

# Sammlaren

Tidskrift för

svensk litteraturvetenskaplig forskning

Årgång 133 2012

*I distribution:*

Swedish Science Press

Svenska Litteratursällskapet

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Svenska Litteratursällskapet PG: 5367–8.

Svenska Litteratursällskapets hemsida kan nås via adressen [www.svelitt.se](http://www.svelitt.se).

ISBN 978-91-87666-32-4

ISSN 0348-6133

Printed in Sweden by  
Elanders Gotab, Stockholm 2013

# “Par foi, ans mes ne vi tel con”

## *Medieval Sexually Explicit Narrative: the Fabliau*

AV ULF MALM

### *I. Introductory Note.*

In 1893 Joseph Bédier defined the Old French *fabliau* in a manner still considered classic, frequently quoted and admired for its remarkable concision: “Les fabliaux sont des contes à rire en vers.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that certain aspects of Bédier’s description of the *fabliau*, particularly the one claiming that it is a genre aimed at the bourgeoisie have been disputed,<sup>2</sup> most commentators on the *fabliau* still insist on humor and/or parody as especially pertinent to the *fabliau*, thus stressing its qualities of entertainment, i. e. its *delectatio*, to speak with Glending Olsen.<sup>3</sup> Important here is of course the fact that the *fabliaux* themselves tend to stress amusement, enjoyment, and recreation as their main motivation. Thus they offer *delectatio*, but also a certain kind of *utilitas* as stressed by Olsen:

The refreshment of one’s spirit is a legitimate motive for certain kinds of discourse; it is the pragmatic justification of fictions which delight rather than profit, and the *fabliau* define what *utilitas* they have on this psychological ground.<sup>4</sup>

This is how the virtues of the *fabliau* are presented in “Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler”, one of the most remarkable ones within the genre and discussed more in detail *infra*:

Flabel sont or mout encorsé;  
maint denier en ont enborsé  
cil qui les content et les portent,  
Quar grant confortement raportent  
as enovrez et as oiseus,  
quant il n’i a genz trop noiseus,  
et nes a ceus qui sont plain d’ire,  
Se il oient bon flabeau dire,  
Si lor fait il grant alegance  
Et oublier duel e pesance,  
Et mauvaitié et pensement.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most influential critics/scholars writing about the *fabliau*, Pierre Nykrog, has insisted upon the parody found in the *fabliau* and particularly, then, the notion of “burlesque courtois”, i. e. the idea that the *fabliau* insists on mocking courtly literature by means of this particular brand of parody. This is achieved mainly by the clashing of styles which accounts for the obscene diction of so many *fabliaux*.<sup>6</sup> Nykrog is quite strongly opposed in this by Philippe Ménard who instead stresses the humor of the genre as a result of a particular application of the Virgilian wheel,<sup>7</sup> or more specifically “effets de dissonance voulus par les conteurs”.<sup>8</sup> In his seminal book Ménard also stresses the didactic dimension of the *fabliau*, i. e., really, its *utilitas*, although he does not use the term. He especially stresses the fact that “les auteurs de fabliaux ne se signalent jamais comme des ennemis de la morale. Point de provocation et de déclaration fracassante. Tout au contraire, l’intention didactique et morale est sans cesse présente.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Ménard also stresses the rich use of the world *esemple* (latin *exemplum*) in Old French with its ever present “valeur morale”.<sup>10</sup> To Jürgen Beyer the *fabliaux* sometimes work as miniature comedies developing a proverb, i.e they provide *utilitas* or even *exempla*.<sup>11</sