sword heightens Brande's observation that Alphonse is not a knight. The emphasis on Alphonse's "goule" performing actions that would normally require hands and a sword underscores the importance of the human form. According to some proponents of the corporeal tradition, if a human lacked hands, he would have to rely exclusively on his mouth which would become shaped like that of a dog's, and this is precisely what Alphonse must do.<sup>64</sup>

When the lovers return to court under the protection of the queen, Alphonse loses any honorific role he may have had. He does not participate at court any more than he participates in the battles fought to save the Palermitan kingdom. Like the bear and deer that walk upright, Alphonse's human behavior, and especially his silent "goule," has value only in the animal kingdom. When it reenters the human sphere of interpretation it is primarily a source of fear and occasionally of wonderment.<sup>65</sup> The attention to Alphonse's mouth also highlights the inherent contradiction of the *beste mue* who is denied the ability to speak and yet who nevertheless attempts to communicate through silent gestures. Throughout his time as a guide to the lovers, the werewolf communicates with them through signs that the lovers interpret. Peggy McCracken notes that the lovers recognize the need to *respond* to the beast by following his lead, thereby

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<sup>64</sup> Abbot William of St. Thierry, *Physics of the Human Body*, quoted in Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 48-9.

<sup>65</sup> Christine Ferlampin-Acher argues that the poet parodies the motif of the werewolf. She uses the term in its classical sense which supposes a depreciatory treatment of the parodied work or works; it is an imitation set against the original work. The elements of a traditional werewolf story exist in *Guillaume de Palerne*, but they are treated in such a way that the figure itself loses all mystery. Ferlampin-Acher, "Guillaume de Palerne: une parodie?" 64-67.

granting the animal a human-like ability to reason and sense of authority.<sup>66</sup> This recognition that the werewolf has something to communicate does not persist beyond the lovers' time spent in the forest. Once Guillaume and Melior become reintegrated into the human sphere of power and authority, Alphonse's attempts at communication become symbols for people to interpret and assign their own meaning to rather than a message with an inherent meaning of its own to communicate:

Gardent aval, el vergier voient  
 Ou li garox i ert venus;  
 Mais tel merveille ne vit nus:  
 Les piés ot joins et sor la teste  
 Les avoit mis la fiere beste;  
 Si se drece sor ceus derriere.  
 A simple vis, a simpe chiere  
 Encline la chambre et la tor  
 Et les dames et le signor,  
 Puis se refiert en la gaudine.  
 [...]  
 "Sire, por le Saint Esperit,  
 Avés vos merveille veüe  
 L'aval de ceste best mue,  
 Com fait samblent nos a ci fait?" (vv. 5838-49, 5852-55)

[They look down, in the orchard they see / that the werewolf had come there. / But such a marvel has no one ever seen: / he had his front paws joined together and on his head / the fierce beast had placed them, / so he is standing up on his rear paws. / With an affable visage, with a gentle face / he bows in greeting toward the chamber and the tower / and the ladies and the lord, / then he hurries back into the wood. / The queen is greatly amazed / by what she sees the beast do. / [...] "My lord, in the name of the Holy Spirit, / did you see down there / the marvelous spectacle of that [mute beast],<sup>67</sup> / how he imitated us in this action?"]

The narrator draws attention to Alphonse's acts as imitations of courtly gestures, highlighting the animal's feet and paws rather than his hands. A few lines later Guillaume interprets the gestures

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<sup>66</sup> McCracken's insistence on the importance of a response to Alphonse hinges on Derrida's recognition of response and reaction as a defining distinction between humans and animals. Animals are seen having instinctual reactions whereas humans can reason and therefore respond to their environment. McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 94-95.

<sup>67</sup> Sconduto mistranslates "beste mue" as "transformed beast" here and in vv. 236-45, 6374-80, and 7207-17.

as good omens for their upcoming battle against the Spanish army (vv. 5658-60). When Alphonse returns before the second battle and bows twice, the queen insists that his actions must signify something. Guillaume, however, dismisses them: “Si croi qu’ele nos senefie / honor et joie et signorie / qui nos vendra par tans, je cuit” (vv. 6397-99; Thus I am confident that he is a sign of / the honor and joy and seigneurial authority / that will come to us soon, I believe).<sup>68</sup> At the outset of the tale Alphonse functioned as a sign of the disintegration of King Embron’s seigneurial authority, and now the animal becomes a sign of the future reinstatement of Guillaume’s political dominance.

The wolf no longer has anything to communicate himself, but he simply signifies things to humans. McCracken argues that the second half of the story hinges on Alphonse’s ability to regain the ability to communicate to the court and reveal his hidden knowledge. When Alphonse enters the court to embrace the feet of his father, Guillaume finally recognizes that the beast is trying to communicate something, which leads to the Spanish king’s recollection of stories about his lost son’s transformation into a werewolf. McCracken claims that the poet addresses the question of whether animals can communicate or if their language is simply hard-wired code, and argues for the convergence of beast and sovereign since Alphonse’s actions as an animal elicit a response from his father and recognition from Guillaume.<sup>69</sup> Were the story to end here, McCracken’s argument about recognizing a form of bestial sovereignty would relatively unquestionable. However, her analysis does not take into account the last two thousand or so lines of the story. When Alphonse finally regains his human form, he enters the court, quiets the room, and reveals the truth about Guillaume’s origins and retells their entire journey. Once

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<sup>68</sup> McCracken also insists on the fact that the queen thinks Alphonse makes a sign whereas Guillaume interprets the werewolf as a sign. McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 88.

<sup>69</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 89-96.

Alphonse recovers the proper use of his mouth, up to now used exclusively to attack, hunt, and carry things, he speaks. Alphonse now takes on the role of narrator, revealing hidden knowledge and telling his story to those around him. This narrator insists on the importance of human speech as the main events of the story are retold either orally or in a letter seven more times in the space of one thousand lines.<sup>70</sup> Human language and not animal signs resolve the story and are ultimately valorized in *Guillaume de Palerne*. Though animals play a considerable role in the journey from Rome to Palermo, they do not ultimately become valorized and incorporated into the noble identity. Guillaume in particular fails to incorporate the ferocious qualities of the bear into his identity. Unlike the Norse “berserkers,” Guillaume does not derive from the hide of a bear the ability to fight like one. Instead of using the animal as a means of initiating the lovers into courtly life, the narrator draws attention to the bizarre blend of human and animal which questions rather than reaffirms noble claims of human distinction. Even the werewolf Alphonse’s actions and behavior which qualify him as protector and savior of the lovers, in the forest, become de-valorized when the story reenters the realm of the court. Rather than conferring value to animals, the author of *Guillaume de Palerne* highlights the role of animals as tools and as clothing for humans to use and wear. The narrator emphasizes the role of human *engien*, or intellect, to reinstate Guillaume and Alphonse as rulers.

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<sup>70</sup> Alphonse recounts the story in vv. 8161-8242. About half of this version is direct speech and the other half the narrator summarizes what Alphonse says. A clerk reads a letter to Emperor Nathaniel and the narrator informs the reader what the letter contains in vv. 8447-60. The other six retellings include: Guillaume’s messengers recap the entire story to Nathaniel (vv. 8485-8552); the king of Spain tells the story to Nathaniel (vv. 8588-96); Melior tells it to Alixandrine, the barons, the king of Spain and Emperor Nathaniel (vv. 8667-79); Lertinidon is given an abridged recap by everyone (vv. 8750-85); the Greeks relate the events to emperor who is astonished but happy about his grandson’s valor (vv. 8986-9001); and the Spanish learn about Alphonse from their companions (vv. 9226-35).

## Hidden Hands and Smooth Skin

Guillaume and Melior never become animals in the text: they eat, talk, and sometimes walk like humans. Alphonse's very nature as a werewolf situates him in a liminal space between humans and animals. Though the situation of all three protagonists is ambiguous; ultimately, however, they all regain their noble status, marry, and become rulers dominating both man and beast. Studying how the narrator prevents his protagonists from becoming animals and looking at the moments when their humanity is first threatened and ultimately re-affirmed will allow us to identify how the poet defines the distinction between humans, particularly noble humans, and animals. The process differs slightly between Alphonse on the one hand and Guillaume and Melior on the other. For the latter couple, clothing and *engien* represent the primary means by which they regain their humanity and dominance over the natural world. Clothing plays a similarly important role for Alphonse, but since the transformation into a wolf started with an attack on smooth human skin, his return to humanity must likewise begin with his skin.

Scholars have noted the similarity between Guillaume and Melior being dressed in their clothes and dressed in their hides, with the emphasis generally on the finished product, realistic bear costumes, which allows the action to continue. Given the role that clothing and sartorial materials play in affirming nobility *outside* of the journey sequence, though, scenes describing the lover's animal disguises merit revisiting. In order to preserve his protagonist's humanity, the narrator emphasizes the materiality of the animal disguises and their manipulation in the hands of a skilled worker who transforms them from hides to (inverted) clothing. The hides represent abnormal clothing, or clothing that the wearers have turned inside out. Worn with the fur side out, Guillaume and Melior's animal *clothing* emphasizes their humanity, but it also becomes the source of their ambiguous position as humanoid animals. By the end of the journey, they must

discard and destroy these animal “garments,” putting animal hides back on the inside of noble garments.

Animal hides defy boundaries. Though they no longer belong to the animal world, they nonetheless bear visible marks of it. Similarly, though skinned, traded, and bought by humans, they do not yet belong to the human world of fabricated clothing. Hides as objects destined to cover humans do not equate automatically to human clothing. Clothing is associated with Man’s sinful nature and is very different from animal fur, a raw material to be worked in order to become clothing. Even in Genesis, God did not simply hand Adam and Eve animal hides; He *made* garments of skin and *clothed* them.<sup>71</sup> The Biblical narrative points to a change in the role of human subjugation of animals, what was a natural order before the Fall, now must be enforced by humans via *engien* and subjugation of animals for food and clothing. Peggy McCracken refers to the fabrication of human clothing from animal skins as part of a “technology of sovereignty that defines practical survival as inseparable from relations of dominion.”<sup>72</sup> She does not however interpret the animal hides in *Guillaume de Palerne* as participating in this relation of domination. I believe that the presence of animal hides in this story points to the need for the nobles to reassert their domination of animals by making clothing with their *engien*. Since Guillaume and Melior live in the postlapsarian Christian world, their rulership over the natural world is God-ordained but it must now be worked for as the presence of the serpent skin in the kitchen reminds readers. In *Guillaume de Palerne*, the narrator shows us the fabrication process which reenacts human domination over animals. Illustration of the process, however, also has the

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<sup>71</sup> Genesis 3:7: “And the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves, and made themselves aprons.” Genesis 3:21: “And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife, garments of skins, and clothed them.” The Douay-Rheims Bible English translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate. <https://vulgate.org>.

<sup>72</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 19.



secondary effect of revealing the hidden hands of the artisan which ensure human domination and construct the noble identity thereby questioning the idea of noble innateness.

From the outset, Guillaume and Melior's decision to cover up their rich courtly garments with animal hides is enveloped in a discussion about clothing which removes any possibility of marvelous creatures since it renders explicit the transformation from human to animal.

According to the narrator, the lovers discuss their escape options before addressing Alixandrine. At one point they must have discussed donning the clothing of common folk because their wise counselor warns them that once the emperor learns of their deception, not a clerk, bourgeois, peasant, or convicted felon will be able to travel throughout the kingdom, much less leave the realm, without their identity being thoroughly checked (vv. 2997-3006). Rather than adopting more traditional disguises, Alixandrine suggests that they wear bear hides and then proceeds to the kitchen to procure them:

Laval en cele grant quisine  
A escorcié bestes pluisors,  
[...]  
N'i puis autre conseil veoir,  
Mais se poiés des piax avoir  
Et dedens fuissiés encousu,  
Ja n'estriés reconneü.  
[...]  
Comme serjans s'est atornee,  
A la quisine s'en vint droit,  
Bien i sot faire son exploit  
Et va droit as escorcheors  
Qui escorchoient cers et ors  
Et bestes molt d'autres manieres.  
.II. en choisist grans et plenieres  
De .II. blans ors et d'un serpent. (vv. 3012-3; 3019-22; 3056-63)

[Down in the great kitchen / they have skinned several animals, [...]] No other counsel can I see. / But if you can obtain these skins / and if you were sewn into them, never would you be recognized. [...] As a servant she dressed herself, / to the kitchen she went directly, / well she knew how to succeed at her task there / and she went straight to the skinners / who were skinning stags and bears / and

many other kinds of beasts. / She chooses two hides large and full / from two white bears and a serpent.]

This description is rather remarkable because the elite world of the roman rarely provides such a glimpse into the kitchen where the skinning and apparently the stretching out of hides takes place. The repetition of the verb *escorcier* alongside the *escorcheors* emphasizes the craftsman behind the scenes who make this escape possible, who have already begun the process of transforming dead animals into a material that can be used for another purpose.<sup>73</sup> Marie-Christine Pouchelle argues that artisans such as fur traders or skimmers symbolically expel bestiality from animal hides and thus from the humans who wear them on the inside of their clothing. They assure the passage from the corpse of an animal body to sophisticated article of clothing thereby maintaining the organized hierarchy of the world.<sup>74</sup> Alixandrine becomes like a trusted servant who would purchase furs for clothing. Just like an informed buyer, in the kitchens she chooses the biggest, fullest, and lightest colored skins, the qualities that any good furrier showcases in his furs. The white coats of ermine, for example, were the most desirable and expensive imported fur because the white, light-producing color was a rarity.<sup>75</sup> This provides a reason as to why Guillaume and Melior don the hide of a polar bear. Though bear, and much less polar bears, would not have lined the clothing of nobles, nor likely have been found in an Italian kitchen, Guillaume and Melior cannot “logically” escape as arctic weasels due to their size (see figure 3.1). The white color of the polar bear recalls ermine and reminds the reader of their status as nobles.

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<sup>73</sup> McCracken cites the fact that the hides are found in the kitchen rather than a tannery as a potential argument against their eventual treatment as clothing. However, the location of the bear hides in the kitchen is problematic regardless of the interpretation because bear meat was rarely consumed in the Middle Ages. McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 79-80.

<sup>74</sup> Pouchelle, “Des peaux de bêtes,” 432.

<sup>75</sup> Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 98.



Figure 3.1 Ermine, Pure white winter coat of the weasel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie. Photo by Ann Hough, National Elk Refuge Voluneer. *Wikimedia Commons*, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AERmine\\_\(25881946640\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AERmine_(25881946640).jpg)

Alixandrine fits Guillaume and Melior into their hides as if they were courtly garments:

“Alixandrine, amie bele,  
 Aves ce que mestier nos est?  
 - Oïl, biau sire, vés le prest.  
 - Or tost, bele, de l’exploitier,  
 Pensés del tost apareillier.”  
 Cele a prise la menor pel.  
 Par le commant au damoiseil  
 Sor Melior l’a estendue;  
 Ensi comme ele estoit vestue  
 De ses garnemens les millors  
 L’a encousue en la piau d’ors. (vv. 3068-78)

[“Alixandrine, sweet friend, / do you have what we need? / - Yes, good sir, see it ready. / - Now, quickly, dear, make use of it, / think about how to prepare it without delay.” / She took the smaller skin. / According to the desire of the young

man / She stretched it out on Melior: / just as if she were dressed / in her best garments / Alixandrine sewed her into the bearskin.]

The skin goes straight from the skimmers to the fitting room as Alixandrine fulfills the role of tailor stretching and sewing the fur to achieve the best fit. Alixandrine stretches the hide over Melior as if she were taking her measurements and helping her into her best clothes. A similar process occurs for the dressing of Guillaume, but the narrator describes the construction of the disguise in slightly more detail:

Après a prise l'autre pel;  
Par le commant au damoiseil  
A corioies longues et fors  
Li estendi desus le cors;  
Sor la robe qu'il ot vestue  
Li a la pel estroit cousue.  
Quant de la pel fu revestis  
Et bien fu ens laciés et mis,  
S'a apelé sa douce amie:  
"Bele, fait il, ne celés mie,  
Dites de moi que vos en samble." (vv. 3087-97)

[Afterwards she took the other skin. / According to the desire of the young man / with long and strong straps / she stretched it on top of his body; / on the robe that he was wearing / she tightly sewed the skin for him. / When he was garbed in the skin / and was well laced and covered by it, / then he called to his beloved sweetheart: / "My love, says he, conceal nothing, / tell me how I seem to you."]

Sartorial vocabulary abounds in the description. Guillaume, like Melior, is "revestis" (garbed) in the bear skin. The description of the construction of the disguise itself becomes slightly more elaborate. Alixandrine stretches the hide over his body using sturdy "coroies" (straps). The hide is ultimately "cousue" (sewn) and "laciés" (laced) over the "robe" (robe) Guillaume already wears. The presence of clothing does not prevent the hides from themselves being treated as clothing. Rather, it emphasizes the abnormality of a garment made inside out. The fabrics have been put on the wrong way and the furs now occupy the outside while the silks and linens of their normal clothing. The text does not explicitly state that the skins were properly tanned

before Alixandrine transforms them into disguises. However, the fact that the noble garments underneath do not spoil and that, in contrast to the deer hides subsequently worn, the bear hides remain in good shape for the majority of their trip, indicates that the kitchen workers likely treated them in some way before the trip.

Near the beginning of their journey, the narrator again stops to describe how Guillaume and Melior eat. He again brings attention not so much to the product, but on the ingenuity of the person who created it:

Cascuns a traite sa main nue  
Fors de la pel c'avoit vestue,  
Car cele qui es piax les mist  
A l'enkeudrè ensi le fist  
Que chascun puet sa main avoir  
Si com lui plaist, a son vouloir.  
Par les geules qui son es piax  
S'entrepaissoient des morssiax. (vv. 3321-28)

[Each one pulled a naked hand / from the skin that it had been wearing, / for she who put them in the skins / stitched the covering in such a way / that each can free a hand / whenever it pleases them, according to their desire. / By means of the mouth that is in the skin / they feed each other morsels.]

Rather than ignore the details of how the protagonists eat their food, the narrator highlights how Alixandrine made the skins so that the front paws would function essentially like gloves and how she constructed the disguises in such a way that the bear's mouth would give easy access to the human's mouth.<sup>76</sup> Such small details not only address the earlier concerns surrounding the acquisition of food, but also attest to the ingenuity and skill of Alixandrine and, by extension, all textile workers to transform furs and other textiles into functional clothing. The poet emphasizes not only the product, but also the transformation process by which it was made.

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<sup>76</sup> The heads of the bears are like hoods which could be attached to cloaks and other articles of outerwear with openings large enough to see and presumably eat through if necessary. Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 93-135; Payne, *History of Costume*, 162, 169.

Unlike the clothing which Nathaniel wears at the beginning of the romance, the bear and especially deer hides do in fact worsen with wear. As they progress and circumstances necessitate that they leave their bear skins, Guillaume and Melior wonder “par quel engien ne par quel art / porront des ore en avant faire / c’on ne perçoive lor afaire” (v. 4338-40; by what means or by what artifice / they will be able to manage henceforth / so that no one will notice their appearance). The word “afaire,” referring here to appearance, rhymes with “faire,” the verb used to describe the fabrication of clothing. These three lines again emphasizes the human fabrication of the bear disguises. The noun “afaire” also commonly described a noble’s rank, dignity, and fortune, which the lovers desire to hide with their animal disguises.<sup>77</sup> Thus, in the forest, the lovers use their inverted animal clothing to hide their noble appearance, exactly the opposite of what their clothing usually does: makes people “perçoive lor afaire,” or notice their nobility.

Luckily, their faithful werewolf saves the day and drags a stag and eventually a doe to the lovers’ feet:

Car c’est li leus qui nes oublie,  
 Qui une beste ot acuellie,  
 .I. cerf mirabillous et grant;  
 Dusques a eus le va chaçant.  
 Devant les .II. amans l’a pris  
 Et quant il l’ot mort et ocis,  
 Si s’en reva grant aleüre.  
 “Voiés, bele, quele aventure,  
 Dist Guillaumes a la pucele,  
 Voiés com nostre beste oisele.  
 S’encore une autel pel aviens,  
 Nos piax lairiens, cestes perriens,  
 Si serions mix desconneü.”  
 La damoisele a respondu:  
 “Voirs est, mais je ne puis veoir  
 Comment nos les puissons avoir.”  
 Endementiers qu’ensi parloient  
 Estes vos que revenir voient  
 Le leu qui ot pris une ciere.

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<sup>77</sup> Godefroy, *Dictionnaire*, s.v. “afaire.”

Par le caon del col derriere  
Le tient as dens et si le maine;  
Devant cels por cui tant se paine  
L'en amenoit en itel guise.  
Devant le cerf le ra ocise  
Si s'en reva, plus n'i arreste. (vv. 4345-69)

[For it is the wolf who has not forgotten them / who has attacked a beast, / a stag marvelous and grand. / Up to them he is chasing it. / In front of the two lovers he caught it / and when he had killed it and slain it, / then he leaves again very quickly. "See, dear, what an adventure, / said Guillaume to the maiden, / see how our beast is hunting, / if we had yet another skin, / we would leave our skins and we would take these, / then we would be less recognizable." / The damsel responded: / "That is true, but I do not see / how we can get them." / While they were talking thus, / there they see coming back the wolf / who has caught a doe. / By the nape of the back of its neck / he is holding it in his teeth and in this way is leading it; / in front of the ones for whom he is suffering so much / he was bringing it back in such a manner. / In front of the stag he killed it, / Then he went away, he did not linger any longer there.]

Alphonse hunts the animals because, though Guillaume and Melior look like bears, they cannot hunt like them as evidenced by Melior's hopelessness at the idea of catching a second deer. The narrator very deliberately describes how they witness both the hunt and the death of the deer. They actually hear and see Alphonse hunting the stag that is brought down and slain before their eyes. When he returns with the doe, Alphonse drags her to them by her neck in a posture of submission like a knight bringing a fallen adversary before his king or a hunting dog bringing the quarry back to the hunter. Once again, he waits to kill the deer until he is in front of both the lovers and the slain stag, making it clear that the sacrifices of these animals ensure Guillaume and Melior's escape and also the animals' submission to human dominion. Furthermore, Guillaume does not even acknowledge the animal brought before him, thinking only of its utility as strictly a material object, a "pel." Guillaume and Melior become the intermediaries charged with transforming the animal hide into clothing: a task which the narrator does not show them completing, perhaps because such work is not dignified for a future king and queen, but perhaps

because they themselves have never ventured down to the kitchens and are unfamiliar with some of the important details of the process. They stay in Benevento only until evening, which does not give them enough time to skin, treat, and stretch the deer hides as would normally be necessary. Thus, they stretch the still wet and slimy hides over their clothing which, as events unfold, means that the hides shrink through their exposure to the elements.

When the queen of Palermo spies the two in her orchard, upon closer examination, she discovers their clothes now visible at the seams of their deer hide disguises:

Mais les piax qu'il orent vestues  
Erent si por le chaut sechies  
Et retraites et restrechies  
Que contreval par les coustures  
Lor saillent hors les vesteüres,  
Lor porpres indes et vermeilles.  
Molt vient la dame a grant merveilles,  
Quant les dras voit des piax issir. (vv. 5094-5101)

[Now the skins that they had put on / had dried because of the heat / and had shrunk and gotten smaller / so that toward the bottom by the stitches / were protruding their garments, / their precious crimson, violet and red fabric. / The lady is so very astonished / when she sees the cloth sticking out from the skins.]

In this description, the narrator treats the animal hides not only as material objects, but very distinctly like hides not yet properly treated. In the hot summer sun, they dry, shrink, and harden. The hides are no longer integral, seamless disguises that can pass for a living animal body, instead, they have very visible seams splitting apart. It is the inadequacy of the fabrication process that leads to their current state, shrunk, and what allows their human clothing underneath slip through and break the illusion. Now, the contrast between the fabric and the untreated hides is stark. The end rhymes “coustures” (stitches) / “vesteures” (garments) and “vermeilles” (red fabric) / “merveilles” (marvels) emphasize the difference between the hides and finished clothing. The raw hides are “sechies” (dried) and “restrechies” (shrunk). The dyed colors of



the fabric, deep reds and purples, imply their royalty and wealth because, in order to achieve such colors, very costly dyes had to be used.<sup>78</sup> From the queen's vantage point, high up in the castle tower, the red and deep purplish-blue hues slipping out through the stitched seams must have looked, at least for a moment, like the deer were bleeding from wounds, a reminder of what actually happened to the deer who furnished these life-saving disguises.

Once the Queen of Palermo convinces Guillaume and Melior of her goodwill, she leads them into the castle and oversees their symbolic reintegration into society:

Ele meïsme a .I. coutel  
A chascun mis fors de sa pel,  
Et quant il furent issu fors  
Et la pucele vit les cors  
Qui o sa dame estoit venue,  
Most grant merveille en a eüe,  
Qu'ele ne set que ce puet estre,  
Quant voit le chevalier honeste  
Et la pucele jouste lui,  
Et voit qu'il sont si bel andui  
De cors, de membres et de vis,  
Mais que il erent ens es vis  
De lors piaux taint et rueillié. (vv. 5337-49)

[With a knife she / removed each one from their skin herself, / and when they had issued forth / and the maiden saw the human beings / who had come with her lady, / she was so very astonished / that she does not know what it can be, / when she sees the honest knight / and the maiden next to him, and she sees that they are both so beautiful / in body, in limbs, and in face, but their faces had been / discolored and dirtied from the skins.]

The queen herself wields the knife and frees Guillaume and Melior from their skins. This metaphorical rebirth is especially symbolic for Guillaume who emerges unscathed from the belly of the beast. Unaware of their relationship, the queen finally gazes upon the precious and greatly mourned body of her son intact. Guillaume's beautiful limbs, body, and face contrast markedly with the drying, shrinking, and cut animal hide worn moments before. Only Guillaume and

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<sup>78</sup> Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 99-101.

Melior's faces bear the mark of this encounter in their discoloration. The lover's physical beauty again contrasts with both the skins and their initial frightening appearance as humanoid animals. However, by stressing the discoloration of the faces on these otherwise perfect specimens – made in God's image – the narrator highlights their tarnishing by contact with the animal realm.<sup>79</sup> By mentioning the discoloration of their faces, the narrator shows that even though they have removed the skins, their humanity remains tainted and excludes them from being fully reintegrated into society.<sup>80</sup>

Removing the skins is only the first part of the reintegration process: they do not fully regain their human status until they remove their shoes and clothing, take a bath, and receive new clothes. The queen dresses Melior

D'uns dras de soie tos a or,  
Riches et biax et bien ouvrés,  
De blans ermines bien forrés,  
A la pucele apareillie. (vv. 5358-61)

[With a silken cloth all in gold, / rich and beautiful and fashioned skillfully, /  
lined well with white ermine, / was the maiden dressed.]

The young servant girl takes the same great pains to dress Guillaume appropriately so that no one will accuse her of negligence, and then Felise gives Guillaume *s'amie*:

La roïne li rent s'amie  
Et dist: "Sire, cesti vos rent  
A faire vo commandement.  
– Dame, ce fait a deservir  
Et Diex me laist le jor veïr  
Que cis services soit rendus." (vv. 5374-79)

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<sup>79</sup> The attention on their dirtied faces also recalls an earlier description where the lovers long to be rid of the skins and to see each other's "cler vis" (bright face), which is evidence of their humanity and individuality (vv. 4921-26). See Sconduto, "Blurred and Shifting Identities," 122.

<sup>80</sup> This is also reminiscent of the trope of rubbing product on one's face in order to darken it as part of a disguise in *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Le Roman de Silence*, for example, and could serve to emphasize the fact that Guillaume and Melior were not actually animals, but were in disguise.

[The queen returns his sweetheart to him / and says: “My lord, I return her to you / to do your will. – My lady, this merits being repaid. / And may God let me see the day / that this service might be returned.”]

The queen returns Melior to Guillaume only when they are both fully dressed; only then does Guillaume thank the queen. The repetition of the verb *rendre* by the narrator, the queen, and finally Guillaume creates a clear connection between the queen’s restoration of Guillaume’s *amie* and his proposed restoration of the kingdom. In terms of their reintegration into courtly society, only after being cleaned and properly clothed can they be *rendus* to their human form. Guillaume could have thanked the queen the moment she cut him from the skins, but he remains silent, bringing to mind the expression *beste nue* used to describe Alphonse. Only after they receive clothing and Guillaume finally sees Melior restored to her former beauty can he speak before the queen as a member of her court. Their animal clothing, the untreated hides, have been completely destroyed and discarded and replaced by clothing that has been “fashioned skillfully” and “lined with white ermine.” The skins put back on the inside of the garments and Guillaume and Melior can now reenter courtly society. The lovers accompany the queen up the stairs and into the main hall of the castle, sit on a beautifully decorated bed, and promptly discuss Guillaume’s preferences for shield and armor.

Guillaume specifies to the queen that a large, strong wolf with a fierce face should be painted onto his shield (vv. 5394-97). These are qualities that Guillaume as knight and the wolf share; however, Guillaume’s animal-like prowess on the battlefield was already well-known and recognized due to his earlier participation in Emperor Nathaniel’s wars.<sup>81</sup> The presence of Alphonse onto the shield is evidence of the animal being incorporated as part of the technology

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<sup>81</sup> In earlier descriptions of Guillaume’s participation in war, the narrator celebrates Guillaume’s ferocious “animal” qualities by including epic comparisons of Guillaume to sparrow hawk, leopard, and wild boar. See lines 2089, 6174, 6222).

of warfare. Much like King Embron's and later Guillaume's warhorse Brunsaudebruel, Alphonse becomes a prosthesis of the knight, and Guillaume uses him to both identify himself and instill fear in adversaries.<sup>82</sup> Critics have cited Brunsaudebruel as proof that animals are treated with respect in *Guillaume de Palerne*. For example, Christine Ferlampin-Acher contends that "l'animal n'est donc pas dévalorisé. La preuve en est Brunsaudebruel, le cheval du roi, qui le premier reconnaît en Guillaume l'héritier du trône et se laisse monter par lui après avoir refusé tout cavalier."<sup>83</sup> Horses are essential to human warriors' success: when Guillaume laments his inability to properly defend Melior in the grotto in Benevento, for example, he includes a horse among the accoutrements he lacks. While Brunsaudebruel does intuit Guillaume's birthright, without Guillaume Brunsaudebruel is a horse that cannot be used and that has been locked in a stable since king Embron's death. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's declaration that "medieval knights were nothing without these animals" certainly rings true in *Guillaume de Palerne*; however, these animals are also nothing without their knights.<sup>84</sup> Without king Embron, Brunsaudebruel "n'avoit fors de l'estable issue [...] n'avoit fait samblant de joie" (vv. 5410, 5413; He had not left the stable [...] nor had he shown any semblance of joy). Guillaume's arrival alone brings life back to the riderless charger who once again becomes a useful war machine. Both horse and wolf-emblazoned shield emphasize the *engien* of human technology and the way it uses animals for human benefit. The animals are recognized as valuable, but only in conjunction with the

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<sup>82</sup> Susan Crane argues that the relationship between knights and horses is one of technology and affection. Knights breed and train horses to become extensions of themselves. The affective relationship between knight and horse helps maintain the knight's humanity rather than making him seem like an object of war. See Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 137-68.

<sup>83</sup> Ferlampin-Acher, introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne*, 71-2.

<sup>84</sup> Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 54. This is part of Cohen's larger argument that horses, along with the various accoutrements of war, are in integral and inseparable part of the knight's identity as all work together to create an assemblage where agency and potentiality flow between the different bodies. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 35-77.

knight, not without him. Guillaume pays homage to the werewolf, but he ultimately remains a tool and pet at the court. Much like Marie de France's Bisclavret, Alphonse can come and go as he pleases. He shares Guillaume's bedchamber, sleeping just in front of the knight's bed.

Alphonse does not truly receive importance or a voice of his own until he can remove the skin of the wolf to put on human clothes.

### **Alphonse: The Naked Bisclavret**

Alphonse must first recover his human form and then be clothed before he can return to the court. Ferlampin-Acher has noted the parody of the werewolf motif in the exaggerated and mechanical gestures and excessive tears which permit his father to recognize him. She has also pointed out the demystification of the transformation process, since the narrator describes Brande placing the powerful ring around Alphonse's neck with a red string and reading from a book to reverse the spell.<sup>85</sup> She minimizes, however, the importance of clothing in the transformation, despite the key role it plays in this and other werewolf tales. Often clothing plays an important role in the transformation of man into werewolf and back again. This is especially true in the case of Marie de France's "Bisclavret," a tale that influenced the tradition of friendly werewolves and that likely influenced the author's portrayal and description of Alphonse in *Guillaume de Palerne*. In "Bisclavret" the knight exerts some controls over his transformations because he becomes a werewolf when he removes his clothes and returns to his human form when he puts them back on. Bisclavret's wife takes advantage of this situation and persuades an enamored suitor to steal her husband's clothing, thereby confining him to his lupine form. After Bisclavret bites off his wife's nose, she admits her treachery under torture and returns the

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<sup>85</sup> Ferlampin-Acher, "Guillaume de Palerne: une parodie?" 64-7.

clothes. Bisclavret, however, refuses to change in front of the court. The king leaves the wolf in his own bedchamber and there the knight puts back on his clothing and falls asleep in the king's bed.<sup>86</sup>

The legend of "Bisclavret" does seem to influence depictions of the werewolf Alphonse.<sup>87</sup> I have already noted Alphonse's freedom in the castle which greatly resembles Bisclavret's freedom in Marie's *lai*. Alphonse's paying homage to his father in the middle of the court likewise bears great resemblance to the King's recognition of Bisclavret's humanity in the forest.<sup>88</sup> The transformation scene likewise witnesses Marie de France's influence. Like Bisclavret facing his wife, Alphonse desires to physically harm his stepmother when he sees her at court. Guillaume, however, prevents Brande's mutilation or worse by restraining the werewolf. Since Brande admits outright her act and motives and receives a pardon from Guillaume, there is no torture in this tale. The presence of the magical ring and book clearly depart from Marie de France's lay; these items, therefore, tend to receive the most critical attention. However, a close examination of what follows the description of these magical objects points to a potential dialogue with "Bisclavret" that brings clothing more explicitly to the fore.

Le vassal a deffaituré  
Et tot remis en sa samblance.  
Cil qui senti sa delivrance,  
Quant il s'escoust, s'est devenus  
Li plus biax hom, mais tos fu nus,  
Qui adont fust, mien essiënt,  
Fors Guillaume tant seulement;  
N'en sai fors lui plus metre fors.  
Cil voit son samblant et son cors  
Qui tous sans dras et nus estoit

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<sup>86</sup> Marie de France, "Bisclavret," in *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990).

<sup>87</sup> Christine Ferlampin-Acher, to the contrary, states that "on ne relève aucune reprise précise de *Bisclavret* ou *Melion* [...] même si ce loup bienveillant, appelé à une réinsertion sociale réussie, est une 'euphémisation' plus proche du Bisclavret que du sanguinaire Mélion." Ferlampin-Acher, "*Guillaume de Palerne*: une parodie?" 61.

<sup>88</sup> McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 89.

Et devant lui la dame voit;  
 Tel honte en a tos en tressue.  
 La dame en est toute esperdue,  
 A li l'apele, se li dist:  
 "Sire, por Dieu qui tos nos fist,  
 Ne te vergoigne pas de moi  
 Se je tot nu, sans dras, te voi:  
 N'a ci se nos seulement non.  
 Ne voi en toi riens se bien non  
 Ne chose qui estre n'i doie." (vv. 7750-69)

[She changed the form of the vassal / and totally restored his appearance. / He who sensed his deliverance, / when he shook himself, became, / although he was completely naked, the most handsome man / with the exception of only Guillaume; / I do not know anyone else I can exclude. / He sees his appearance and his body / that was totally without clothing and naked / and he sees the lady before him. / He is so ashamed that he becomes violently agitated. / The lady is quite distraught because of this, / she calls to him and tells him: / "My lord, in the name of God who made us all, / do not be ashamed because of me, / if I see you naked, without clothing: there is no one here but the two of us. / I see in you nothing that is not good / nor anything that is not as it should be."]

Alphonse's transformation takes place away from the court, in a bedchamber. In Marie de France's lay, the werewolf pretends not to notice the clothing placed before him at court in order to change in the privacy of a bedchamber. A wise chevalier explains to the king in "Bisclavret" that the werewolf would not dare transform in the presence of the king because "mult durement en a grant hunte" (v. 288; he is filled with great shame).<sup>89</sup> Alphonse, though spared the eyes of the court, is not spared the humiliation of changing in front of royalty. Since Brande carries out the retransformation process, the reader witnesses the ludic encounter between the queen and her now naked stepson who "tel honte en a" that his entire body trembles in rage. Brande openly addresses the nakedness concealed by Marie de France and reassures Alphonse that she sees nothing out of place. This attention paid to Alphonse's body serves a greater purpose than mere comic effect. Brande's assurance that she sees nothing out of the ordinary and the narrator's

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<sup>89</sup> My translation.

confirmation that no one, save Guillaume, surpasses Alphonse in beauty, alludes to Felise's concerns over the mutilation of the noble body. Brande initially transformed Alphonse by rubbing an ointment which caused hair to deform the smooth skin and body of Alphonse; now she verifies that all has been restored and that the human body has survived intact.

Up to this point Alphonse has still not received clothing of his own and wears presumably only his stepmother's mantle, whereas the king gives Bisclavret his old clothing immediately. The difference in the bestowing of clothing in the two tales indicates a difference in the transformation of the werewolves, and does not diminish the importance of clothing in the romance. Alphonse was transformed into a werewolf as a young child and the return of his child's clothing would hardly have done him any good. Moreover, given the role that clothing plays throughout *Guillaume de Palerne* in establishing noble identity, the idea of a nobleman willingly parting with his clothing in broad daylight, as does Bisclavret, becomes an untenable possibility. Since Alphonse's transformation resulted from an attack on his body, his stepmother attends to his sartorial needs after she sees to his body. Yet clothing and the trappings of war play the same decisive role in his gradual reintegration into courtly society as they did for Guillaume and Melior. Alphonse does not wear clothing beneath his hide like the lovers, yet the narrator nevertheless links werewolf pelt to Guillaume and Melior's hides when Brande first offers to transform Alphonse back into a human and states: "Mais or verrons tot en apert, / ançois que je fenisse m'uevre, / quel beste ceste piax acuevre" (vv. 7690-92; But now we will see everything out in the open, / before I have finished my work, / and what beast this skin is hiding). Line 7692 directly echoes Guillaume's earlier lament about the bear hide which concealed his true identity (v. 4054), and creates a parallel between the bear and deer skins and the wolf skin covering Alphonse. As for the lovers, regaining human form represents only the first step in



rejoining society. Brande's observation that Alphonse had not been knighted prior to becoming a werewolf identifies a deficiency in his identity that the court must rectify. She insists that Alphonse receive clothing and arms before appearing before his father and the Palermitan court. Alphonse's first spoken words inform Brande that he will accept clothing from no one other than Guillaume. When Brande relays Alphonse's request to Guillaume, their exchange again attests to the symbolic importance of clothing:

“Sire, fait la roïne Brande,  
Uns garnemens voel et demant  
Qui soient riche et avenant,  
Tiex comme estuet a fil a roi.”  
[...]  
Ce dis li bers: “Suers, doce amie,  
Por Dieu, ne me celés vos mie,  
Est ce voirs que il dras demant?” (v. 7804-7 ; 7817-19)

[“Sire, says Queen Brande, / he wants garments and is asking for ones / that are splendid and attractive, / such as would be suitable for the son of a king.” [...]  
Said the baron: “Sister, gentle friend, / by God, do not conceal anything from me, / is it true that he is asking for clothing?”]

Alphonse desires not merely clothes, but rich and stylish garments appropriate for a prince. Guillaume's reaction to the news is pure joy; his delight stems from Alphonse's request for clothing, not simply from his transformation back into a human. Guillaume gladly accommodates the request, bringing Alphonse rich green silk garments embroidered with gold crosses and lined with white ermine. After their joyful reunion, the narrator dedicates twenty-one lines, the same amount used to describe the ring and book during the transformation, to describing Alphonse's new shift, breeches, silken hose, silk surcoat, the lacing around his arms, his rich gold belt and its fastener, his cloak, and other knightly equipment (vv. 7926-46). Like Guillaume and Melior, Alphonse can reenter the world of the court only when impeccably clothed beyond all reproach.

Ultimately, the reintegration process for all three characters emphasizes the recuperation of an integral and smooth-skinned human body. Rather than incorporating animals into their identities, these nobles must establish themselves in a position of dominance over nature. Alphonse must put on the noblemen's clothing and be initiated into knighthood. Only then can his exploits begin to receive their proper value in human society as he uses his mouth to tell stories rather than to terrorize people. In order to preserve Guillaume and Melior's identity, the narrator treats the animal hides like material for clothing. Animal hides as they naturally occur do not constitute clothing of course; if they did, then animals too would be clothed. In order for animal hides to become clothing, even abnormal clothing, the animal must be expelled and the fabrication process seen, or at least glimpsed. Ultimately, it is *engien* and *art* which transforms hides into clothing and humans into animals in this tale. It is also *engien* that separates humans from the animals, taking the animal from the hide, and putting it exactly where nature did not put it, on the inside of clothes.

### **Nature and *Engien***

By the end of the romance a firm re-establishment of the human over the animal body has taken place. In *Guillaume de Palerne* the lovers and the reader witness the process that transforms the hide from animal to clothing. The narrator provides glimpses into the intermediary roles of the furrier and tailor, not normally described in romances, so that by the time Guillaume, Melior, and Alphonse put on their ermine-lined cloaks, the reader, at least, knows that animal suffering is the source of their luxury. The ultimate picture in *Guillaume de Palerne* is not one of humans dominating peasants with an animal-like violence. Rather, the narrator portrays humans violently controlling and suppressing animals and peasants in order to

protect their aristocratic hegemony. The orchard rather than the forest becomes the site where Guillaume and Melior ultimately discard their hides and return to human society because the orchard is the place where human mastery of nature becomes most evident. The orchard represents a place where nobles go to enjoy all the splendors nature has to offer after the gardener has cultivated it:

Ens el vergier vont ombroiant,  
Les flors, les herbes regardant;  
Del rousignol oent les cris,  
De la tortrele et del mauvis;  
Forment li plaist et atalente.  
Assises sont desous une ente  
Qui molt estoit bele et ramue,  
Et desus l'erbe vers et drue  
La on lor reposee faite. (vv. 1379-87)

[Inside the orchard they rest in the shade, / look at the flowers and the herbs; / of the nightingale they hear his song, / as well as that of the turtledove and the thrush; / it is quite agreeable and pleases her enormously. / They are seated beneath a tree recently grafted / which was very beautiful, its branches dense with foliage, / and on the green and luxurious grass/ there they took their repose.]

In this manmade terrestrial paradise knights and maidens stroll along peacefully on horses or hunt the game that they stocked within their walls. The nobles would like those around them to believe that their power is natural, and they craft their outer appearance in a way to accentuate their nobility. Reality, however, reveals that the nobles' *samblant* is actually very much like the "ente," grafted tree, of the orchard. It may appear natural, but it is actually a manufactured product of man's ingenuity under which the nobles may rest assured of their superiority. The nobles occasionally succeed in sustaining their illusion when it comes to literary descriptions of their fur-lined clothing which, in the case of Emperor Nathaniel's garments, can be so intricate and beautiful that no one can tell how they are crafted. However, when those clothes are turned inside out, man's handiwork becomes evident. Beneath the glittering robes and silks are the

skinned bodies of animals, ripped apart and then sewn back together again with such skill that readers may forget they are there.

Animal skins in this romance can and should be attacked, cut apart, and then reassembled as a means of re-enacting human dominion over animals and other humans. By emphasizing the fabrication of the noble identity, the poet subtly displaces the idea that a noble is noble by “nature.” Rather he emphasizes the role of mankind’s *engien* and nurture. In the growth of grafted trees, the production of clothing, the manufacture of shields, and the training of horses, however, *engien* is not usually the work of nobles, but of the workers hierarchically underneath them. The poet in no way denies the importance of nature, as illustrated by the insistence on the nobility of Guillaume’s body and appearance as a child. Nature in this case seems to provide the raw material, the high-quality cloth, that is worked into something amazing, like the garments Emperor Nathaniel wears or that the protagonists put back on. Though noble identity is fully re-established, the author reveals the importance of the intermediaries: noble identity is, in part, dependent on others. If their power depends on others, then it is in part constructed and could also be deconstructed. Equally alarming is the possibility that other people, like members of the rich bourgeois class, could potentially be molded into positions of power like the noble cowherd who raised Guillaume and whom the narration eventually rewards with a castle and power over magistrates. The author of *Guillaume de Palerne* does not completely undermine the conservative aristocratic hegemony of the thirteenth century, but by studying how he describes the treatment of human and animal bodies and the relationship between animal hides and human clothing, we can see that he subtly critiques the supposed “natural” legitimacy of the institution.



## Chapter 4

### **Hairstyles and Horns: The Battle for Domestic Dominance**

In a thirteenth-century exemplum Etienne de Bourbon tells the story of a man with an old, fashion-conscious wife. One day during a procession he walks behind a woman with a beautiful head of golden blond hair whose beauty he greatly admires. Wanting to see her face, he speeds up and is disgusted to find the wrinkled face of his wife. He asks her if she has been turned into a monkey because she looks like a woman from behind but something else from the front. Etienne compares coquettish women who embellish their heads with fake or dead hair women's hair to two-faced Janus. He concludes the exemplum with a second story of a monkey kept in a rich hotel, watching the Palm Sunday procession from a window. The monkey saw an older woman with an impressive arrangement of fake hair on her head. He wanted to show everyone the truth about the woman, so he climbed out the window, took the woman's hair, and showed off his treasure to the crowd who all laughed at the woman's shame.<sup>1</sup> Courtly romances and poetry of the thirteenth century commonly used the motif of blond hair to designate a woman's beauty, rank, and nobility. By the second half of the century hairstyles, clothing, and accessories were becoming increasingly elaborate, leading moralists and preachers like Etienne de Bourbon to condemn what they considered ostentatious displays of wealth and fashion as signs of a woman's pride and disdain for the handiwork of her Creator. As evidenced by Etienne's exemplum, the increasing criticism of artifice inevitably led to the incorporation of the animal in the very heart of civilized, courtly society with women and their hairstyles being compared to animals or even mocked by them.

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<sup>1</sup> Etienne de Bourbon, *Les coquettes à la procession*, in Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Rire du prédicateur: Récits facétieux du Moyen Âge*, ed. Jacques Berlioz (Paris: Brépols, 1992).

Thirteenth-century literary works frequently construct a woman's appearance as the focal point of a conflict between men and women, husbands and wives. Clothing, makeup, hairstyles, and accessories become the frontline where a woman's desire for independence and sexual expression collided with a man's desire for dominance and female submission in accordance with what medieval Christians believed was the divinely ordained order of the world. Styled hair, specifically braids or "cornettes" (braids coiled and worn above the ear) became a site of struggle for ascendancy between men and women. In this struggle both male and female participants exploit animal comparisons to either silence a voice of opposition or reclaim what they interpret as a right of nature. My analysis of this power play will center on three texts: the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Dit des cornetes*, and the fabliau *Tresces*. Although each represents a different literary genre, all are likely male-authored works that creatively engage with contemporary misogynistic discourses surrounding women's appearance.<sup>2</sup> Each also plays with notions of female agency and women's relationship to the dominant social order.

Using hair to establish the connection between women and animals was nothing new in the thirteenth century. Body hair and excessively long head hair on the wild man represents an avenue for authors to graft animal traits on a human body. The use of hairstyles to illustrate the connection, however, represents a new way of approaching this issue in the thirteenth century since, for educated men like Bartholomaeus Anglicus, head hair represented a strictly human manifestation of hair, distinct from animal fur in its susceptibility to styling. This distinction holds especially true for women, given that the Latin term used to describe their hair, *crīnes*, was

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<sup>2</sup> Thérèse Bouché links Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* and the mechanisms used to provoke laughter to the fabliaux. Thérèse Bouché, "L'obscène et le sacré ou l'utilisation paradoxale du rire dans le *Roman de la Rose* de Jean de Meun," in *Le rire au Moyen Âge dans la littérature et dans les arts: Actes du colloque international des 17, 18 et 19 novembre 1988*, ed. Thérèse Bouché (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1990).

traditionally held to derive from the word *discriminalia*, which refers to the laces binding a woman's parted and braided hair.<sup>3</sup> Myriam Rolland-Perrin reminds us that disheveled rather than styled hair was almost always considered a sign of an uncivilized nature:

Si la chevelure hérissée concentre toutes les attaques, c'est qu'elle signale avant tout un manque de soin manifeste, une volonté de ne pas *civiliser* sa coiffure. Voilà pourquoi la plupart des qualités capillaires retenues telles que la brillance ou l'ondulation – plus ou moins naturelles – révèlent *a contrario* une chevelure soignée témoignant d'une détermination à assouplir la nature, à la dompter, à la discipliner. L'esthétique traduit avant tout un souci éthique.<sup>4</sup>

Styled hair belongs to humankind's civilized nature while tangled hair that hangs free belongs to the world of the beasts. "Nature" adopts this very argument in the *Roman de Silence* when she criticizes Merlin for denaturing himself by choosing to live in the woods and eat roots, which leads to his becoming hairy like a bear.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Marie the Egyptian's humanity came into question less because her body became a bit fuzzy than because her long, unkempt hair concealed her human form.<sup>6</sup> The discourse of animality surrounding body and unkempt hair remains prevalent, but a competing discourse coexists in the thirteenth century, condemning artifice in appearance.<sup>7</sup> Thus, when considering hair as either "wild" or "civilized," it becomes necessary to subdivide "civilized" further into "natural" and "artificial." In such a conceptualization, artificial hair represents the extreme opposite, yet nonetheless negatively valued, concept of what the *Roman de Silence*'s "Nature" would classify as "wild" or bestial in

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<sup>3</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, ed. Wolfgang Richerum (1601; repr., Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964), V.66, 229. For more on the definition of hair and the distinction between head and body hair, see chapter one.

<sup>4</sup> Myriam Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or: la chevelure féminine au Moyen Âge, Senefiance 57* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2010), 73. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup> For more on de-naturing Merlin in the *Roman de Silence*, see chapter one.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter two for more on *Marie l'Égyptienne*.

<sup>7</sup> See Noëlle Lévy-Gires, "Se coiffer au Moyen Âge ou l'impossible pudeur," in *La chevelure dans la littérature et l'art du Moyen Âge, Senefiance 50*, ed. Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2004).



the appearance of Merlin. The increasing criticism of artifice, however, inevitably leads to the incorporation of the animal in the very heart of civilized, courtly society.

### **Hair: A Lover's Battleground**

The *Roman de la Rose*, one of the most influential and polemical texts of the Middle Ages, addresses the role of a woman's appearance in the initiation and preservation of an amorous relationship in several places including: the personification of Oiseuse, who welcomes the Amant into Déduit's garden; the rant of the Mari jaloux, whose words Ami recounts to the Amant; and the advice offered to Bel Accueil by the Vieille. The heart of the conflict surrounding a woman's appearance is found in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose* written circa 1270-80, some forty years after the publication of Guillaume de Lorris' first part of the poem. In the continuation, appearance becomes the object of the jealous husband's scathing attack and is also part of the Vieille's advice. During a long speech in which he offers dubious advice on how to attain the affection of the beloved and expresses nostalgia for the Golden Age, Ami recounts the delusions of a jealous husband who berates his wife for the time, money, and energy she puts into maintaining her appearance. In his eyes her many fancy dresses serve no purpose because he never sees her in them, and their voluminous skirts keep him at a distance. Her elaborate hairstyles, accessories, jewels, and makeup represent an affront against God and nature. He explains, moreover, that none of this fine apparel enhances a woman's beauty because the beauty of the objects does not transfer to the wearer: they do nothing to make his wife, or women in general, more beautiful. Finally, suspecting a lover rather than her mother as the benefactor of the new dress she wears, the Mari jaloux grabs his wife by her hair, drags her around their house, and beats her until the commotion convinces neighbors to intervene. By

studying the role of hair in the Jaloux's speech in light of its role in Guillaume de Lorris' earlier description of Oiseuse, I will demonstrate the central role it plays as a gatekeeper in amorous relationships. Realizing the seductive power of hair, the Mari jaloux, on the one hand, attacks it in order to discourage his wife from pursuing love affairs. The Vieille, on the other hand, encourages young women to take great pains in preparing every detail of their hair style and physical appearance in order to attract and take advantage of young men like wolves among sheep.

Although Jean de Meun voices only one side of the conflict in Ami's narrative, the wife's appearance clearly lies at the heart of this marital discord. The Mari jaloux despises his wife's garments because, in his eyes, they provide neither material gain nor physical pleasure; he desires only to pawn them. His wife, on the other hand, apparently takes great pains and pleasure in maintaining her appearance to increase her social standing, gaining access to parties and perhaps to lovers, though the Mari jaloux undoubtedly exaggerates the extent of his wife's activities. Both E. Jane Burns and Sarah-Grace Heller have demonstrated the conflicting male and female values and desire for power within the household economy in the jealous husband's diatribe. The wife invests family wealth in a social display that she correlates with social status and simultaneously achieves some semblance of independence. Conversely, her husband prefers to save the money, thereby rejecting the social value of rich garments, which he sees only as waste and a lure to attract other men.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the example of Pygmalion several thousand lines later in Jean's continuation, who recognizes that a well-dressed wife increases a man's social status, the Mari jaloux appears unaware of the social distinction that such finery can bring his

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<sup>8</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance in Thirteenth-Century Sumptuary Laws and the *Roman de la Rose*," *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 339-41; E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 31-37.

household. With the creation of sumptuary laws governing the consumption of clothing and luxury items in the thirteenth century, social rank was increasingly embedded within the attainment of fine apparel.<sup>9</sup> Heller concludes that “these conflicts [between husband and wife] likely had more to do with anxieties over the control of wealth and less with the feminine morals outwardly preached.”<sup>10</sup> The *Mari jaloux*’s harangue undoubtedly displays concerns over control of wealth, especially since Jean de Meun designates him as bourgeois. The objects criticized nevertheless remain embedded within a discourse surrounding feminine morals and appearance. The husband’s excessive concern with his wife’s material possessions may distance him from the *Rose*’s more noble audience; however, behind the façade of bourgeois avarice, the objects of the husband’s wrath embody the fear surrounding a woman’s sexuality and deceptive nature.

The wife’s hair becomes the object of her husband’s wrath rather than her jewels and fur-lined clothing, which represent the primary objects of the husband’s fiscal concerns. This suggests that the *Mari jaloux*’s concern lies not solely in his wife’s expenditure:

Lors la prent, espoir de venue,  
 Cil qui de mal talant tressue,  
 Par les treces, et sache et tire,  
 Ront li les cheveuls et descire  
 Li jalous, et seur li s’aourse,  
 Pour noient fust lyons seur ourse,  
 Et par tout l’ostel la traÿnne (vv. 9365-71)<sup>11</sup>

[Then the jealous husband, sweating with anger, may seize her straightaway by the hair and pull and tug her, break and tear her hair and grow mad with rage over her. A lion’s rage at a bear would be nothing in comparison. In anger and rage, he drags her through the whole house]

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<sup>9</sup> Heller, “Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance,” 344-46. Sumptuary laws are discussed in more detail in chapter three.

<sup>10</sup> Heller, “Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance,” 346.

<sup>11</sup> All citations taken from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. Armand Strubel (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992). English translation from *The Romance of the Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun*, 3rd edition, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Initially, the Mari jaloux exerts his violence exclusively on his wife's hair. Pulling it to the point of tearing; his assault extends to the rest of her body only at the end of the scene. This attack on his wife's hair, however, is not entirely without warning. In his earlier criticism of women's appearance, hair had already come under scrutiny:

Chascune a seur son chief coronne  
De floretes, d'or ou de soie,  
Et s'enorgueillist et cointoie  
Quant se va moustrant par la ville;  
Pour coi trop malement s'aville  
La maleüreuse, la lasse,  
Quant chose plus vill et plus basse  
De soi veult seur son chief atraire  
Pour sa biauté croistre ou parfaire. (vv. 9048-56)

[Each one has on her head a crown of flowers, of gold, or of silk. She preens herself and primps as she goes through the town showing herself off, and thus the unhappy wretch abases herself in a very wicked way when, to increase or perfect her beauty, she wants to draw onto her head an object lower and more base than she.]

The primary concern with women's hair accessories stems from the pride and vanity such items produce rather than from their price. Furthermore, the husband seems to impute a greater sense of gravity to the act of embellishing one's head, the seat of a person's intellect, which may partially explain why it later becomes his target.

The manuscript tradition likewise emphasizes the Mari jaloux's treatment of his wife's hair.<sup>12</sup> Seven fourteenth-century manuscripts of the *Rose* show the husband beating his wife in a total of eight illuminations. They all depict the husband grabbing all or part of his wife's completely uncovered hair with one hand, and raising a club above his head with the other. The

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<sup>12</sup> The *Roman de la Rose Digital Library* lists fourteen images under the illustration title "Jalous Beats His Wife" and eight under the title "Jalous Berates His Wife." These illustrations occur in fourteen total manuscripts with seven dating from the fourteenth century and seven from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Combined, the jealous husband and his wife figure among the top fifteen illustrated scenes of the entire work. "Illustration Titles," *Roman de la Rose Digital Library*, <http://romandelarose.org/#illustrations>.

illustrator of Arras ms. 897, which includes two illustrations of this same scene occurring in two different households, clearly attempts to reproduce the wife's braids. In the first image the husband holds half of his wife's hair and the other half seems to be braided and either plaited or coiled just above the ear in the style known as "cornettes" (see figure 4.1). The second image shows the wife's hair clearly parted down the middle in two braids, one of which the husband holds while the other hangs down below her chest; some loose hair hangs down her back (see figure 4.2). In all of these illuminations, nothing other than the wife's hair and neck, which would normally have been covered by a headdress, the husband exposes or assaults, although the illustrator occasionally depicts her hunched over or on her knees perhaps suggesting she has been pushed to the ground. Throughout the Jaloux's tirade, his wife's apparel constitutes the primary target of the husband's ire; nevertheless, the illuminators portray the Mari jaloux's wrath as primarily affecting his wife's hair. This emphasis on hair becomes even more striking in later illuminations. Six of the seven fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts that illustrate this scene do so with two illuminations: one with the Mari jaloux berating his wife and a second with him abusing her. When husband and wife argue in these illuminations, a coif or headdress always completely covers the woman's hair. However, when the husband beats his wife, all but one of the illuminations portray the wife's hair uncovered, hanging loose or grasped entirely in the husband's hand. The emphasis on uncovering and assaulting primarily the wife's hair in these illustrations appears all the more striking given how well her coif or hood hides her hair in the preceding images.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bodleian MS Douce 195 is the only one of the fourteen manuscripts to portray the wife in a position which uncovers any other part of her body. In this illumination, the wife is sprawled on her back with her skirt falling just above her knees. "Illustration Titles," *Roman de la Rose Digital Library*, <http://romandelarose.org/#illustrations>.



**Figure 4.1:** *Jalous Beats His Wife*, France, Bibliothèque municipale d'Arras, 897, f. 47r. In *Roman de la Rose Digital Library*, <http://romandelarose.org/#read;Arras897.047r>



**Figure 4.2:** *Jalous Beats His Wife*, France, Bibliothèque municipale d'Arras, 897, f. 52r. In *Roman de la Rose Digital Library*, <http://romandelarose.org/#read;Arras897.052r>

This scene of violent marital discord is not unique to Jean de Meun. In her study of the connotations of hair color, descriptors, styles, and quality in medieval literature, Rolland-Perrin identifies “les traînées,” women dragged by their hair, as one of several hair-related motifs recycled by medieval authors.<sup>14</sup> Authors like Jean de Meun perhaps make their fictional husbands reach for their wives’ tresses with such frequency for two reasons: it is one of the most accessible and vulnerable parts of her body, and it represents her femininity, often functioning as a synecdoche for the woman.<sup>15</sup> The ideal woman in much medieval literature has long, thick, blond hair that shines as bright as gold. Rolland-Perrin notes that gleaming blond hair represented the essence of femininity, highlighting not only the woman’s natural beauty, but the

<sup>14</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 207. The word “traînée” does not appear in medieval texts but is adapted from the verb “traîner” which means to drag something heavy.

<sup>15</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 207.

time she spent washing and styling it. Hair sometimes becomes the identifying trait of women (and some men) as exemplified by the appellation “Iseut la blonde.” It can also function as a substitution for the longed-for lady as seen in Lancelot’s idolization of the forgotten strands of Guinevere’s hair found in the queen’s comb in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Lancelot, ou Le chevalier à la charrette* and in the various examples of ladies offering their golden locks as a gift or hiding them in gifts to their lovers.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, since medieval verbal portraits descend from head to toe, hair often holds the first place in physical descriptions. As portraits became more condensed throughout the thirteenth and into the fourteenth century, a reference to hair, especially blond hair, often sufficed as an indicator of beauty.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the decisive factor, however, for grabbing a woman’s hair is its connection to her power of seduction. Iseut’s single strand of golden hair which so fatefully enchanted king Marc, and the strands of Guinevere’s hair idolized by Lancelot demonstrate the mysterious power of hair. Given its association with seduction, most “traînées” (a word used by Roland-Perrin to describe women dragged by their braids), the Mari jaloux’s wife included, find themselves accused of adultery or some other lustful behavior. Immediately preceding the transition from verbal confrontation to physical aggression, the Jaloux accuses his wife of accepting a dress from her lover rather than her mother. The embodiment of femininity, beauty, and seduction, hair naturally becomes the target of the Mari jaloux’s wrath.

The cuckolded husbands in medieval texts do not simply grab hair, however. In these scenes, authors almost unanimously use the word *tresces* to refer to the woman’s hair and Jean de Meun represents no exception; in fact, he emphasizes the word with repetition of the

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<sup>16</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 224-35, 276-309. In *Le Châtelain de Coucy*, the dame de Fayel cuts off her braids and gives them to Renaud before he leaves for the Holy Land. Jakemés, *Le Roman du Châtelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel*, ed. and trans. Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas (Paris: Champion, 2009), vv. 7303-24. In Chrétien de Troyes’s *Cliges*, Soredamor uses a strand of her hair in place of golden thread in a shirt. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, eds. And trans. Charles Méla and Olivier Collet (Paris: Livres de Poche, 1994), vv. 1150-90.

<sup>17</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 109.

consonants “t” and “s” and even embeds it within the last word of the preceding verse: “Cil qui de mal talant tressue, / Par les treces, et sache et tire” (vv. 9364-67; [the jealous husband,] sweating with anger, may seize her straightaway by the hair and pull and tug her). The detail may appear minor, but it remains nonetheless significant because “treces” designates hair that has been braided; it conveys the notion of a woman’s toilette. The place where a woman prepared her toilette, often a bedroom but sometimes a private fountain, constituted a private space where she, or a female servant, would brush, part, and often braid her hair before hiding it from view under a headdress. A married woman covered her tresses with a headdress that consisted of two bands of fabric: one encircled the head and the second passed under the chin and fastened at the top of the head. The headdress was then covered with a coif, something like a contemporary pillbox hat (see figure 4.3).<sup>18</sup>

As hairstyles and accessories became more elaborate in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, braids increasingly came under attack from moralists. They became a symbol of sensuality and seduction because they displayed a woman’s neck. Their phallic form could also make them a symbol of sexuality.<sup>19</sup> In his collection of exempla from the thirteenth century, Albert Lecoy de la Marche includes sixteen about women’s vices, including four by Etienne de Bourbon that criticize the vanity of women’s hairstyles, making them the source of migraines and tools of deception that make men believe old women are young and that bald women have hair.<sup>20</sup> For medieval moralists a woman’s toilette and its artificiality usually

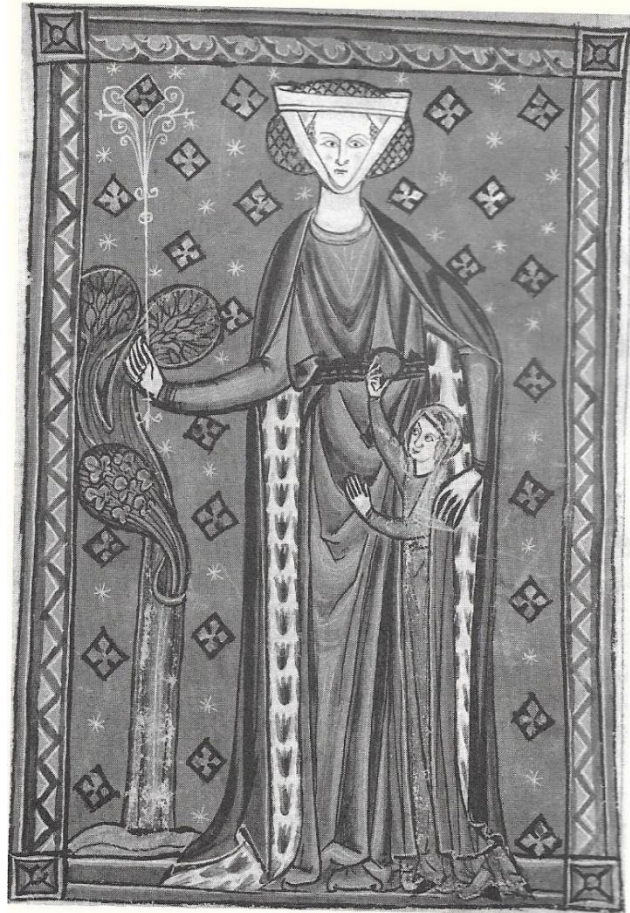
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<sup>18</sup> Blanche Payne, *History of Costume: From the Ancient Egyptians to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 175. Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion* (London: British Library, 2009), 64.

<sup>19</sup> See Lévy-Gires, “Se coiffer au Moyen Âge,” 283-84.

<sup>20</sup> Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Rire du prédicateur*, 129-131.





**Figure 4.3:** *Woman with a Little Girl*, Psalter, English, thirteenth century, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. 2397, f. 13. In Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain (eds. and trans.), *Three Medieval Views of Women* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989), 51.

represented an affront against God and His creation, perhaps one rendered more egregious since it was time was spent removed from the male gaze. Consequently, seeing a woman preparing her toilette in literature carried with it a sense of glimpsing into the forbidden, secret realm of women, as evidenced by the legend of Mélusine, which Rolland-Perrin qualifies as revelatory of the misogynist beliefs surrounding woman's nature: "Cette vision, permise par un trou dans la porte, trahit la véritable nature de Mélusine et, ce faisant, du genre féminin. En effet, la femme, au moment même où elle se fait plus féminine en se coiffant, se révèle être un animal et qui plus

est, un serpent. L'animalité semble ainsi constituer l'essence de la féminité."<sup>21</sup> If animality constitutes the essence of femininity and hair the symbol of that femininity as Rolland-Perrin and many medieval moralists suggest, it seems only natural that Jean de Meun, noted for inserting his work into contemporaneous discourse, would also allude to the connection in his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*.

Within the context of the *Rose*, the allusion to braids and its connection to a woman's toilette most clearly brings to mind Guillaume de Lorris's Oiseuse, the personification who grants the lover access to Déduit's garden and whose interpretation scholars contest. John Fleming interprets Oiseuse as idleness in accordance with the Ovidian tradition; a trait that can lead to a strike from Cupid's arrow.<sup>22</sup> Fleming explains that at the time of the *Rose's* composition, a connection existed between leisure and lubricity, especially in moral contexts. Luxuria, or Lust, one of the seven deadly sins, was commonly depicted with a mirror and comb. Guillaume's Oiseuse likewise carries a mirror, and many illustrators depicted her following traditional images of Luxuria. Although he concedes that any interpretation of the poem based primarily on the iconographic tradition must remain tentative, he clearly associates her with lust since later readers of the poem, including Chaucer, do so.<sup>23</sup> These later readers, Fleming included, interpret Guillaume's poem in light of Jean de Meun's continuation and its scabrous ending. Guillaume de Lorris wrote a courtly poem, not a moralizing or satirical one. As Carlos Alvar has noted, nothing in the portrait of Oiseuse suggests that Guillaume de Lorris aimed to

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<sup>21</sup> Rolland-Perrin claims that most scenes in romances or poetry which reveal a woman at her toilette contain the idea of a transgression, especially when the scene takes place indoors rather than outdoors as is often the case with fairies. Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 235, 241.

<sup>22</sup> John V. Fleming, "Further Reflections on Oiseuse's Mirror," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 100 (1984). Fleming's paper directly refutes the interpretation of Oiseuse as verbal folly found in Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Reflections on Oiseuse's Mirror: Iconographic Tradition, Luxuria and the *Roman de la Rose*," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 98 (1982).

<sup>23</sup> Fleming, "Further Reflection," 27-28, 31.

criticize a vice or a sin.<sup>24</sup> Guillaume was not necessarily unaware of the connection of idleness to lust; he simply did not exploit this connection in his poem.

Alvar equates Guillaume de Lorris's Oiseuse with Venus-Beauty following the tradition of Ovid rather than with Venus-Lust, represented later in the poem by Venus herself with her flaming brand.<sup>25</sup> He states that Oiseuse "devient à la fois le guide du poète vers l'amour et une personnification non identifiable avec Vénus [-Luxure]. Oiseuse porte le miroir qui est l'attribut classique de Vénus [-Beauté]: seul le miroir pouvait rendre compte rapidement de la beauté de la gardienne du Jardin de Déduit et seule l'inactivité d'Oiseuse pouvait en montrer la disposition vers Amour."<sup>26</sup> Oiseuse's primary attribute is beauty, which she maintains in large part due to the time she spends at her toilette in front of her mirror. Guillaume presents his personification as a woman whose entire day revolves around "soi atoner noblement" (v. 574; turn[ing] herself out nobly). The narrator dedicates considerable space to describing her unsurpassable beauty, and Oiseuse describes herself as

Riche fame suis et puissanz,  
S'ai d'une chose mout bon tens,  
Car a nule rien je n'entens  
Qu'a moi joer et solacier  
Et a moi pignier et trecier. (vv. 584-88)

[I am a rich and powerful lady, and I have a very good time, for I have no other purpose than to enjoy myself and make myself comfortable, to comb and braid my hair.]

Oiseuse seems more to represent coquetry, a concept that for Guillaume de Lorris does not necessarily possess negative connotations. Rather, it represents the beauty necessary for participation in courtly love, which explains why Oiseuse places such importance in her toilette

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<sup>24</sup> Carlos Alvar, "Oiseuse, Vénus, Luxure: Trois dames et un miroir," *Romania* 106, no. 421 (1985): 113.

<sup>25</sup> Alvar, "Oiseuse, Vénus, Luxure," 117.

<sup>26</sup> Alvar, "Oiseuse, Vénus, Luxure," 114.

and hair.<sup>27</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller likewise sees in Oiseuse a case study for medieval conceptions of beauty and specifically its relationship to light.<sup>28</sup> In describing Oiseuse's hair, for example, Guillaume does not employ the traditional comparison to gold; instead, he describes her locks as "blonz com .i. bacins" (v. 527; blond as a copper basin). This descriptor does not exclude Oiseuse from the canon of beautiful blonds since the shade encompassed a wider spectrum of colors in the Middle Ages. Rather, as Heller has shown, it attracts attention to the luminous quality of Oiseuse's hair, a quality found throughout her portrait: her skin is as white as snow, she carries a mirror whose reflective surface of polished metal rather than glass permits her to add the silk ribbon worked with gold into her braids, and a golden circlet into their arrangement.<sup>29</sup> Heller argues for the importance of possessing light and artificial light-producing or reflecting items in displaying one's nobility and richness.<sup>30</sup> Oiseuse's "light" does not occur naturally; she spends a great deal of time producing this luminous appearance, and much of it involves her hair and hair accessories. Though the majority of the narrator's description of Oiseuse describes her complexion and face, the most light-catching items are located on her head or in her hair. Furthermore, when Oiseuse describes her routine to the lover, she focuses on the time she spends arranging her hair. If, as Heller suggests, light equals beauty, Oiseuse achieves her luminous appearance by spending a great deal of time at her toilette brushing, braiding, and

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<sup>27</sup> Danielle Bohler explains that caring for appearance does not necessarily equate to a vice since maintaining a tidy appearance was promoted in both courtly and didactic literature. She explores how condemnation arises primarily in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when women do not practice moderation in their appearance, a concept definable only in terms of excess. Danielle Bohler, "Parure, censure, luxure: L'élégance du 'moyen estat,'" *Micrologus* 15 (2007).

<sup>28</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, "Light as Glamour: The Luminescent Ideal of Beauty in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Speculum* 76, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Heller points out that some of the vocabulary in Oiseuse's description, like her vaulted eyebrows, brings to mind the light-producing qualities of Gothic architecture. Heller, "Light as Glamour," 938-40.

<sup>30</sup> Heller, "Light as Glamour," 938-40.

arranging her hair. These behaviors may seem to confirm the idleness inherent in Oiseuse's name, but this idleness is purpose-driven and necessary to gain entry into Deduit's garden.

Coquetry and feminine beauty do not directly initiate the Amant into the art of love. Via the personification of Oiseuse, they introduce him into Deduit's garden, which leads to the encounter with Cupid. Even though Guillaume's Oiseuse displays no lustful behavior, the potential for such a connection remains latent. Jean de Meun exploits this connection by assigning it a more sinister quality to what Oiseuse represents. In Guillaume's portrait of Oiseuse, the rhyme between "solacier" and "trecier" suggests that a well-manicured appearance and hairstyle represents a necessary element for participation in social gatherings and amusement that lead down love's path. This causal relationship finds an echo in the Mari jaloux's interpretation of his wife's meticulously arranged toilette. The husband's first words in Ami's narrative tellingly include a criticism of his wife's frequent social engagements and her coquettish appearance:

Trop estes, fait il, vilotiere,  
Si ravez trop nice maniere.  
Quant sui en mon labour alez,  
Tantost espinguez et balez  
Et demenez tel rabaudie  
Que ce samble estre ribaudie,  
Et chantez comme une seraine.  
[...]  
Et quant aucuns vous aparole  
(Por quoi si cointe vos tenez  
En touz les leus ou vous venez)  
Vour responnez "Hari! hari!  
C'est pour l'amour de mon mari!" (vv. 8471-77, 8484-88)

["You are too giddy," he says, "and your behavior is too silly. As soon as I go to my work, you go off dancing and live a life so riotous that it seems ribald, and you sing like a siren. [...] and when anyone speaks about the reason that you conduct yourself so demurely in all the places where you go, you reply, 'Alas! It is on account of my love for my husband.'"]

In the Jaloux's eyes, his wife's outings and their accompanying explanations equate to nothing more than a siren's song, meaning they serve to deceive both her husband and the other men who hear it. Sirens represent another group of women in late medieval illustrations whom artists depict holding a mirror and who prompt a connection to Luxuria, especially since their mysterious songs are always love songs.<sup>31</sup> The remainder of the husband's invective, taken in large part from Tertullian's *Du cultu feminarum*, shows that the wife's appearance proves the true siren song, deceiving men and rousing their lust.<sup>32</sup> The Jaloux describes the war waged between Beauty and Chastity and asserts that women who strive to be beautiful declare themselves Chastity's enemies:

Dont jure dieu, le roi celestre,  
 Que fame qui bele veult estre  
 Ou qui dou ressamblar se paine,  
 Qui se remire et se demaine  
 Pour soi parer et cointoier,  
 Qu'el veult chastaé guerroier,  
 Qui mout a certes d'ennemies. (vv. 9017-23)

[Therefore I swear by God, the celestial king, that a woman who wants to be beautiful, or who exerts herself to appear beautiful, examines herself and takes great trouble to deck herself out and look attractive, because she wants to wage war on Chastity, who certainly has many enemies.]

In the discourse of the Mari jaloux, Jean connects a woman's appearance and the not quite human song of the siren to infidelity. Perhaps this allusion to the wife's song, among other allusions to her singing and participation in carols, gestures back to the Amant's initial admittance into the garden by Oiseuse (vv. 8529, 9115-20, 9320). Though curious, the lover only began searching in earnest for an entry to the garden upon hearing the bird song and "dance" that

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<sup>31</sup> Artists in the late Middle Ages often depict Luxuria, Venus, the Prostitute of Babylon, and sirens with mirrors. Alvar, "Oiseuse, Vénus, Luxure," 112.

<sup>32</sup> Lionel Friedman first demonstrated that the Mari jaloux is a stock character of medieval comedy and that citations rather than contemporary realities make up the majority of his discourse. Lionel J. Friedman, "'Jean de Meung,' Antifeminism, and 'Bourgeois Realism,'" *Modern Philology* 57, no. 1 (1959): 22-23.

prefigured the carol. For the Jaloux, his wife's appearance constitutes the siren song that both piques a potential lover's interest and invites him in. If the husband indeed seeks to put an end to what he considers his wife's social misconduct, he must address the source of the problem: her "cointise," or coquetry. If Oiseuse's introduction can be used as a guide, the most significant way to discourage his wife's desire to have a good time, to "solacier," would be to attack what she spends so much time preparing, her "trecier."

The Mari jaloux's attack on his wife's tresses represents more than rehashing a stock motif: it is a preemptive measure designed to prevent her from using her appearance to ensnare future lovers. Her body becomes the siren song. Sarah Kay also sees the woman's body as a site of discourse in the *Rose*, noting that for the jealous husband, her body is the site of her uncontrollable sexuality.<sup>33</sup> The Mari jaloux is not simply a mouthpiece for the misogynistic discourse and violence, his actions show that he actively seeks to silence his wife's corporeal voice:<sup>34</sup>

Et par tout l'ostel la traÿnne  
 Par corrouz et par ataÿnne  
 Et la laidange malement;  
 Ne veult pour nul serement  
 Recevoir excusacion,  
 Tant est de male entencion;  
 Ainz fiert et frape et roille et maille  
 Cele qui brait et crie et baille  
 Et fait sa voiz voler au vanz

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<sup>33</sup> Since Jean de Meun presents and exaggerates a variety of thirteenth-century discourses of gender and knowledge of the thirteenth century with his characters, it is impossible to tell whether he considered misogyny justified or not. Sarah Kay, "Women's Body of Knowledge: Epistemology and Misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Several articles discuss the treatment of women within the *Rose* including that of the jealous husband. Heather Arden posits that the *Rose* presents female readers, for the most part, as unteachable, distorting the messages found in books. Heather Arden, "Women as Readers, Women as Text in the *Roman de la Rose*," in *Women, the Book and the Worldly*, eds. Lesley J. Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor, vol. 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995). Emmanuèle Baumgartner says that the misogyny of Jean's characters, even the jealous husband whose misogyny is tempered by the examples of Lucretia and Heloise, is not a global condemnation of women but of their deceptive appearance. Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "De Lucrèce à Héloïse, remarques sur deux *exemples* du *Roman de la Rose* de Jean de Meun," *Romania* 95, n. 380 (1974).

Par fenestres et par auvanz;  
Et tout quanqu'el fait li reprouche  
Si com il li vient a la bouche,  
Devant les voisins qui la viennent,  
Qui pour fols ambedeus les tienent  
Et la li tollent a grant painne  
Tant qu'il est a la grosse alaine. (vv. 9371-86)

[In anger and rage, he drags her through the whole house and vilifies her foully. His intent is so evil that he doesn't want to hear excuses on any oath. Instead he hits her, beats her, thumps her, and knocks her about while she gives out howls and cries and sends her voice flying on the winds past windows and roofs. She reproaches him in every way she knows how, just as it comes into her mouth, in front of the neighbors who come there. The neighbors think them both crazy; with great difficulty they take her away from him while he is out of breath.]

After dragging her by her tresses, the husband silences her literal voice in his refusal to listen to her excuses and promises. The physical violence again comes to the fore as he moves to silence his wife's body, at which point she loses her human voice (if she ever truly possessed one: Jean never permits her to speak). When her husband punishes her body, the wife's voice temporarily passes from the human realm of pleas and promises to the bestial realm of howls and inarticulate cries. Jean opposes the husband's violent blows with the wife's inarticulate howling: "Ainz fiert et frape et roille et maille / celle qui brait et crie et baille." By beating her body and defeating the work of Oiseuse, the husband tries to prevent further unauthorized entries into Déduit's garden. His violence also reveals the implicit animality that many moralists suggest lies at the heart of female nature.

The husband interprets his wife's hair in a thoroughly negative way; yet the animal presence remains implicit. No explicit animal comparisons arise in the dragging scene: though the sounds the wife makes are inarticulate, the verbs used to describe them likewise describe human sounds; sirens, too, are half human. Within the web of Jean's narrative, however, the connection to the animal is closer than it appears. Only seven lines before the Jaloux grabs his



wife by her tresses, he compares her to a charger because her mother takes her to parties to show her off to the highest bidder: “Et de vous promener ne finne / si com l’en fait destrier a vendre” (vv. 9358-59; And then she doesn’t stop parading you, as one does with a horse for sale). Earlier, he likewise marveled that if a man were to buy a horse he would have the opportunity to look at it and try it out but that he did not have the same opportunity when choosing a wife (vv. 8671-76). To punish his wife’s social misconduct, which the Jaloux conflates with suspected sexual deviance, the husband beats her as a horse into submission, her braids become the horse’s tail that when pulled causes her to “brait.” The connection between sexuality and horse tails is not as uncommon as it may appear. Aristotle suggests cropping a horse’s tail in order to subdue its sexuality and tail mutilation represented a symbolic emasculation of the horse’s rider.<sup>35</sup> The Jaloux does not cut off his wife’s braids. Nevertheless, the physical similarity between braids and tails, their symbolic connection to sexuality, and earlier comparisons of the wife to a horse render plausible such an interpretation. The substitution of woman’s braids for horse’s tail shows how fully the Mari jaloux has subverted the discourse of Oiseuse, taking hair from a high symbol of beauty that adorns the seat of reason to a low symbol of bestial sexuality that remains ungoverned by reason.

The reference to the wife’s mother, whom the Jaloux refers to as a whore who initiates her daughter in her deceitful ways, prepares the terrain for the Vieille’s counsel to Bel Accueil.<sup>36</sup> In terms of coquetry and appearance, the Vieille repeats much of Ovid’s advice to women in *Ars amatoria*. The old woman’s instruction counsels a woman always to present herself in the most

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<sup>35</sup> Aristotle’s advice is reproduced in the thirteenth century by Brunetto Latini in his *Livres dou trésor*. Andrew G. Miller, “‘Tails’ of Masculinity: Knights, Clerics, and the Mutilation of Horses in Medieval England,” *Speculum* 84, no. 4 (October 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Arden also notes similarity between the Vieille and the Mari jaloux’s description of his mother-in-law. For Arden, the Vieille represents the unteachable woman who gains her knowledge either from lived experience or by distorting the knowledge found books to justify her carnal appetites. Arden, “Women as Readers,” 114.

favorable light, either naturally if she is fortunate, or by artifice, to attract and exploit as many men as possible. The Vieille gives cosmetic advice following the order of a typical portrait, moving from head to toe. In terms of hair, the Vieille implicitly refers to the Mari jaloux as she explains what do to if a woman's locks must be shaved as the result of an illness or if a villainous man were to rip them out to the point that they could no longer be braided:

Face tant que l'en li aporte  
 Cheveuls de quelque fame morte  
 Ou de soie blonde bourriaus,  
 Et boute tout en ses fourriaus.  
 Sus ses oreilles port teus cornes  
 Que cerf ne bous ne unicornes,  
 S'il se devoient touz effronter,  
 Ne puist ses cornes sormonter. (vv. 13297-304)

[She should have someone bring her a dead woman's hair, or pads of light silk, stuffed into shapes. Over her ears she should wear such horns that they could not be surpassed by stag, billy goat, or unicorn, even if he had to burst his forehead.]

For Arden, these details regarding hairstyles represent modifications to Ovid's text based on daily medieval life.<sup>37</sup> As with the tresses, however, such details in Jean's text often convey a larger meaning. The Mari jaloux has already rendered clear how elaborate hairstyles represent a prideful desire contrary to the will of God and a means of tricking men. Yet the Vieille, just as excessive as her male counterpart, compounds artifice with sacrilege since she encourages women to use a dead woman's hair to replace or replenish their own.<sup>38</sup> In a contemporaneous *exemplum* Etienne de Bourbon criticizes women who would never lie in a bed if a dead person's hand were found in it but who willingly use dead women's hair to supplement their own. He recounts how an emperor summoned his guards to throw the empress's diabolic, false hair in the

<sup>37</sup> Arden, "Women as Readers," 116.

<sup>38</sup> Lévy-Gires, "Se coiffer au Moyen Âge," 284-85.

fire when he realized what it was because he wanted a wife who was alive rather than a half dead one.<sup>39</sup>

False hair is diabolical; moreover, it links women to animals because women use it to fashion horns that will surpass those of deer, goats, and unicorns in length. Hair now explicitly connects women to animals in Jean's mockery of cornettes, a "horned" hairstyle that gained popularity at the end of the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth century. To achieve the look, women did not abandon their braids; they simply styled them more extravagantly by winding them into a coil above each ear. They would then cover their entire head with a *crepine*, a net covering that was usually a colored or gold material, and, finally, place a circlet or some other thin band on top of the *crepine* (see figure 4.3).<sup>40</sup> The more voluminous the style the more vehemently moralists condemned it, as reflected in the Vieille's animal comparison.<sup>41</sup> Jean's Vieille, however, does not stop at invoking horns. Having moved down the length of the woman's body, she returns once more to the head, linking hair unquestionably to a ferocious female nature:

Et s'ele n'est bele de visage,  
Lors leur doit torner comme sage  
Les beles treces blondes chieres  
Et tout le hasteriau darrieres  
Quant bel et bien drecié le sant:  
C'est une chose mout plesant  
Que biautez de cheveleüre.  
Touz jours doit fame metre cure  
Qu'el puist la louve ressembler  
Quant el vait les berbiz ambler;  
Car, qu'el ne puist du tout faillir,  
Pour une en veust mil assaillir,  
Qu'el ne set laquele el prendra  
Devant que prise la tendra.  
Aussi doit fame par tout tendre

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<sup>39</sup> Lecoy de la Marche, "Le Rire du predicateur," 129-30.

<sup>40</sup> Payne, *History of Costume*, 175, 192; Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> Lévy-Gires, "Se coiffer au Moyen Âge," 283.

Ses raiz pour touz les hommes prendre,  
 Car, pour ce qu'el ne puet savoir  
 Desquels el puist la grace avoir,  
 Au mains pour .i. a soi sachier  
 Doit son croc a touz atachier.  
 Lors ne devra pas avenir  
 Qu'el n'en doie aucun retenir  
 Des fols, entre tant de milliers,  
 Qui li frotera ses illiers,  
 Voire pluseurs par aventure,  
 Car art aide mout nature. (vv. 13579-604)

[Now if her face is not handsome, she must be clever and show people her beautiful priceless blond tresses and her well-coifed neck. A beautiful head of hair is a very pleasant thing. A woman must always take care to imitate the she-wolf when she wants to steal ewes, for, in order not to fail completely, the wolf must attack a thousand to capture one; she doesn't know which she will take before she has taken it. So a woman ought to spread her nets everywhere to catch all men; since she cannot know which of them she may have the grace to catch, at least she ought to hook onto all of them in order to be sure of having one for herself. If she does so, it should never happen that she will have no catch at all from among the thousands of fools who will rub up against her flanks. Indeed she may catch several, for art is a great aid to nature.]

The Vieille assigns not a woman's hair, but her hairstyle, as important a role as her face in catching men. She promotes artifice and woman's ability to improve upon nature, both of which the Mari jaloux condemns. The old woman would undoubtedly have approved of the hours spent by Oiseuse in front of a mirror brushing and braiding her hair in order to help nature. The Vieille praises a woman who can modify her appearance to embellish upon her own nature; yet this praise of human ingenuity actually turns women into animals as she becomes a wolf among sheep. Braided and covered by a golden netting, a woman's styled hair becomes the net that she will "tendre" in order to "les hommes prendre."<sup>42</sup> In this example, the woman becomes a she-wolf (la louve) and men are ewes (berbiz) rather than rams. Earlier, she described women as possessing horns, putting her in the position of male animals, male goats in particular. Here, the

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<sup>42</sup> Once again, the comparisons originate from book III of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*.

woman remains female and takes an active role in the pursuit of men while the man becomes female in the comparison, taking on the more passive role and being trapped. For the Vieille, these animal comparisons empower rather than degrade women. Instead of caving in to the pressures of men like the Mari jaloux or moralist preachers, the Vieille encourages women to add as much volume as they can to their hair. She encourages women to embrace the comparison and strive to make their own horns even more impressive and dangerous weapons in order to attain their natural right to possessing multiple lovers; she supports this right by distorting the meaning of the Boethian caged bird that longs for its freedom.<sup>43</sup> In this ferocious war of the sexes the Vieille recognizes the need to embrace the bestiality assigned to women through their hair as a necessary asset to subjugate men to their wills.

Tracing the allusions to tresses in both descriptions of Oiseuse and the Vieille's speech helps explain their centrality in textual and artistic renderings of the Mari jaloux and his wife. For the Jaloux, the hours a woman spends at her toilette, outside the male sphere of influence, represents an imminent danger where she fabricates her appearance and prepares her siren song. More than a stock motif, the punishment inflicted on his wife's hair reveals a desire to prevent future lust by damaging her tresses, her most effective weapon, and revealing the animality at the heart of a woman's nature. Through the Vieille Jean de Meun reveals the other extreme of the argument, in which women fully embrace the animal identity assigned to them. Her toilette becomes a site of action where a woman prepares the only weapons available to her to ensure her survival in a patriarchal world.

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<sup>43</sup> For more on the Vieille's conception of free love, see Chauncey Wood, "La Vieille, Free Love, and Boethius in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Revue de Littérature comparée* 51, no. 3 (1977); Thomas Hill, "La Vieille's Digression on Free Love: A Note on the Rhetorical Structure in the Romance of the Rose," *Romance Notes* 8 (1966/67).

## Woman as Beast in the *Dit des cornetes*

Several other thirteenth-century texts exploit both the negative and positive connotations of women's hairstyles discussed in the *Roman de la Rose*, as well as the connection between women's hairstyles and animals. In the *Dit des cornetes* and the fabliau *Tresces*, women's hair comes to represent an insidious form of deception and defiance of men that must be suppressed. In order to silence this dangerous siren song, the author of the *Dit des cornetes* spins his own song to silence "horned" women by turning them into *bestes mues*. In the fabliau *Tresces*, another jealous husband attempts to impose order on his wife's body and sexual activities by removing her tresses, only to find that he cannot destroy something whose reality cannot be grasped.

The *Dit des cornetes* is an anonymous satirical poem extant today in only one manuscript, BnF fr. 837.<sup>44</sup> Along with *Cornetes*, this manuscript contains a wide variety of fabliaux, lays, complaints, writings about women, and a large collection of Rutebeuf's works, including *Marie l'Egyptienne*, among others. The poem recounts that the Bishop of Paris supposedly issued a pardon in advance to anyone who would yell, "Hurte belin" (Push the ram) at any woman wearing her hair in "cornettes" and spending too much time on her toilette. The meaning of the Bishop's fictional "battle cry" proves rather difficult to grasp. In the mid nineteenth century Frederick W. Fairholt translated the command into English as "push ram." Since the Old French expression "hurte belin" possessed a variety of physical, bestial, and sexual connotations, which will be discussed in detail below, it is difficult to find a suitable

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<sup>44</sup> All references to *Cornetes* refer to Fairholt's transcription of the manuscript. Fairholt does not use verse numbers, I have added these to facilitate retrieval of textual references. English translations are my own. *Dit des Cornetes*, in *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume From the 13th to the 19th Century*, ed. Frederick W. Fairholt (London: Richards for the Percy Society, 1849).

translation.<sup>45</sup> The invective is meant to insult women who wear their hair coiled on the side of their head in “cornettes.” Throughout the poem the author warns his readership, presumably male, of the dangers of succumbing to the charms of foolish, vain women who waste their time on their appearance and who reside under the devil’s tutelage because they take pleasure in ensnaring men and leading them into sin. The poet assures the readers that though these women are beautiful today, their beauty will do them no good unless they repent.

The author of the *Dit des cornetes* presents his reader an alternate way of interpreting women’s elaborate hairstyles than that found in more traditional court literature. Often in medieval literature beautiful hair and rich hair ornaments symbolize the noble qualities of women and become visible markers of wealth and social status. The *Dit des cornetes*, however, assigns an alternate meaning to elaborate, and specifically artificial hairstyles by making them symbolize a woman’s bestial and deceitful nature rather than her noble one. This poem criticizes the hairstyle known in English as the horned headdress. Scholars generally associate this style with the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the horns became pointed and placed higher on the head.<sup>46</sup> There exists, however, evidence that such a style flourished and was condemned much earlier in the thirteenth century. In the *Dit des cornetes*, the poet claims that the Bishop of Paris denounced the hairstyle from the pulpit, offering ten days’ pardon to those willing to call out the offending ladies. Contemporaneous events may, in fact, have influenced the poet’s condemnation of horned headdresses from the literary pulpit. Dominican preacher Gilles d’Orléans, whom scholars believe preached in Paris around 1272, condemned “horns” at the end of the thirteenth century, linking them to the devil: “Levez les yeux vers la tête: c’est là

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<sup>45</sup> I have decided to maintain Fairholt’s “push the ram!” even though the translation conceals some of the bawdier connotations.

<sup>46</sup> T. Wright, “The Horn-Shaped Ladies’ Head-dress in the Reign of Edward I,” *Archaeological Journal* 1, no. 2 (1844).

que se voient les insignes de l'enfer. Ce sont des cornes, ce sont des cheveux morts, ce sont des figures du diable."<sup>47</sup> The poet of *Cornetes* similarly connects horns to the devil and implicitly criticizes the use of dead women's hair. Historian Albert Lecoy de la Marche also claims that in the fourteenth century a certain Thomas Couette ordered horned hairstyles to be removed and burned in the public square.<sup>48</sup> Although certainly fictionalized in *Cornetes*, the criticism attributed to the Bishop of Paris could very likely have been inspired by critiques of women's horned headdresses and their comparison to animals found in the teaching of preachers and moralists.

Literary evidence also points to the existence of the horned headdress in the thirteenth century. The author of *Cornetes* clearly refers to such a style in the late thirteenth century and he is not alone in doing so. In his *Testament*, a satirical imitation of contemporary wills written in the last years of the thirteenth century, a supposedly repentant Jean de Meun likewise refers to "cornettes" as he makes amends for the sins of his youth and the scandal of the *Roman de la Rose*. Despite the remorseful façade, the majority of the text maintains the same critical spirit of the *Rose*, targeting religious orders that make money through burials, the avarice of friars, and the hypocrisy of women. He specifically criticizes women who go to church in the guise of mourning their husband's death, but whose true purpose lies in ensnaring men with their appearance:

La gorge et li goitrons sont hors de la touelle  
 Ou il n'a que trois tours a la tourne bouelle  
 Mais il y a d'espingles plus de demie escuelle,  
 Fichiees es deux cornes et entour la rouelle. (vv. 1224-28)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Gilles d'Orléans, ms. Lat. 16481, n. 96, quoted in Lévy-Gires, "Se coiffer au Moyen Âge," 284.

<sup>48</sup> Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *La Chaire française au Moyen Age* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1886), 406.

<sup>49</sup> All citations are taken from Vatican MS 367 as reproduced in the dissertation of Aimée Céleste Bourneuf, "Le Testament of Jean de Meun: Vatican MS. 367," (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1956). English translations are my own.



[The breast and the throat are out of the gorget, / where there are but three turns to the neck-kerchief; / but there are over half a bowl full of pins / stuck in the two horns and around the little wheel (circular part of the style).]

Jean had only alluded to the horned headdress in the *Rose*. In the *Testament*, however, he not only confirms the existence of the horns but also describes how women would attach their *gorget*, a type of neck covering, to their hair by wrapping it around the neck and connecting it with hoops or pins to the cornettes themselves.<sup>50</sup> The author of *Cornetes* refers to a similar technique in his description of a woman's head:

Ferrée de tel bende  
Et de cerciaus,  
Et si ont fet cols toz noviaus.  
Sor lor cols metent lor joiaus,  
Et lor crespines  
Et font cols du bout des eschines  
Et font cornes de lor poitrines. (vv. 38-44)

[Decorated by such bands / and hoops, / and they have made their collars in a new way. / On their necks, they put their jewels / and [attach] their *crespines*, / and they make collars out of spines<sup>51</sup>, / and make horns of their chests.]

Both Jean de Meun and the author of *Cornetes* emphasize the elaborate nature of these headdresses composed of multiple layers of cloth, pins, collars, and jewels. The similarity and the specificity of these descriptions in both poems lends credence to the existence of this style at the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Wright. "The Horn-Shaped Ladies' Head-dress."

<sup>51</sup> This part of the poem is quite obscure and spines could also be translated as penises. The Old French *eschine* refers to the spine of humans and animals. Fairholt suggests that the poet could be referring to a technique of using animal bones, particularly whalebone, to stiffen the collar thus forming a horn. Fairholt (ed.), *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume*, 31n. The expression "bout de l'eschine," however, was a euphemism for the penis. Given the scabrous nature of the poem, the poet was likely playing with the double meaning of the word *eschines* to criticize both women's dress and unbridled sexuality at the same time, a rather common technique in the poem. *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, s.v. "échine."

<sup>52</sup> T. Wright also cites Jean de Meun and, briefly, the *Dit des Cornetes* as proof that the style existed, although he assigns both texts to the fourteenth century. Wright. "The Horn-Shaped Ladies' Head-dress." An early fourteenth- or late thirteenth-century text, *La Contenance des Femes*, also describes women's hair as horned. *La Contenance des Femes*, in *Three Medieval Views of Women*, ed. and trans. Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989).

The poem opens with the Bishop of Paris and his condemnation of the women who wear their hair in elaborate ways. Commanding parishioners to yell “hurte belin” at women as a form of punishment constitutes one of the most unusual aspects of this poem. Placed in the mouth of the Bishop of Paris, it becomes a battle cry reminiscent of the Archbishop Turpin in the *Chanson de Roland*, calling knights to arms in a battle where man’s intellect must best a woman’s appearance. The poet identifies the Bishop as both a theologian and a philosopher. Presumably, therefore, he possesses sufficient information and authority to interpret the world around him and assign meaning to it, which is precisely what the poet presents him as doing:

Li evesques parisiens  
 Est devins et naturiens,  
 Si se prent garde  
 Qui forre son chief et se farde  
 Por plère au monde.  
 Fame n’est pas de pechié monde,  
 Qui a sa crine noire ou blonde  
 Selonc nature,  
 Qui i met s’entente et sa cure  
 A ajouster .i. forreure  
 Au lonc des trèces.  
 L’evesques connoist lor destrèces;  
 De lor orgueil de lor nobleces  
 Si les chastie,  
 Et commande par aatie,  
 Que chascun hurte belin die.  
 Trop i tardon,  
 Hurte belin por le pardon.  
 Se des fames nous gardon,  
 Ocis serommes. (vv. 1-21)

[The Bishop of Paris / is a theologian and a philosopher; / he is mindful / that a woman has become too foolishly crazed / who lines her head with false hair and wears makeup / to please people. / A woman is not unmarked by sin, / whose hair is black or blond / by nature, / and who puts all her effort in / adding false hair / all along her tresses. / The bishop knows of their pitiable situation, / and for their pride and ostentation, / he chastises them; / He orders, in all haste, / that everyone cries: “push the ram!” / we have waited too long, / cry “push the ram!” for the pardon. / If we don’t protect ourselves from these women, / we will be slain.]

In this first stanza, the poet presents the bishop as a learned man who has identified a grave problem and devised a solution to rectify it. Women who artificially adorn their hair find themselves condemned to the mockery of their fellow citizens. This stanza however, may not be as straightforward as it seems. The object of the Bishop's knowledge is neither spiritual, nor intellectual. The Bishop is a theologian and philosopher; his expertise, however, should not pertain to the ways of women. As a Bishop, he understands the spiritual situation of women, but as a man, he understands all too well the situation of being subjected to the charms of a deceptive appearance. Such knowledge aligns him with priests more commonly associated with the libidinous humor of the fabliaux.

The repeated "hurte belin" represents a key to grasping the full extent of this poem's meaning because the richness of the verb "hurter" and its combination with "belin" allows the reader to see both the misogyny of the poem and a subtle teasing of moralists who get worked up about a woman's hairstyle. In his 1835 collection of "poésies légères" from jongleurs and trouvères of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Achille Jubinal writes the cry as composed of two words: the conjugated verb "hurter" and the noun "belin."<sup>53</sup> Just over a decade later, a reprint of Jubinal's transcription appears in a collection of satirical poems on dress edited by Frederick W. Fairholt who translates the command into English as "push ram."<sup>54</sup> Although not incorrect, this translation inadvertently obscures the semantic richness of the Old French verb "hurter," and offers little explanation for the choice of a ram to describe these fashion-forward women. The verb "hurter" designates intentionally or unintentionally shoving, striking, hitting or colliding with someone or something; it can be used with or without an object. The etymology of

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<sup>53</sup> *Dit des Cornetes*, in *Jongleurs et trouvères, ou, Choix de saluts, épîtres, rêveries et autres pièces légères des XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, ed. Achille Jubinal (Paris: Merklein, 1835).

<sup>54</sup> Fairholt (ed.), *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume*, 29-39.

the verb is somewhat uncertain; the Latin verb “urgere,” meaning to press upon, strain or exert, provides the most plausible origin.<sup>55</sup> This verb occurs in a variety of contexts in Old French describing literal and figurative impacts, jolts, and hits.<sup>56</sup> It often occurs within the context of battle to describe the various forms of impact and collision of horses, knights, weapons, and shields as seen, for example, in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Lancelot*: “Les .II. [chevaliers] que il trova plus pres / hurte des codes et des braz / Si qu'andeus les abat toz plaz” (vv. 1140-42; The two that he found closest, shoving with elbows and arms, he threw them to the ground).<sup>57</sup> In the early twelfth century, Philippe de Thaon used the verb in *Li cumpoz* or *Le livre des creatures* to describe the collision of two rams: “li multons un verm ad, qui les corns li manjue, quand del hurter se argue” (39; the sheep has a worm, which eats his horns, when he does not strike with them).<sup>58</sup> The verb very clearly refers to the well-known action of rams butting heads. In this particular example Philippe de Thaon equates the head of the sheep and its horns with God’s intellect. The ram possesses strength and vigor in its head through its horns, which, to Philippe, signifies that God reflected much when he created the earth and, consequently, no one lacking intelligence can be considered sound. The horns are long and curved in on themselves, indicative of God’s all-encompassing knowledge of the past, present, and future.<sup>59</sup> The horned head of a ram represents a powerful weapon, a man’s intellect, which can be used to create wonderful things. Though we cannot know whether the author of *Cornetes* was aware of this tradition, its existence opens the possibility of interpreting the Bishop’s invective as a cry urging men to butt

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<sup>55</sup> *Dictionnaire étymologique de l’ancien français (DEAF)*, s.v. “hurter.”

<sup>56</sup> The verb preserves this basic sense of one-sided or two-sided collision in a variety of different contexts which do not affect the meaning of this poem such as the impact of waves and wind, or of a boat crashing onto dry land. *DEAF*, s.v. “hurter.”

<sup>57</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la charrette ou Le Roman de Lancelot*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992). Translation is my own.

<sup>58</sup> Philippe de Thaon, *Li cumpoz*, in *Popular Treatises on Science Written During the Middle Ages in Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman and English*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Historical Society of Science, 1841), 20-73.

<sup>59</sup> Philippe de Thaon, *Li cumpoz*, 39-40.

heads figuratively with these women because in this battle of the sexes, the men are destined to win. Women make counterfeit horns out of their hair; only men possess the true horns representative of divinely-inspired intellect with which they can create a multitude of weapons, including the present poem, to defeat their adversaries.

Starting in the thirteenth century, the verb “hurter” acquired bawdier connotations in satirical genres. In the fabliau *Le fevre de Creil*, for example, the narrator uses the verb in his description of the blacksmith’s wife’s thwarted attempt to have sex with his well-endowed apprentice: “Li vis fu roides comme pel, / Si atasta s’il i ot sel / Et si fu pres de hurter enz” (vv. 143-45; His penis was stiff like a stake, / touched so much that he was ready to go / and he was ready to ram it inside).<sup>60</sup> The preceding verses and general context of the fabliau leave little doubt about the sexual connotations that the “striking” and “impact” of this verb acquired. Likewise, the old traveler in *Marguet convertie*, a poem dating from the end of the thirteenth century, uses the verb four times to describe the sexual proclivities of the young “fame de joie” whom he meets in the road who, he says, many men “hurte[nt]”:

– Dame, s’au cul me bat la biere,  
Au vostre bat la bource enflée;  
Sovant vos hurte tex derriere  
Qui ne vos a pas espousée. (321)<sup>61</sup>

[– Woman, if the coffin strikes my ass, / a swollen sack strikes yours; / often are you thrust from behind / by those who have not married you.]

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<sup>60</sup> *Le fevre de Creil*, in *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, vol. 5, eds. Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990). My translation.

<sup>61</sup> *Marguet convertie* in *Nouveau recueil de contes, dits, fabliaux et autres pièces inédites des XIII<sup>e</sup>, XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, vol 1, ed. Achille Jubinal (Paris: Pannier, 1839-1842). All translations are my own. The verb also appears in three other examples: “Pou vos chaut qui vos doint monnoie, / Por vos faire souvant hurter” (317; Little do you care who gives you money / to bang you often); “Je croi que hurté i ont maint” (318; I think that many men have thrust in there); “Trop iestes hurtée en folie, / Por vous trop souvent descouvrir” (321; In folly, you are screwed too much, / Because you uncover yourself too often).

Given the satirical nature of the *Dit des cornetes*, the Bishop's battle cry could easily maintain this salacious connotation and we can easily imagine that anyone taking advantage of his license would have accompanied the words with vulgar gestures. In that case, it is also highly plausible that the poet mocks the Bishop himself, who has in effect encouraged his flock to teach women wearing their hair in cornettes a lesson by yelling something potentially obscene at them in order to receive a pardon.

The misogynist thirteenth-century poem *Chastie-musart* (*L'evangile de fames*) (*Punishment of the Foolish [The Gospel of Women]*), which criticizes women for their love of clothing and accessories among other things, furnishes further evidence for a satirical reading of the Bishop's orders:

De tant com la f[ame] est plus mignote et plus cointe,  
De tant est plus musarz et plus soz qui l'acointe:  
Ne li chaut qui li hurt sur son cul de sa pointe,  
Mais qui li doint deniers ou robe ou coutepointe. (vv. 137-40)<sup>62</sup>

[The lovelier and more coquettish the woman, / the more foolish and more stupid is he who frequents her: / it does not matter to her who thrusts her ass with his point, / but who gives her deniers, or dresses, or bedding.]

The language in this tenth stanza shares a close affinity with that of *Cornetes* where the author too reproduces the rhyme "cointe" and "acointe" (vv. 162-63), disparagingly describes time spent preparing one's toilette as "cointise" (vv. 135, 155, 157; foolishness), and a woman who thus wastes her times as "musarde" (v. 4; foolish). The charge that these women care less about the identity of their sexual partners than the money, dresses, or bedding that they receive recalls both the condemnation of the *Mari jaloux* and the advice of the *Vieille* in the *Roman de la Rose*.

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<sup>62</sup> Paul Meyer (ed.), "Le *Chastie-Musart* d'après le ms. Harléien 4333," *Romania* 15 (1886): 607. Translation of the title and work are my own.

By the later Middle Ages the verbal expression *hurte belin* had become a noun. The *Dictionnaire étymologique de l'ancien français* lists *hurtebelin* as a pleonastic expression (since the verb *hurter* was already associated with the butting of rams).<sup>63</sup> Godefroy's definition of the term as "celui qui cherche a attraper les sots," or a "femme qui cherche à attirer les regards des niais par une toilette tapageuse," shows that the term maintains its ties with its usage in *Cornetes*.<sup>64</sup> Gilles le Muisis, writing in the fourteenth century and inspired by earlier moralists, uses "hurtebelin" to describe vain women who use their appearance to attract men as one word alongside the image of horns:

Je tieng trop grant orguel de ches femmes cornues;  
 Che sanlent trèstout chierf quant elles vont par rues;  
 Resanler voellent vakes et autres biestes mues:  
 Iestre leur vauroit mieuls ou rèses ou tondues.

Che sont hurtebelin, s'en tient-on ses parolles,  
 Quant on les voit aller as fiestes, as karolles. (33)<sup>65</sup>

[I hold there to be too much pride in these horned women; / they look exactly like stags when they go down the street. / They want to look like cows and other mute beasts. / It would be better for them to be shaved or tonsured. / They are "hurtebelin," abstain from speaking to them, / when we see them going to parties and carols.]

The connection between the horned hairstyle and animals seems to have become somewhat commonplace as evidenced by the repeated rhyme between "cornues" and "biestes mues." The bishop's insult in *Cornetes* has become a label for these women who likewise represent a threat to men. Although there is no direct evidence that Gilles le Muisis was aware of the *Dit des cornetes*, it seems likely that he was influenced by its imagery. A few lines later, le Muisis seemingly borrows yet another image from the dit, that of a woman who should be feared more

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<sup>63</sup> *DEAF*, s.v. "hurter."

<sup>64</sup> Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.v. "hurtebelin."

<sup>65</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove (ed.), *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis*, vol. 2 (Louvain: Imprimerie de J. Lefever, 1882).

than any beast or storm (vv. 25-26): “Par moustier et par rues se vont monstrant les tiestes; / s’en font bien à le fois li povre gent tempestes, / se dient l’un à l’autre: ‘Vesci sauvages biestes’” (33; They go showing their heads in convents and in the streets; / At the same time, the poor agitated people do well, / They say to each other, “Look, wild beasts”). Le Muisis not only recycles the same rhyme of “teste,” “beste,” and “tempeste” found in *Cornetes*, but he also describes the onlookers more or less following the Bishop of Paris’s advice by calling these women wild beasts as they pass by. By the fifteenth century the sexual connotations of the verb clearly remained, and the noun was again incorporated into a verbal expression describing intercourse with a woman.<sup>66</sup> In the *Farce nouvelle à cinq personnages, etc.*, the judge asks a witness: “Avés-vous veu le beau Colin / avoir fait le hurtebelin / avec ceste fille presente?” (51-52; Did you see handsome Colin / do the “hurtebelin” / with the girl before you?).<sup>67</sup> Clearly, when the author composed the *Dit des cornetes* the verb “hurter” could be translated in a variety of ways, referring to pushing and shoving in both the battlefield and the bedroom. In the years following the poem’s apparition, the expression “hurtebelin” used as a noun could also describe women who entrap men and eventually become part of a verb describing sexual activities. Thus, it is likely that the readers of the *Dit des cornetes* were aware of the lewder connotations of the Bishop’s battle cry.

Throughout the poem the author reinterprets women’s elaborate hairstyles, taking them from a symbol of nobility and wealth to a sign of women’s bestial nature, sin and deceit. The order to cry “hurte belin” represents the most obvious connection in its linking of cornettes to

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<sup>66</sup> Additionally, a derivation of “hurtebelin,” the verb “hurtebillier,” came into existence in the sixteenth century. The verb is composed of the verb *hurter* and *bille*, or testicle, and means to make love to a woman. *DEAF*, s.v. “hurter.”

<sup>67</sup> *Farce nouvelle à cinq personnages, etc.*, in *Choix de farces, soties & moralités des XVe et XVIe siècles*, vol 2, ed. Emile Mabilie (Nice: Gay & Fils, 1873).



rams. The choice of a ram is likely linked to the use of the verbe “hurter” since it could describe rams butting heads. The figure of the ram itself, however, was a symbol of libidinous and violent behavior. There existed an iconographic tradition in the Middle Ages of depicting the figure of Luxuria as a young girl on a ram or a goat. According to bestiary tradition, both goats and rams were associated with lust, with a male goat supposedly needing anywhere between one and two hundred females to satisfy his appetite, and a ram between forty and one hundred ewes.<sup>68</sup>

Although the goat became associated with Luxuria more often than the ram, the latter was known for its exceptionally large reproductive organs and thus also could fulfill the role.<sup>69</sup> The figure of the girl on the ram exists today in several sculptures in church corbels of the Middle Ages, including an early fourteenth-century corbel in the cathedral in Auxerre and an earlier Romanesque sculpture located considerably farther south in a church in Issoire (see figure 4.4).<sup>70</sup> This same depiction of Luxuria appears as far away as Sweden in the corbels of the Uppsala Cathedral.<sup>71</sup> Scholars studying these sculptures note that the image derived from the tradition surrounding the constellation of Venus, shown sometimes as the figure of a woman with flowing hair riding an animal. Richard Hamann notes that “the connexion between the rider of the ram and the Venus is very close, and the medieval sentiment which transplants the gods of antiquity into Hell and transforms them into demons expresses itself most strongly in that the animal on which the figure rides is a beast of Hell.”<sup>72</sup> The tradition is not entirely limited to sculpture: at

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<sup>68</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 116-118.

<sup>69</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 116-18.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Hamann, “The Girl and the Ram,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 60, no. 347 (Feb. 1932): 96-97; Adolph Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 24 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 61.

<sup>71</sup> Folke Nordström, *Virtues and Vices on the 14<sup>th</sup>-Century Corbels in the Choir of Uppsala Cathedral* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), 94-103.

<sup>72</sup> In the book of Matthew chapter 25, Jesus explains that the Son of Man will separate the sheep from the goats. The former will inherit the eternal kingdom of heaven, while the latter are condemned to eternal fire. Hamann, “The Girl and the Ram.” 97.



**Figure 4.4:** *Console with Luxuria (Sensuality)*, Cathédrale Saint-Étienne, Portal of southern transept, Auxerre, France, fourteenth century. Photo by Hervé Champollion, <https://www.akg-images.co.uk/archive/-2UMDHUORCUL4.html>.

least one fourteenth-century French manuscript illustrating the seven deadly sins portrays

Luxuria as “une dame chivachant sur une chèvre portant en sa main une colombe.”<sup>73</sup>

As seen in the *Roman de la Rose* and thirteenth-century exempla, the connection between women who use their appearance to ensnare men and Luxuria was common in the thirteenth century and it reinforces the message of the poem.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, much like Guillaume de Lorris’s Oiseuse, the poet of *Cornetes* explicitly states that these women spend a great deal of time on their appearance. He goes on, however, to agree with the Mari jaloux’s point that the ultimate goal of this polished appearance is to “nous font tendre le musage / por esgarder” (vv. 128-29; ensnare us [men] in the dissipated life / by looking at them). Even though the ram was often held in a more positive light than the goat, its sexual appetite and jealousy in matters of reproduction makes it compatible with the sin of Luxuria and the criticism of lustful women.<sup>75</sup> The author of *Cornetes* mixes the two traditions in his condemnation of vain, lustful women. Though their lust

<sup>73</sup> Arthur Martin, “Chasse de S. Taurin d’Évreux,” *Mélanges d’archéologie, d’histoire et de littérature*, vol. 2, eds. Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin (Paris: Chez Mme V Poussielgue-Rusand, 1851), 27.

<sup>74</sup> Scott, *Dress and Fashion*, 96.

<sup>75</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires au Moyen Age*, 116.

most clearly connects them to the goat, the curled horns of a ram doubtless encouraged the poet to adopt the figure of the ram for criticizing a coiled hairstyle. Moreover, the ram's notoriety for conflict in the form of butting heads, alluded to in the exclamation "hurte belin," likewise insists on the reality of a battle between the sexes.

In addition to sexuality, the horns of a ram were one of its most noted attributes in medieval bestiaries. Though they do not appear particularly sharp, a ram's horns are nevertheless deceptively dangerous. Bestiaries indicate that "bien que fortement enroulées, inaptes à pointer ni à transpercer, celles-ci constituent des armes redoutables dont l'animal se sert pour repousser ses ennemis et terrasser ceux de ses congénères assez audacieux pour convoiter ses propres brebis. Grâce à ses cornes, son front est dur comme de la pierre."<sup>76</sup> Just as the ram's horns do not reveal their menacing qualities at first glance, a woman's headdress seems but a harmless decoration, but when properly interpreted the true danger is revealed:

Se des fames nous gardon,  
Ocis serommes.  
Cornes ont por tuer les hommes  
D'autrui cheveus portent granz sommes,  
Desus lor teste.  
L'en doit bien redouter tel beste. (vv. 20-25)

[If we don't protect ourselves from these women, / we will be slain. / They have horns to kill men. / They wear great masses of others' hair / on top of their heads. / One should truly fear such a beast.]

Women make themselves rams by constructing horns with their hair and slaying men. By calling women rams, the poet attributes to women the attributes of a male animal. Throughout the poem the narrator of *Cornetes* presents women in an assertive role: they dress and style their hair in a purposely seductive manner to ensnare men, initiating the violence committed against men. These women usurp the man's more active role in initiating relationships and now represent a

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<sup>76</sup> Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, 117-118.

threat. By choosing a ram, perhaps the poet acknowledges the perverted gender roles these women have adopted. When a woman leaves her assigned, passive role, however, he shows her to be essentially bestial; she appears “unnatural” or “inhuman.” The insistence on the resemblance of the hair style to horns, the rhyme between “teste” and “beste,” and the explicit mention of supplementing hair with a wig, unquestionably situates hair as the source of the bestialization of women. Jean de Meun likewise points out this danger in the *Testament*:

Se je l’osasse dire, senz elles courroucier,  
 Leur chaucier, leur vestir, leur lier, leur trecier,  
 Leurs seurcoz traïner et leurs cornes drecier,  
 Ne sont avant venuz fors pour hommes blecier. (vv. 1240-44)

[If I dared to say it, without making them angry, / the way they shod, dress, lace, and tress themselves, / the way their surcot drags on the ground and their horns are raised high, / did not come about for any reason other than to wound men.]

The comparison to an animal is here only implicit in the threat of the horns. Although numerous other grooming and sartorial activities appear on Jean’s list, the end rhymes of “leur trecier,” “cornes drecier,” and “hommes blecier” emphasizes hair, its animal qualities, and its danger. Jean seems particularly concerned by the way these women use the clothing that drags behind them and the hair that rises above them in order to extend themselves beyond the confines of their natural bodies. This extension of the female body represents a threat that must be contained. For Jean, the author of *Cornetes*, and other moralists, demonizing and rendering bestial the offending objects provides one means of suppression.

More than simply adding a comic element to the dit, the Bishop’s command and the poem itself become part of a larger process rewriting what a woman’s hair says or should say. Rather than taking a woman’s appearance at face value, or, to use the Mari jaloux’s terminology, instead of listening to the siren song, the poet will reveal the true meaning behind women’s elaborate hairstyles. The poet adopts in the opening stanza the stereotypical misogynistic

complaints found in Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and reinvigorated by moralists throughout the Middle Ages. The Bishop criticizes artificial embellishment of one's natural appearance in any form; however, as lines six through thirteen demonstrate, hair that has been augmented, artificially manipulated, and subsequently styled receives the brunt of the condemnation:

Fame n'est pas de pechié monde,  
Qui a sa crine noire ou blonde  
Selonc nature,  
Qui i met s'entente et sa cure  
A ajouster .i. forreure  
Au lonc des trèces.  
L'evesques connoist lor destrèces;  
De lor orgueil de lor nobleces  
Si les chastie (vv. 6-13)

[A woman is not unmarked by sin, / whose hair is black or blond / by nature, / and who puts all her effort in / adding false hair / all along her tresses. / The bishop knows of their pitiable situation, / and for their pride and ostentation, / he chastises them.]

The rhyme of "monde," pure and without blemish with "blonde" reinforces the preference for natural blond hair; a preference which comes as little surprise. The assertion, however, that it would be more desirable to keep natural black hair than to use false hair would surely have intrigued some readers, at least those familiar with romances and cosmetic treatises. Blackness was almost always associated with uncivilized creatures, the devil, and anger. It often indicated an impurity of the soul; black hair on women reflected the blackness of the heart.<sup>77</sup> Though natural blond hair represents the feminine ideal, the poet's preference of natural black hair over artificial (blond) hair thus undermines women's attempts falsify their appearance with dyes and other materials to fit traditional expectations of beauty. It renders the condemnation of artificial

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<sup>77</sup> In the later Middle Ages, a knight's black hair was sometimes valued, but black hair on a woman rarely possessed positive connotations. Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 44-49.

hair even more striking by making false blond hair less desirable than the hair traditionally associated with wildness.

This condemnation of artificially modified hair likewise exists near the end of the poem when the poet contrasts the behavior of “musardes” (foolish women) with that of wise women:

N'iront pas, je les en respit,  
Ou repos qui tout sanz respit  
Est otroié  
A celes qui bien emploïé  
Ont lor tens, et ont Dieu proïé  
Por lor péchié  
Et ont si lor cheveus trechié  
Qu'autre chose n'i ont drecié  
Ne ajousté. (vv. 136-44)

[They will not go, I repeat it to them, / to the eternal rest which without a doubt / is given / to those who have well spent / their time, and have prayed to God / for their sins, / and have braided their own hair / and have not dressed it with other things / nor added anything to it.]

The poet presents women who spend their time like Oiseuse, preparing their hair in cornettes, “crespines,” and “gorgets,” as wasting it. Wise women spend their time on activities such as prayer that carry an eternal benefit. Yet the poet does not suggest that wise women spend no time on their hair, much less that they do not ensure its proper care and appearance. In fact, wise women braid their hair just like those condemned to hell. The difference lies in the act of adding “autre chose” to their braids. Throughout *Cornetes*, the poet pays particular attention to the act of supplementing hair and the many forms such artificiality can take. In the above citation, though the poet praises women who do not spend time adding anything to their tresses, the rhyme between “trechié” (braided), “drecié” (dressed), and “péchié” (sin) nevertheless mirrors the assertion that opened the poem that adding things to one’s tresses becomes a cause of sin. In the opening stanza, the poet condemns women who “forre son chief” (v. 4; line their heads) with a “forreure” (v. 11; false hair). The verb “forrer” and the noun “forreure” intensify the animal

presence in the poem. A “forreure” refers to animal hides with the fur still on them used to line, or “forre,” the inside of a garment. Here the poet clearly refers to women adding false hair to their own, essentially lining their hair. The poet shows these women treating their hair as an article of clothing that they can remove and change at will, in contrast to natural hair, which extends their body. A few verses later in this same stanza the author specifies that some women embellish their hair with another human’s hair: “D’autrui cheveus portent granz sommes / desus lor teste” (vv. 23-24; They wear large amounts of other people’s hair / on top of their heads). Finally, about halfway through the poem, he notes that women also resort to supplementing their own hair with plant matter: “De chanvre ouvré ou de lin / se font cornues” (vv. 74-75; Of worked hemp or flax / they make themselves horned). As was implicit in the Vieille’s recognition that adding false hair leads to a connection to the beasts, the unnatural quality of the woman’s headdress draws the Bishop’s ire. The problem with hair in this poem is that once it has passed through these women’s hands, it is no longer a reliable signifier. Women adjust or treat the fur, the other person’s hair, or the plant products to match their own hair to give the illusion that these products belong to their own body. By showing this false hair for what it really is, the poem discloses the deceptiveness of artificial hair, which emphasizes the deception inherent in the woman herself. Deceptive hair becomes a synecdoche for the deceptive woman.

The author of *Cornetes* punctuates his poem with rhymes emphasizing the nefarious quality of these women identified by their cornettes, in a way that overwrites the story a woman tells through her toilette. The first reference to the Bishop’s order to yell “hurte belin” follows the poet’s assertion that sin arrives on the heels of adding false hair “au lonc des trèces” (v. 12), and that the Bishop well understands the gravity of the situation: “L’evesques connoist lor destrèces; / de lor orgueil de lor nobleces” (vv. 13-14; The bishop knows of their pitiable

situation; / for their pride and ostentation). The rhyme scheme immediately preceding the first reference to the Bishop's call to arms strengthens the relationship between a woman's hairstyle (trèces) – with its accompanying haughtiness and ostentation (nobleces) – and her deplorable situation (destrèces) before God. These verses additionally illustrate the poet's deliberate reinterpretation of hair. In the *Roman de la Rose*, the presence of Oiseuse in Déduit's garden confirmed that having the time to prepare an elegant "trèces" represented an essential way for a woman to demonstrate her nobility (nobleces). The connection, elaborated in the *Rose*, between nobility and noble appearance pervaded medieval, courtly literature. Like the *Mari jaloux*, the author of *Cornetes* rejects this view of hair. He discloses how hairstyles have passed from elegant to elaborate and therefore rather than demonstrating a woman's nobility, they show her ostentation. Further, the prefix "des-" in the pair "trèces" and "destrèces," rather than signaling the undoing or the removal of something (unbraiding), unites the two terms in a logic of causation and amplification that pervades the entire poem. Women amplify their braids with artificial hair and this action, rather than causing them to be seen as noble, leads to the deplorable situation of both sexes. Finally, within the context of a poem about hairstyles, the noun "destrèces" cannot but recall the verb "destrecier," to unbraid. The Bishop – and the poet – is presented as knowing the truth of a woman's nature. He knows what lies beneath the artifice because he has "unbraided" a woman's hair and divested it of artifice, in a metaphorical and perhaps a literal sense.

Throughout the poem hair as a symbol of elegance and nobility comes under attack. Insistence on revealing the deceptiveness of excessively styled or embellished hair precedes the final "hurte belin" in the poem:

De lor cornes est grant parole,  
Genz s'en gabent, n'est pas frivole,



Parmi la vile.  
 Tel cointise est à Dieu trop vile:  
 C'est aussi voir comme évangile,  
 Et n'est pas fable;  
 Mès je croi bien que le déable  
 Les veut asseoir à sa table,  
 Qui leur ensaingne  
 Que n'i ait nule qui se faingne  
 De porter de péchié l'ensaingne  
 Desus son chief.  
 Hurte belin tout de rechief,  
 Por le pardon. (vv. 100-13)

[There is much talk about their horns; / people mock them, saying they are nonsense, / throughout the town. / Such adornment is too contemptible to God: / this is as true as the gospel, / and it is not a fable. / I do believe that the devil / wants to seat them at his table, / who teaches them so / that there is not one who hesitates / to carry the standard of sin / on top of her head. / Cry, “push the ram,” once again / for the pardon.]

If hair indeed represents a form of female self-expression, the poet attempts to disavow this voice by inserting it within a larger and more influential discourse. He presents the people of the town as gossiping about *cornettes*; they are already the object of public scorn. The Bishop's “sermon” and the poet's *dit* deliver the final blow to this carefully crafted form of female voice taught by the devil himself.<sup>78</sup> The Jaloux attempts to subjugate a woman's body by discrediting it as a siren song; in a similar move, the narrator of *Cornetes* labels hair as the devil's masterpiece: the “ensainge” of sin. Sin represents the only appropriate meaning that can be assigned to women's horned hairstyle in the poem given its deceptive and constantly-changing nature. Hair worn in *cornettes* and hidden beneath a web of hoops, dangles, and nets cannot be trusted; deceit becomes the only possible interpretation.

The rhymes in these verses surrounding this reminder to yell “hurte belin” also emphasize the deceptive quality of artificial hair. Once again, “de rechief” – a word whose

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<sup>78</sup> This anticipates the condemnation of *cornettes* proffered by Gilles le Muisis.

etymology derives from the Latin *caput*, head, and that contains the Old French word for head, *chief* within it – the rhyme between hair, in this case “chief,” and “meschief,” misfortune or calamity, leaves little doubt on the negative connotations of wearing cornettes. The noun *chief* refers to the head, but it was often used to refer explicitly to hair. According to Rolland-Perrin, *chief* possessed more noble connotations than its synonym *teste*, which also could be used to describe hair: “Cette connotation explique sans doute l’écrasante majorité d’emplois de *chief* accompagné d’adjectifs mélioratifs et, à plus forte raison, la relative rareté de ce terme pour désigner la tête des animaux. Par un procédé d’extension synecdochique, *chief* a pris le sens de partie supérieure de la tête et donc des cheveux.”<sup>79</sup> In *Cornettes*, the “chief” no longer holds its privileged position. The head has lost its place of honor as the site of reason because women adorn it in false, diabolical, animal hair. It incurs the Bishop’s reproach and has become a “meschief,” literally a bad head, that merits the bestial comparison.

The author carries this redefinition process out to its furthest possible spiritual conclusions:

C’est grant meschief  
 Que la vermine  
 Mengerà ce que je devine  
 Et que très bel pel d’ermine  
 Cuevre et aorne. (vv. 113-17)

[It is a misfortune / that vermin / will eat – as I foresee it – / that which a very  
 beautiful ermine pelt / covers and adorns.]

The poet rhymes “vermine” with “ermine,” the expensive fur lining of noble clothing. The inclusion of this highly prized white fur lining recalls the earlier comparison of hair to clothing lined with a “forreure” (vv. 4, 11), an image reinforced by the connection between the white

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<sup>79</sup> Rolland-Perin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 24.

color of ermine and blond hair, which both possess the luminous qualities coveted by nobles.<sup>80</sup> The juxtaposition of “vermine” and “ermine” again serves to remind the reader of the foolishness of women who spend so much time on their appearance because the beautification will ultimately fade away in death. The rhyme also comments on the consumption of animals by equating highly prized fur of the ermine, a type of weasel, with the fur of vermin humans try to exterminate. Nobles avidly consume the dead bodies of ermine and cover their skin with them. These human bodies, however, will later be consumed by vermin, and the vermin, perhaps by the weasels. For the poet, then, these women’s decision to wrap their bodies, or even their hair, with animal pelts becomes a sartorial choice that no longer shows their power and nobility but that instead foreshadows and seals their fate as a less than noble part of the natural world.

Both Jean de Meun and the author of the *Dit des Cornetes* present women as putting themselves, and particularly their hair and headdresses, on display while simultaneously obscuring what lies beneath the surface. Women’s behavior can be likened to their *gorget*, a neck covering worn beneath clothing that, when attached to the headdress, creates a space around the chin and neck that reveals the skin it is supposed to conceal. The act of connecting the collar to the cornettes creates a space for the skin beneath the cloth to be glimpsed and represents a temptation for allegedly unsuspecting men. Headdresses create a literal gap between cloth and skin, and more importantly, they create a figurative gap between appearance and reality. The women create and use the gap to attract and deceive men. Women make the deception more attractive with veils, circlets, and jewels, and men indeed become their victims since a woman’s appearance does “atrère / les léchéors” (*Cornetes*, vv. 83-84; attract / debauched men). In response to this danger the author of *Cornetes* and Jean de Meun disclose the reality of this gap.

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<sup>80</sup> Heller, “Light as Glamour,” 955.

They reinterpret the signs women send and thereby subdue them. In the case of the gap allowing men to see women's chests, both Jean de Meun and the author of *Cornetes* change it from a seductive opportunity to glance at the skin to a ridiculous hole:

Robe ainsinques escoletée  
Semble le treu d'une privée,  
Ne plus ne mains;  
L'en lor puet bien véoir ès sains.  
Lén i metroit bien ses .ii. mains  
Ou une miche. (*Cornetes* vv. 49-54)

[A dress that has such a neckline / looks like the hole of a latrine, / no more, no less. / You can very well see into their breasts; / you can put your two hands in there, or a small loaf of bread.]

Rather than a sexy sneak peak, the gap becomes a place of filth, its size hyperbolically described as being large enough to pass a loaf of bread through, or, Jean will add, a rat: "Car entre la touelle, qui n'est pas de bourras, / et la temple et les cornes pourroit passer un ras" (vv. 1250-51; Because between the gorget, which is not of a coarse fabric, / and the temples and the horns a rat could pass through). These authors reveal the true signification of exposed skin: a part of the flesh that is destined to decay. Jean relays this idea with his inclusion of the rat, while the author of *Cornetes* writes about vermin eating their flesh. Both Jean de Meun and the author of *Cornetes* expose the deceptive nature of the image before them and reinterpret it.

The author of the *Dit des cornetes* similarly reinterprets the message women send with their hair. Rather than a sign of nobility, wealth, and beauty, hair represents ostentation, deficiency of character, and grotesqueness. He reveals the deception inherent in the act of artificially embellishing hair with other people's hair, animal fur, and plant products to create elaborate hairstyles that "contrefont les bestes mues." The comparison of a woman to a ram not only ridicules the horned headdress, but also participates in a system that denies a woman's self-expression by turning her into a mute beast. The *Dit des cornetes* supplants a woman's voice

with the voice of male authority figures such as the Bishop of Paris and the poet himself. By the poem's conclusion, the woman has been silenced and the poet's work is complete: "Atant des fames nous teson, / et fin en ces ditié feson" (vv. 166-67; Let us speak no more of women / and make an end of this dit). In terms of dominating women's expression, this poem presents itself as successful. Elaborate hairstyles have been completely redefined from the initial moments spent preparing them in front of her mirror to their eternal impact on a woman's soul. Men will probably continue succumbing to the lies, but the truth has at least been laid bare. Thus, the poet (and the Bishop) may end their discussion and continue to more important matters.

### ***Tresces*: Indomitable Femininity**

Not all thirteenth-century works dealing with the threat of a woman's appearance present men as the victors in the quest for domestic dominance. Some works, such as the fabliau *Tresces*, show women following in the footsteps of Jean de Meun's *Vieille*, fully exploiting the animal identity assigned to them to the great misfortune of their husbands. The anonymous fabliau dates from sometime in the first half of the thirteenth century and exists today in both a short and long version. Scholars occasionally refer to the short version I as *De la fame qui fist entendant son mari qu'il sonjoit* (*The woman who made her husband believe he was dreaming*), the title given in one of the two extant manuscripts. The longer version II, *Tresces*, exists in only one manuscript.<sup>81</sup> One manuscript of version I attributes the fabliau to Garin, the alleged author of several other fabliaux, about whom scholars know next to nothing.<sup>82</sup> Scholars generally agree

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<sup>81</sup> Version I: B. Berne, Bibl. de la Bourgeoisie, 354, fol. 90d-93a. – Titre : *De la Dame qui fist entendant son mari qu'il sonjoit* ; X, Paris, BnF, fr. 12581, fol. 373d-375a. – Titre : *Li Fabliaus des Tresces*. Version II: Paris, BnF, fr. 19152, fol. 122b-123f – Titre: *Des Tresces*. All citations taken from *Tresces*, in *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, volume 6, ed. Willem Noomen (Assen; Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1991). English translations are my own.

<sup>82</sup> Other fabliau attributed to Garin or Guerin include the *Prestre qui abevete*, both versions of the *Chevalier qui fist parler les Cons*, one version of *Cele qui fu foutue et desfoutue*, *Berengier au lonc Cul*, and *Prestre qui manja Mores*.

that both versions share a common ancestor, now lost, since each relates the story of a woman who cuckolds her husband, then uses a horse's or a mule's tale to convince him that his discovery of her unfaithfulness had only been a dream. Small variations in the characters and events differentiate the two versions. One of the most notable of these involves the social status of the characters. In the long version of the tale, the lady, her husband, and the lover all belong to the nobility, while in the shorter version, they are bourgeois. Since the majority of the texts in this chapter treat nobles or are addressed to a noble audience (or at least one aspiring to imitate the nobility), I will primarily discuss version II, with occasional references to version I when variations in the treatment of hair arise.

Version II of *Tresces* begins, like many romances, by lauding the chivalry and prowess of a knight married to a beautiful woman; this woman, however, loves another knight. One day, the news of the husband's unexpected arrival interrupts the two lovers' meeting at a cousin's house. Upon leaving, the lover obtains a gift from his lady: he will join her that night in bed while her husband sleeps. Unfortunately, when the lover enters the dark room, he grabs the husband who has not yet fallen asleep. The husband captures the intruder and places him in an empty barrel and leaves to fetch a light and his sword. The wife releases her lover and replaces him with a mule. Her husband does not fall for the ruse and kicks her out, leaving her to devise a plan back in the lovers' habitual meeting place. She convinces a bourgeois woman, whom she greatly resembles, to go in her stead to her husband and beg his forgiveness. Angered by the return of the woman he believes to be his wife, the husband puts on his spurs, holds down the woman, and mercilessly beats her. The woman bemoans her fate a little too loudly, further aggravating the knight, who cuts off her long braids, and places them under his pillow. The bourgeoisie returns to

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Noomen concludes that since this was a fairly common name, it is impossible to determine with any certainty that *Tresces* is the work of the same author. Noomen (ed.), *NRCF*, 6:211.

the man's wife, who now promises to make the woman rich and to find her tresses. The wife returns and while her husband sleeps, she locates the locks under his pillow and replaces them with his favorite horse's tail. The next morning the husband cannot believe that his wife has returned home after receiving such a beating. The lady feigns concern for her husband's mental state and, as proof that nothing transpired during the night, shows him her unharmed body. Bewildered but still unconvinced, the husband says that she cannot hide the loss of her long locks. When the lady removes her cap to reveal her undamaged hair, the husband reaches under his pillow, finds his horse's tail, begs his wife's forgiveness, and sets off on a pilgrimage to Vendôme. The author offers the following moral: husbands, do not put your wife out of the house at night, for she will find an occasion to bring you shame.

Philippe Ménard characterizes the ending of adulterous fabliaux like *Tresces* as one of rediscovered serenity; it does not matter that this textual stability is reconquered at the husband's expense.<sup>83</sup> Michelle Houdeville interprets the fabliau's ending as the wife's revindication of animal instincts over courtly conceptions of love in something akin to the *Vieille*'s version of "free love."<sup>84</sup> Despite the ultimate laugh at the husband's expense, for Dominique Boutet, the fabliau reveals an anxiety about both the maliciousness of human nature, illustrated in the knight's violence and the wife's sacrifice of the bourgeoisie, and about female sexuality.<sup>85</sup> Myriam Rolland-Perrin identifies this anxiety before the sexual appetite of the protagonist as constituting a key component of *Tresces*: "Ce fabliau, dans lequel l'héroïne manipule les apparences, génère une angoisse diffuse devant le pouvoir d'une féminité débridée. À l'image du

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<sup>83</sup> Philippe Ménard, *Les Fabliaux: contes à rire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 43-44.

<sup>84</sup> Michelle Houdeville, "La queue et le cheveu," in *La Chevelure dans la littérature et l'art du Moyen Âge*, *Senefiance* 50, ed. Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2004).

<sup>85</sup> Dominique Boutet, *Les Fabliaux* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985), 54, 72-3, 99.

mari qui ne parvient plus à distinguer le faux du vrai, le lecteur ne sait plus s'il a devant les yeux une tresse de cheveux, de poils ou encore un fouet entre les mains d'une femme animale."<sup>86</sup> This anxiety, embodied in the woman's braids, infiltrates the entire fabliau and gives its name to two of the three versions of the tale.<sup>87</sup>

The important role of hair in this fabliau is apparent from its title. Françoise Laurent and Myriam Rolland-Perrin have noted the ways in which the author organizes the story in a tripartite fashion mirroring the tripartite interlacing characteristic of braids: three lovers make up a love triangle and three substitutions constitute the plot and the comedy of the piece.<sup>88</sup> Both Rolland-Perrin and Laurent also illustrate the centrality of the infamous scene where the lady sends a friend to be beaten and de-tressed in her stead. The husband puts on his spurs, holds the woman down by her hair and beats her like a disobedient horse in a much more literal way than did Jean de Meun's *Mari jaloux*. Still enraged, he administers one the most severe forms of punishment imaginable to a *traînée* by cutting off her tresses. With this move, he not only foreshadows the final substitution of horse's tail for woman's hair but also de-feminizes her. The removal of the braids likewise becomes a symbolic castration of the woman he takes to be his wife, cutting off what many medieval moralists and romance author's present as the symbol of a woman's lechery.<sup>89</sup> Both critics also note that in cutting off her braids, the husband follows the

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<sup>86</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 318.

<sup>87</sup> This is the title given in manuscript B. Manuscript X (BnF. Fr. 12581 f. 373d-375a) of the shorter version refers to the title as *Li Fabliaus des Treces*. Inventories referring to the first version use title found in B (Berne, Bibl. de la Bourgeoisie, 354, f. 90d-93a). Noomen (ed.), *NRCF*, 209.

<sup>88</sup> See Françoise Laurent, "*Si li a coupee la trece, dont el a au cuer grant destrece*. De Part du tressage à la science du piège dans le fabliau *Des Tresses*," *Senefiance* 50, ed. Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2004), 240-45; and Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 318-24.

<sup>89</sup> Lévy-Gires goes so far as to note that cutting off a woman's braids is more perverse than simply grabbing and removing a handful of hair since braids cover the sensual neck and are phallic in form. She concludes that, "Sa forme ne vient-elle pas souligner à quel point la femme séductrice s'arroge un pouvoir tout masculin? Aussi n'est-il pas étonnant que dans les fabliaux par exemple, les maris trompés coupent les tresses de leur épouse, qui a tendance à vouloir 'porter les braies'" Lévy-Gires, "Se coiffer au Moyen Age," 283-84.



advice of Aristotle that if one cuts off a mare's tale it curbs her sexual appetite.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, since the narrator presents the two women as identical in beauty and perfectly interchangeable, this scene, situated at the core of the fabliau, strengthens the substitutions of animals for humans that precede and follow it. The first substitution of a mule for the lover fails and leads to the wife's danger; the last substitution of a horse's tail for human hair succeeds and cements the wife's victory over her husband. Such perfect symmetry, Laurent writes, becomes a "reflet de la coiffure tressée qui encadre le visage de la dame – où les éléments se réfléchissent en s'inversant comme dans un miroir."<sup>91</sup> In *Tresces*, the wife alone reveals herself to be master of this game of mirrors where sexuality and pleasure triumph. Her lover becomes a mule, an animal whose sterility makes him a symbol for pure lust. Her unbridled sexuality, embodied by the long locks that her husband believed he had removed, lies triumphantly over her breast at the end of the fabliau while the husband finds himself implicitly emasculated by his own wife.<sup>92</sup>

Clearly, the connection between women and animals and the important role hair plays in establishing this connection in *Tresces* has been well-documented, particularly by both Rolland-Perrin and Laurent. Rather than propose further commentary on the woman/animal connection, I will explore how *Tresces* adds to the discourse found in previous texts on the role of artifice in a woman's toilette and its subsequent role in deceiving men. Given the general distrust with which some thirteenth-century authors treat women's hair and especially braids, the reference to this particular hairstyle in the title of two of the three surviving manuscripts foreshadows the deceitfulness of the woman and the means by which she fools her husband. Examining the three

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<sup>90</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 204; Laurent, "Si li a coupee la trece," 244.

<sup>91</sup> Laurent, "Si li a coupee la trece," 242. Laurent and Rolland-Perrin also note that the verb *tresser* could refer to a dance in Old French where participants enter and exit successively, with some even being excluded, or put "hors de tresce." Laurent, "Si li a coupee la trece," 241; Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 320-21.

<sup>92</sup> Houdeville, "La queue et le cheveu." For more on the importance of the castration motif in the fabliaux, see R. Howard Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

substitution scenes within the context of a woman's toilette will reveal not only the overall importance of braids from the outset of the tale, but also how the author presents his protagonist as taking advantage of the misogynistic linking of women to animals, in order to control her husband and her lover. Because the wife experiences a kind of liberated sexual victory in the vein of the Jean de Meun's *Vieille*, the author ultimately describes anxiety about woman's sexuality as an inescapable reality; any attempt by men to control her sexuality is inevitably doomed to fail.

Part of the art of the fabliaux, according to R. Howard Bloch and Norris Lacy, consists in producing a conclusion that appears unexpected. They demonstrate, however, that if we were better readers (or listeners in the case of the initial audience), the joke would be evident from the outset.<sup>93</sup> Such is the case in *Tresces* where each reference to hair points to the tale's conclusion. The fabliaux are known for their narrative economy and physical descriptions appear with relative infrequency.<sup>94</sup> Historian Marie-Thérèse Lorcin has shown that when references to parts of the body occur, they are rarely gratuitous, serving rather to accentuate or advance the action within a text.<sup>95</sup> Hair, and particularly a woman's braids, represents no exception in *Tresces*, demonstrating the deception inherent in a woman and facilitated by her toilette. Lorcin also maintains that though fabliaux often illustrate the deceitfulness of the women, they rarely mention her coquetry, toilette, clothing, and hairstyles.<sup>96</sup> *Tresces* proves an exception to Lorcin's rule. The action in *Tresces* begins when the lovers find themselves interrupted by the husband's arrival which incites the lover to ask the lady to blindly grant him one request: "Lors dit qu'il se

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<sup>93</sup> Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, 126; Norris Lacy, *Reading Fabliaux* (New York: Garland, 1993), 113-129.

<sup>94</sup> Ménard, *Les Fabliaux*, 37.

<sup>95</sup> Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, "Le Corps a ses raisons dans les fabliaux: Corps féminin, corps masculin, corps de vilain," *Le Moyen Age* 90 (1984): 435. See also Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, "L'expression corporelle dans les fabliaux," in *L'image du corps humain dans la littérature et l'histoire médiévales*, Razo 4, ed. James Dauphiné (Nice, Université de Nice, 198).

<sup>96</sup> Lorcin, "Le Corps a ses raisons," 436.

voloit couchier / o son seignor et ovuec li” (vv. 52-53; Then he said that he wanted to sleep in her bed with her and with her lord). Scholars have noted the incongruity between the courtly nature of a “don contraignant,” a gift or service that is blindly agreed to and that the donor must fulfill as a point of honor, and the request to join the lady in the conjugal bed which jeopardizes the secrecy of the affair which, up to this point, they have zealously guarded. For some, it represents the first departure from the courtly code set in place with the initial praise of the knight’s prowess and wife’s beauty.<sup>97</sup> Given that the narrator follows the lover’s request by qualifying him as a disciple of courtly love, it seems likely that part of the comedy of this scene, and indeed of the entire fabliau, revolves around the discrepancy between the sayings and the doings of courtly love. A second consequence of this rather inexplicable request is that it moves the action into the domestic sphere and, more precisely, into the intimacy of the bedroom where, among other things, a woman would prepare her toilette. The connection may seem a tenuous one. However, in a fabliau named after a hairstyle and whose intrigue revolves around the control and manipulation of braids, the decision to situate both the beginning and the end of the fabliau’s intrigue in the often-criticized site of a woman’s artifice and deception becomes more significant than it initially appears.

The chaos following the husband’s realization that a third person has entered the bedroom reveals the importance of hair and the wife’s ability to manipulate it, all of which prefigures her ultimate ruse. When her husband leaves to find a candle and sword, the wife frees her lover from the barrel where her husband had placed him after overpowering him, and then she replaces him with a mule. The knight’s decision to entrust the prisoner to his wife places him

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<sup>97</sup> Boutet notes that this request, which he attributes to the wife instead of the lover, does not necessarily signal a parody of the courtly genre because it is reminiscent of Béroul’s *Tristan* which is not considered a satire of anything. Boutet, *Les Fabliaux*, 52-53.

within the company of countless duped fabliau husbands, though unlike many others, he recognizes the naivety of his trust. In order to convince her husband to leave the room, she first had to feign her fear and further prove her resolve to carry out her duty by forcefully grabbing the intruder by his hair:

“Sire, fait ele, ja merci  
N’en aiez quant il est repris!”  
Lors l’a la dame as cheveus pris  
Et fait senblant que bien le tiegne. (vv. 124-27)

[“Sire, have no pity on him / since he has been caught in the act!” / Then the woman grabbed him [the prisoner] by the hair / and pretended that she held him quite firmly.]

The author emphasizes the wife’s ingenuity: she only pretends (*fait senblant*) to hold the man. Later she will place the mule’s head in the barrel to render the situation more credible (*mielz entreprise*). The wife’s deceptive nature is not uncommon to fabliaux and it drives the remainder of the story. Critics have noted that the woman holding her lover by his hair prefigures the treatment of the bourgeoisie whom the husband will violently hold down by her hair before cutting it.<sup>98</sup> This detail, however, foreshadows far more than this one act of violence. Since Bakhtin’s inclusion of fabliau humor among the humor of the carnivalesque, which values turning the world upside down, scholars have paid much attention to the role of inversion in fabliaux.<sup>99</sup> In this scene, the detail of the lady grabbing her lover by the hair becomes important because it embodies the transposal of control in the fabliau from man to woman and the method by which she will maintain her position. Up to this point, the lady has been controlled by the

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<sup>98</sup> Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 318.

<sup>99</sup> Mikkaïl Bakhtine, *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*, trans. Andrée Robel (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 15-26; Houdeville, “Le queue et le cheveu,” 197. Boutet recognizes the applicability of Bakhtinian “rire carnivalesque” to fabliaux, but cautions applying the term generally to all fabliaux because some, including *Tresces* or *La Dame escoilliée*, produce a dark laughter not characteristic of carnivalesque laughter. Boutet, *Les Fabliaux*, 73-78.

movement and desires of men: she had to leave her lover when her husband came home and her agreement to a *don contraignant* obliged her to allow her lover into her bedroom. By grabbing the lover's hair, she now refuses to leave when her husband asks her to and she now holds her lover at her mercy. The wife usurps the position of strength that is embodied in hair given its connotations in the Biblical story of Samson. The woman renders her lover inferior to herself via the pulled hair and will later subjugate her husband with her own braids and his horse's tail.

In addition to foreshadowing the violence committed against the bourgeois woman, this first substitution prefigures the ultimate switching of human for animal hair because the wife immediately releases her lover to find a mule:

Puis saut et deslie la mure,  
Si l'a par les oreilles prise  
Et por estre mielz entreprise  
Li boute en la cuve la teste. (vv. 132-35)

[Then she quickly unties the mule, / and grabs it by its ears / and to make the scene more convincing, / she shoves its head in the barrel.]

In this scene, the woman not only substitutes a mule for her lover, but she takes special care to replace her lover's head with the head of a mule in another inversion since the mule commonly symbolized lowliness.<sup>100</sup> Throughout the bedroom scene, both the husband and wife pay particular attention to the lover's head. When the husband re-enters the room he "prant s'espee / et dit que ja avra coupee / la teste cil que pris avoit" (vv. 137-39; grabs his sword / and says that he will cut off / the head of the man he has caught). The role of the lover's head and hair are central: the husband wants to cut off this man's head just as he will later cut off the bourgeoisie's hair, while the wife substitutes the lowly mule for her lover's head, as she will later substitute the tail of a horse for the bourgeoisie's hair. Although doomed to fail, this initial deception becomes

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<sup>100</sup> Boutet, *Les Fabliaux*, 85.

the wife's first attempt to substitute animal hair for human hair. She unties the mule and grabs him by the one of the two parts of the animal which would most resemble human hair: his ears. Using the mule's ears rather than its tail gestures towards the fabliau's denouement without being overly repetitious. Andrew Miller explains that mutilation of a horse's ears sometimes accompanied the emasculating act of chopping off a horse's tail in medieval France and England.<sup>101</sup>

Both the emphasis on counterfeiting hair and evidence for the woman's familiarity with doing so becomes more evident from the second substitution scene. Reunited with her lover, the woman devises a plan to salvage the situation with her husband. She sends an acquaintance "qui en beauté la resanbloit" (v. 164; who resembled her in beauty) to beg the knight's forgiveness. Because sending someone in her stead represents an integral part of her plan to save her reputation, scholars generally agree that the wife was likely aware of the violent treatment to which she exposes the bourgeois woman:

Lors vient a cele, si l'i a mise  
Contre terre par les cheveus.  
El chief li a ses doiz envous;  
Lors tire et fiert et boute et saiche  
Qu'a paine ses mains en arrache. (vv. 194-201)

[Then he approaches her and flattens her / against the ground by her hair. / He wraps his fingers around her head / and then yanks, and hits, and pushes, and pulls so much / he almost rips her head off with his hands.]

The scene echoes that of the Mari jaloux in the *Roman de la Rose*. Rolland-Perrin remarks that the narrator initially presents only the woman's hair as enduring the husband's abuse: "C'est sur

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<sup>101</sup> Miller explains that ear mutilation also carried sexual overtones: "finally, the fact that a horse's ears were sometimes mutilated along with its tail during such ritualized defacements only reinforces the connection between tail and penis, for medieval people believed that a man's generative powers were dependent in part upon his ears (for loading sperm from the head to the testicles)." Miller, "'Tails' of Masculinity," 975.

le symbole de la féminité luxurieuse que se défoule fiévreusement le jaloux.”<sup>102</sup> The verb “arracher” comes from the Latin *eradicare*, meaning to pull out from the roots. It is as if the husband intuits that his wife’s hair lies somehow at the heart of the problem and his violence serves as a means to root it out. In the shorter versions of the tale, the narrator specifies that the two women’s primary resemblance resides in their hair:

Lors la saisi par les cheveus  
Que ele avoit luisanz et sors  
Tout autresi comme fins ors:  
Le chief sa fame resambloit. (Version I, vv. 159-62)

[Then he grabbed her by her hair / which was shiny and golden<sup>103</sup> / just like precious gold. / It resembled his wife’s hair.]

Thus, the woman successfully replaces her own hair with someone else’s and avoids the punishment which begins with the knight dragging his “wife” by her “cheveus.”

The next phase of the punishment occurs when the woman complains of her maltreatment. The knight grabs the woman by her already mistreated locks and proceeds to cut them off:

Son cors tot d’angoisse tressue,  
Si li a coupee la trece,  
Dont el a au cuer grant destrece,  
Si que ses plors entroublia. (vv. 226-29)

[His body is drenched (with sweat) due to his rage, / and he cut off her braids. / At this, she experiences such distress in her heart / that her crying stopped.]

Once again, the scene takes up many of the same qualities found in both *Cornetes* and *Roman de la Rose*. The tresses are incorporated into the husband’s rage as he becomes “tressue” like the

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<sup>102</sup> Rolland-Perin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 319.

<sup>103</sup> In Old French, the color blond could be described using three different adjectives: *blond*, *sor*, and *bloi*. *Blond* represents the most commonly used adjective. It is followed by *sor*, which could refer to a light brown that we would not typically refer to as blond today, and finally *bloi*, which occurred most often in the second half of the twelfth and first part of the thirteenth century before being replaced by *blond*. Rolland-Perin, *Blonde comme l’or*, 33-41.

Mari jaloux. The rhyme, used earlier in *Cornetes*, between “trece” and “destrece” occurs, serving once again to highlight the relationship between a hairstyle and a deplorable situation. This time, a man physically inflicts this “destrece” upon a woman rather than a woman inflicting it upon herself in front of a mirror. Although the misogynist counter argument of cause and effect elaborated in *Cornetes*, which identifies the woman’s appearance as the source of this treatment, would likely be applied by the husband and some moralists. Of course, in *Tresces*, the poet also plays with the common association of removal and undoing contained in the prefix “des-” as the husband quite literally “de-tresses” the woman he believes to be his wife.

As earlier noted, critics have amply demonstrated how the husband treats the woman like a horse in this scene and the role hair plays, primarily in its removal, to strengthen the connection. I would only add the observation that the author of *Tresces* further emphasizes the association of braids with a bestial sexual appetite by inserting two comparisons between the wife’s sexual pleasure and the bourgeoisie’s physical abuse in the narration of this episode. The first occurs as the bourgeoisie arrives at the bedroom:

Cele s’en vait et puis s’assist  
 Dedenz la chanbre endroit la couche.  
 La dame o son ami se couche,  
 Qui longuement i fust son vueil.  
 Et cele commence son duel (vv. 174-78)

[The bourgeoisie leaves and / once in the room she sits next to the bed. / The woman goes to sleep with her lover, / they would stay a long time if it were up to her. / As for the other, she begins her lament.]

The narrator clearly draws a parallel between the activities of these two women by rhyming the noun, “la couche,” and the verb, “se couche,” in lines 175 and 176. Thus, one gets into bed with her lover, the object of her “vueil,” while the other gets in bed with her executioner, the author of



her “duel.” The second comparison between the two women occurs in the middle of the description of the merciless treatment inflicted upon the bourgeoisie:

Et fiert des esperons granz cous  
Qu’il en fait en plus de cent leus  
Le sanc saillir parmi la sengle.  
Mout pot ore la dame atendre  
De son ami graignor soulaz  
Que cele qui prise est as laz!  
Ainsi la damoisele bat  
Le chevalier, et se debat  
Et de parole la laidist. (vv. 199-207)

[And with his spurs he inflicts great blows / in more than one hundred places he makes / her blood flow, bloodying everything around her belt.<sup>104</sup> / During that time, his wife receives / much more agreeable treatment from her lover / than does she who has fallen into this trap! / And thus, the knight beats / the woman and rebukes her, / and hurls insults at her.]

The earlier comparison paralleling both women getting into bed now permits the author to allude to the more explicit activities recounted in many fabliaux without describing the act itself. This corresponds with the adopted guise of courtly decorum present from the outset of the story. If the knight mounts and subsequently beats the bourgeoisie like a horse to her great “duel,” then it follows that the wife’s *ami* similarly mounts her to her great “vueil.” One woman falls into a trap, finds herself beaten and held by her hair in submission like a disobedient animal, and will eventually have the symbol of her sexuality removed, while the other freely exploits her sexuality. Even without these glimpses into the wife’s continued infidelity, the connection between adultery and punishment of hair and body remains clear. The account of the woman’s sexual activities, couched between descriptions of the husband’s administration of punishment, however, emphasizes both the negative behavior targeted and the ultimate failure of this “de-tressing.”

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<sup>104</sup> The word “sengle” also refers to a strap that attaches a horse’s saddle. Frédéric Godefroy, *Complément du dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, s.vv. “cengle,” “cengler.”

To this point in the fabliau the wife has only substituted human heads for animal or other human heads; she has not literally embellished hair with foreign substances for which the author of *Cornetes* harshly criticized Parisian women. The practice of supplementing hair with false hair does not directly appear in *Tresces*. The wife's response to the bourgeoisie's "destrece," however, suggests that the practice was not unknown to the cunning protagonist.

Mais la dame jure et affiche  
Qu'a toz jorz mais la fera riche,  
Ne ja doubter ne li estuet  
Des tresces – si trouver les puet –  
Que si bien ne li mete el chief  
Que ja n'en savra le meschief  
N'ome ne feme qui la voie. (vv. 237-43)

[But the woman promises and swears / that she will make her rich for the rest of her days, / and that she has nothing to fear / regarding her braids because, if she can find them, / she will once again reattach them so well to her head / that no one, neither man nor woman, who sees her / will ever know about this misfortune.]

The poet uses the same rhyme found in *Cornetes* of "chief" and "meschief" in the wife's promise to the brutalized woman that she will re-attach the severed braids to her head. Thus, no one will ever see that her "chief" is actually a "meschief," a bad head, in its lack of hair. The wife's response represents one of the few times in fabliaux that an author alludes to the activities of a woman's toilette. Neither Laurent nor Rolland-Perrin discuss the wife's suggestion, though they do refer to her seemingly magic powers of substitution throughout the story.<sup>105</sup> Rather than magic, the wife's assurance alludes to her mastery of supplementing hair with other products such that none can detect the trickster's hand, a necessary skill in applying false or, in this case, genuine hair to what remains of the woman's hair (the author never mentions whether or how well the wife carries out her end of the bargain). Thus, the woman already alludes to her powers

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<sup>105</sup> Laurent, "Si li a coupee la trece," 245-48; Rolland-Perrin, *Blonde comme l'or*, 323.

of deception, of passing off something like a wig for natural hair, even before the final substitution of the horse's tail for the severed locks.

The scope and the effect of the wife's substitutions in *Tresces* progressively gain in intensity. The first, of a mule for her lover, arises out of desperation and was unlikely to succeed. The second substitution, her neighbor's head of hair for her own, was planned and used to deflect physical pain from herself onto another. The final substitution of the horse's tail for the severed locks represents the fruit of a meticulous plan and an elaborate mise-en-scène destined to attain and cement her husband's submission in a blatant perversion of medieval hierarchy and morality. Returned once more to her bedroom, the woman quietly searches for the bourgeoisie's braids and finds them under her husband's pillow. She proceeds to cut off her husband's favorite horse's tail, eliciting the same comic inversion, this time in a more literal sense, found in the substitution of mule for human just a few hours earlier. The preparation of the ruse highlights the way in which the author of *Tresces* adopts and manipulates the theme of artificially embellishing one's hair to deceive men evoked with some frequency in thirteenth-century texts. In the *Roman de la Rose*, the Vieille encourages women to use the hair of dead women to embellish their own tresses should they fall out or should a brute rip them out. In *Tresces*, the wife follows this advice in an unusual fashion, knowingly causing someone else's hair to take the place of her own in an act that almost leaves the other woman dead. In both versions of the story, the husband beats his victim so badly that the next morning he expresses his shock to see his wife alive.<sup>106</sup> The woman recovers this "dead" hair with the express intent to re-attach it to its living owner. She then replaces that hair with a horse's tail, bringing to mind the condemnation found in *Cornetes* of women "lining" their hair with animal fur and the uncomfortable proximity between animal fur

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<sup>106</sup> In Version I, the author writes that the husband hit the woman so much that: "morte la cuide avoir" (v. 167; he thinks she is dead).

and human hair already alluded to with the earlier substitutions of the mule's ears. The ensuing scene highlights not only the skill with which the woman bewilders her husband, but her use of her skills to manipulate her body, which she covers in multiple layers and progressively unveils.

At her husband's shock to find her by his side, the wife feigns surprise at his recollection of the previous night's events and expresses her concern that he may have been possessed. To prove she was not been beaten the wife shows her flawless body to her husband:

Tantost a la robe levee,  
Si li mostre costez et hanches,  
Et les braz et les cuisses blanches,  
Et le vis qu'el n'ot pas fardé. (vv. 324-27)

[Immediately she lifts her dress / and shows him her sides, and her hips, / and her arms, and her white thighs, / and her face which she had not covered in makeup.]

The wife hides and unveils her body as she sees fit, proof of the skills of which she boasted to the bourgeoisie: no one will be able to see the truth behind her lies. Here the reader finds a second allusion to the artifice of a woman's toilette in the narrator's noting that she did not use makeup to cover her bruises. The narrator characterizes the woman as "bien guile" (v. 330; very cunning) who so tricks her husband (v. 330-31; abete / son seignor), evoking the similar description of the wife's trickery in her first attempted substitution. Her white body leaves her husband troubled; he concludes that a man who beats his wife without killing her wastes his time since women can turn to the devil for assistance: "Certes, se vos bone fussiez, / ja mais par voie n'alissiez: / or vos ont malfé respassee!" (vv. 337-39; Certainly, if you were a good Christian, / you would never be able to go out again. / Now I see that demons have healed you). Earlier the wife asked her husband if he were under the influence of the devil; now he displaces the suspicion of demonic intervention onto her body. He does not linger on this detail, and immediately moves on to what he believes to be the strongest proof of the previous night's activities: the severed braids.

According to the knight, the severed tresses represent the greatest and most undeniable shame to befall the woman during the night. Their loss is the one thing that she cannot hide:

Mais n'iert pas si tost trespassee  
La grant honte que vos avroiz:  
Ja si garder ne vos savroiz  
De vos treces qu'avez perdues,  
Deus anz les avroiz atendues,  
Ainz que soient en lor bon point. (vv. 342-45)

[But the great shame that awaits you / will not be so easily avoided, / regardless of the precautions you take, / since you have lost your braids. / You will have to wait two years / before they again reach their full length.]

Faced with the inexplicable healing of his wife's body, the husband clings to reality: her hair will be gone because it will take at least two years for it to grow back.<sup>107</sup> The wife easily unravels her husband's argument: "Maintenant la coiffe deslace, / si a les tresces avant traites / qu'il cuidoit avoir fors traites" (vv. 352-54; Straight away she unlaces her coif, / and shows him the braids / that he thought he had removed). Once again, the woman takes pains to reveal what is hidden beneath her garments in the moments preceding the final revelation. The unlacing of the coif alludes to the earlier untying of the mule which initiated this strange charade. The unveiling of her body and her hair emphasizes the many layers of reality in this fabliau. Just when the husband thinks he has a grip, even a tenuous one, on reality, his wife peels back a layer which sends him grasping for the truth embodied in the braids under the pillow:

Son seignor de ce se merveille,  
Et si s'esbahist a merveille.  
Lors lieve sa mein si se saigne,  
Mais la dame pas ne s'ensaigne  
De riens que la nuit fet eüst.  
Mais encor pas ne se teüst,  
Qui lui donast tote Prouvence:

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<sup>107</sup> Jean-Luc Leclanche notes that the husband is willing to believe demons healed his wife's body, but that he will not go so far as to attribute the regrowth of her hair to such a power as it would be reminiscent of divine miracles such as the regrowth of Saint Agnes's hair. Jean-Luc Leclanche (ed. and trans.), *Le Chevalier Paillard: Quinze fabliaux libertins de chevalerie* (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2008), 204n15.

Monstrer en cuide la provence,  
Quar il cuide qu'el ait apostes  
Les tresces qu'il avoit repostes.  
Maintenant le coissin sozlieve,  
Mais a poi li cuers ne li crieve  
Quand il a trovee la queue. (vv. 373-85)

[Her husband, at this miracle, / is so taken aback and astonished. / He raises his hand and crosses himself, / but the woman does not sign herself / for anything that she did the previous night. / But he is not ready to keep quiet, / even were all of Provence given to him, / for he believes he has the proof of all he says, / because he believes he still has in hand / the braids that he had hidden. / Now he lifts the pillow, / but his heart nearly burst / when he found the tail.]

Braids occupy a conflicting role for the husband. Attached to his wife's head they are a symbol of falseness, infidelity, and deception. As such, he does not believe his wife's version of the previous night's events despite the apparent proof before his eyes. The distrust that his wife's braids inspire, foreshadows the futility of the husband placing his trust in the braids under his pillow; they too only lie to him. Although it is often unprofitable to question the motives of fabliaux characters since events generally occur to achieve a desired comic ending regardless of external logic, the husband's move to locate the braids under his pillow despite seeing them on his wife raises the question of what he expected to find. Perhaps finding them there would prove that his wife is in league with diabolical forces, thus explaining why he signs himself upon seeing her long braids. The newly grown braids would therefore represent a literal manifestation, or "ensaigne," of deception and diabolic instruction as described in *Cornetes*. Two other cosmetic possibilities could likewise explain the husband's desire to check under his pillow, especially in light of the woman's earlier comments made to the bourgeoisie. Perhaps he expects to find the locks, in which case she must have garnished in the interim the hair he now sees on her head with something or someone else's hair. Or perhaps he expected to find nothing, in which case he must suspect her of convincingly reattaching them to her remaining hair as she

indeed promises to do to the bourgeoisie. Either way, the appearance of tresses on his wife's head elicits distrust and signals deception to the husband. The horse's tail reveals the "truth" of the nights actions, showing that though he indeed carried out all he thought he did, his victim was his horse instead of his wife.

By the end of the fabliau the husband can no longer distinguish truth from the lies, he leaves on pilgrimage to recover his "sight," and says he will defer to his wife in any future disagreements. The substitution of horse tail for braids completely subjugates the husband to his wife's will and the author takes full advantage of the sexual symbolism of hair. The removal of the husband's favorite horse's tail emasculates him. In contrast, the phallic symbolism of the wife's braids could not be more evident as the narrator explains that the woman is free to continue her extramarital liaison and is ensured dominance in all household matters. *Tresces* harbors a deep misogynistic anxiety surrounding men's ability to truly control women and their sexuality. Boutet writes that, aside from laughter, the ultimate goal of the "cruel fabliaux," including *Tresces*, is "le rétablissement immédiat de l'état normal des choses, et [ce but] vise à empêcher toute transgression ultérieure de cet ordre."<sup>108</sup> *Tresces* does not re-establish the husband's authority. Nonetheless, the subversive hierarchy produced does not in itself represent the source of the fabliau's greatest anxiety. The anxiety of *Tresces* results from the suggestion that a woman dominating and deceiving her husband represents the rule rather than the exception. This rule, symbolized in the wife's braids, exists at the beginning of the story and the end as well, despite the husband's best efforts to reverse it. Moments of transgression in fabliaux, usually occurring somewhere near the beginning or the middle of the story, reveal Bakhtin's

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<sup>108</sup> The cruel fabliaux for Boutet include *Tresces*, *La Dame escouillée*, and *Connebert*. Though *Tresces* fails in the reestablishment of the "normal" gender hierarchy, the cruelty of the husband nonetheless clearly aims at re-establishing it. Boutet, *Les Fabliaux*, 71-72.

carnavalesque humor. During this time, life and society become temporarily inverted but they ultimately return to normal. Unfortunately for men, the knight's violent acquisition of control by dragging the woman whom he believes to be his wife by her braids and removing them represents the transgression in *Tresces*. The restored order at the end shows that if men can dominate women, the victory is brief. Such an anxiety partially explains the otherwise odd moral attached to the end of the story:

Par cest fableau poez savoir  
Que cil ne fait mie savoir  
Qui de nuiz met sa feme hors,  
S'el fait folie de son cors:  
Quant el est hors de sa maison,  
Lors a ele droite achoison  
Qu'ele face son mari honte.  
Ici vueil definir mon conte. (vv. 427-34)

[By this fabliau you can know, / that he shows little learning / the man who puts his wife outside at night / if she has done a foolish thing with her flesh: / for when she is out of the house / she has even more of an opportunity / to bring her husband shame. / Here I want to end my story.]

To return to the debate that opened this chapter, men should accept that the woman and her body rule the home because a worse fate awaits the man who kicks his wife out and gives her body the opportunity to “faire folie” in the street. It does not matter how many jealous husbands beat their wives or how many men yell “hurte belin:” the author of *Tresces* concludes that women will always indulge in their bestial sexual appetites. Even if a man successfully dominates one woman, destroying the symbol of her femininity, the triumph is illusory because her hair can always be replaced. If *Cornetes* shows a desire to unveil the truth beneath a woman's appearance, *Tresces* shows the futility of that attempt because no amount of unveiling can ever reveal the truth about women. Although the wife herself was not beaten, the narrator points out that that makeup hides bruises and braids can be replaced. When forcibly removed, hair can



reappear as if by magic. Even had the husband succeeded in punishing his wife and the iconic image of her femininity, there would always be a way for her to disguise the shame because in braids, the essence of femininity proves endlessly deceiving.

In these texts women's hairstyles become the canvas upon which authors write animal characteristics and blur the boundary between humans and animals. The male authors depict hairstyles in such a way as to turn women into animals in order to dominate them, showing that when women indulge in their appearance they indulge in their sexuality. Such indulgence turns women into beasts that succumb to their own desires. Even though, in a sense, men also become animals since they fall prey to women's traps, the authors never question men's humanity. Some women in these texts, however, take advantage of the bestiality men see in their hair and figuratively turn themselves into animals in order to exploit the fear their bestial nature evokes in men, using it to empower themselves and assert their freedom in the domestic sphere. In either situation, for their detriment or their advantage, it is women upon whom bestiality is written through the medium of their hair. This may be because these female voices and elaborate hairstyles are the literary imaginings of men. These voices belong to works of art as elaborately styled and prepared as the hairstyles they criticize. The truths they present may be as untrustworthy as women's hairstyles, providing an artificial image of the world that entraps women, even those who come out on top, within a discourse of animality and inferiority, ultimately trapping them right where men want them.

## Conclusion

Humans and animals share a close bond in medieval texts, living and working together, and sometimes becoming indistinguishable from each other. This project allows us to better understand how and why medieval authors dehumanize their protagonists by inscribing animal traits and imagery onto human hair or by putting animal fur on human bodies. It set out to prove that when authors manipulate hair in their texts, they often deliberately blur the boundary between humans and animals. I argued that because hair encodes social meaning such as adherence to religious orders, marital status, or wealth, examining the context under which such manipulations occur reveal an interrogation of larger socio-cultural questions of religion, social class, and gender. In order to prove this claim, I conducted close readings of moments in a wide variety of literary and nonliterary texts: where human head and body hair became excessive, where humans wore animal hides, or where they styled their hair in a manner that caused it to appear bestial to observers. Since the characters I was examining remained human and were for the most part treated as such, I paid particular attention to the language the authors employed to see when, how, and why bestial traits were assigned to these characters.

The first chapter provided a general overview how a medieval person understood human hair and animal fur from an intellectual and medical view point. Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* offered a scientifically-grounded view of both human and animal hair as generated from a heated by-product of the four humors which medieval intellectuals believed governed the entire body. These intellectuals posited that the color, texture and even length of hair described a person's internal makeup and temperament. The purpose of hair was to help protect the head from extreme temperature changes and also to adorn the head and face.

Bartholomaeus distinguished between head and body hair, and in his chapter on body hair associated hirsuteness with animals, which directly introduced the animal into his descriptions of humans. The link of hair to animality troubled the organization of the encyclopedia as Bartholomaeus modified the traditional head to toe order of the fifth book, placing all discussions of hair and animals at the end of the book. The physician Aldebrandin de Sienne's *Régime du corps* was addressed primarily to women and greatly reduced the anatomical descriptions in the work, focusing primarily on the parts of the body that a woman could modify. The majority of the chapter on hair addressed cosmetic concerns such as how to make hair grow, get rid of it, and how to change its color. The presence of such information becomes problematic for the physiognomic treatise found at the end of the book which explained how to interpret physical traits for temperaments. Aldebrandin encouraged his readers to apply such information with caution, explaining that while nature creates body parts, nurture can modify them. The issues surrounding the connection of hair with animals and its ability to be manipulated by nurture were illustrated in Heldris de Cornouaille's contemporaneous *Roman de Silence*. Hair played a small but crucial role in blurring the boundary between nature in nurture and humans and animals, as personified Nurture attempted to strip Nature of her rights by cropping Silence's long feminine hair to make her look like a boy, and by causing Merlin's naturally smooth body to become hirsute.

Chapter two illustrated how the hairiness of the wild saint serves as an instrument with which to interrogate the apparent incompatibility of sanctity and modern urban society in Rutebeuf's *Marie l'Egyptienne* and the anonymous *Robert le Diable*. The thirteenth century witnessed a good deal of blending between sacred and secular in both literature and society. As cities grew and the role of the church become increasingly important in everyday life, and the

question of how to live a Christian life in the midst of wealthy cities become a relevant concern. In *Marie l’Egyptienne* I showed how Marie’s repentance emphasizes her separation from the city where she relies on herself and others for nourishment and protection. She flees to the forest wilderness where she must rely completely on God to provide for her. The further removed from society she became, the more Marie began to look like an animal, as her hair surpassed human norms and began to cover her entire body. This abnormal hair growth initiated descriptions of Marie where the human and the bestial intermingle, bringing the saint to the very edge of humanity, revealing the incompatibility of complete religious devotion with life in society. In my analysis of *Robert le Diable* I began by illustrating how the bestiality of the third article of Robert’s penance connects the first and second halves of the story. I then showed how the bestial characteristics of Robert’s penance, notably the third article, served to create a space for the saint to devote himself to spiritual concerns in the midst of the city and court. Once his penance was complete, however, and the cover of the animal removed, Robert, too, chose to leave the city to spend the remainder of his days in the forest. In both cases, the saints never again set foot in the city; only Marie’s story and Robert’s bones reenter civic life to provide encouragement for the faithful. By studying the way these authors use animality to create a space for their protagonists, we see that these exemplary stories also address deeper concerns about the incompatibility of mixing the truly sacred with the secular.

My reading of *Guillaume de Palerne* in chapter three similarly revealed how the blurring of animals, lycanthropes, and humans wearing animal hides addressed the origin and innateness of noble sovereignty. Usually seen as a purely entertaining story, critics have recently begun considering the ways in which the author seems to incorporate animal characteristics into the noble identity or how he links beasts and sovereigns as a way to present noble power and

privilege as natural. My rereading of the story emphasized how humans establish their dominance over the natural world by breaking and manipulating the hirsute animal body in order to preserve and cover their own bodies. The chapter began by revealing the importance of clothing in establishing the noble identity in *Guillaume de Palerne* and showing the threat of the bestial and political world that both Guillaume and Alphonse must overcome in order to regain their positions as sovereigns. I argued against more recent readings of the poem to show how Guillaume and Melior's journey from Rome to Palermo under animal skins did not enable the lovers to incorporate animal characteristics into their identity. Rather, the skins were treated as inside-out clothing and the entire journey a satirical representation of a rite of passage. The werewolf Alphonse temporarily maintained a position of sovereignty over humans in the animal realm, but ultimately, he loses it when the lovers reenter the realm of the court. I argued that the narrator maintains Guillaume and Melior's humanity by emphasizing the transformation of the hides into clothing and the importance of clothing in the protagonists' reintegration into the court. The narrator emphasized the role of human *engien*, ruse and ingenuity, in the act of subduing both nature and other humans as a legitimization of sovereignty. By highlighting the fabrication of both their disguises and their social position, however, he also revealed the importance of the hidden artisan hands that make clothing and other signs of noble power possible. Thus, in reaffirming noble identity, the poet also questioned its permanence and elite status.

The fourth chapter looked at three satirical pieces to examine how these authors ascribe animal traits to women's hairstyles to explore questions of dominance in love relationships. It illustrated how Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* interprets Guillaume de Lorris' character of Oiseuse, who spends hours in front of a mirror preparing her braids, in two

different ways in order to explore different roles of women in relationships. Jean's Mari jaloux interprets the time women spend preparing their hair and their appearance as an affront to God and as an enticement to other men. He punishes his wife via her hair in an attempt to gain control of his household affairs. Jean's Vieille, however, interprets such attempts by men to control their wives as futile and she instructs young women to embrace any bestial connotations of their elaborate hairstyles to entice and entrap as many men as possible during their youth. The aggressive stance the Vieille proposes finds conflicting interpretations in other late thirteenth-century works. In the *Dit des cornetes* the author compares a woman's horned hairstyle to the horns of a ram, showing that any attempt of a woman to be the initiator of amorous relationships renders her bestial and a dangerous threat to be suppressed. The fabliau *Tresces*, however, shows a woman taking the animal connotations of her hair to a literal level as she substitutes a donkey's ears, another woman's hair, and a horse's tail for her own hair to deceive her husband and end with complete domestic dominance.

Studying the animal presence in the language of these texts offers a new way to read them, situating them at the intersection of literature and culture. Critics readily recognize that the authors of some of these texts, like Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose*, insert their work into contemporaneous debates with broad social implications. Scholars have not as readily recognized other texts, like the *Régime du corps*, *Marie l'Egyptienne*, *Robert le Diable*, *Guillaume de Palerne*, or misogynistic poetry such as the *Dit des Cornetes* and the fabliau *Tresces*, recognized as participating in this same discourse and sometimes consider them as mere poetic exercises written for commission or pure entertainment. By looking at how these texts use hair as a means to connect the human to the animal, we have seen that these texts nonetheless participate, if sometimes indirectly, in larger discourses of women's sexuality, of noble sovereignty, of

religious practices of devotion, or of self-definition. Together, these readings show that unusual representations of hair in medieval texts are rarely gratuitous and that they connect humans and human behavior to animals without necessarily transforming them into animals. The animal comparisons, in turn, reveal an underlying anxiety about a changing society. The idea that animals are good to think with, attributed to Claude Lévi-Strauss, finds further currency in the works studied. Their subtle presence in human hair or on human bodies reveals a desire to interrogate human exceptionality, devotional practices, social identity, and dominance in relationships. These socio-cultural concerns may not always be the primary focus of the works; yet they infiltrate these texts in moments when the boundaries of the human body become less stable. The instability of the human becomes a vehicle for exploring the instability of thirteenth-century society.

In the future, it would be useful to look at a wider range of texts to determine to what degree the authors' examination of the various socio-cultural issues by means of rendering human hair bestial is representative of thirteenth-century literary practice. Bartholomaeus Anglicus represents but one exemplum of medieval encyclopedic texts, and health regimens of the thirteenth century owe much to those of the twelfth. The discussion on gender in chapter one, for example, would benefit from an examination of the twelfth-century Trotula texts attributed to a female Salernitan physician. Animals appear frequently in hagiographic stories like those studied in chapter two, and future work could examine if other saints' lives use animals and animal language as a way to create a space for devotion or to represent an access to the divine denied to most humans. It would likely be fruitful to study the use of animal hides in *Guillaume de Palerne* in conjunction with their consumption and preservation in a work like the *Roman de Renart* where humans continually hunt animals for their hides and where the narrators treat hides

ambiguously as both animal clothing and raw material destined for human clothing. Finally, comparisons of women to animals abound in misogynistic poetry, and the patterns studied in chapter four could likely be applied to a large selection of poetry villainizing and occasionally praising women that this study did not explore.

Examining how authors inscribe animal traits onto human protagonists is generalizable to other texts and readily lends itself to additional avenues of exploring how humans relate to the natural environment. This project focused on hair because of its visibility, its malleability, and its affiliation with both humans and animals; however future work could examine other body parts such as hands or feet. Authors write bestial traits onto human behavior as well, and several texts, including the *Roman de Silence*, *Robert le Diable*, *Marie l'Egyptienne*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*, emphasized nourishment practices, for example, alongside bestial physical descriptions. Whether the blurring between humans and animals is literal as in werewolf transformations, or figurative as when an author refers to a woman's hairstyle as ram's horns, this study reveals the importance of examining these moments and treating them as more than commonplace repetitions of tropes. Both today and in medieval literature, using language to dehumanize people often reveals an underlying anxiety or prejudice, because a text, no matter how frivolous or misogynistic it may appear, cannot be removed from the context in which it was written. Studying how these anxieties manifest in medieval works can perhaps help us better understand the attitudes and anxieties behind intentional and unintentional contemporary usage of animal discourse.





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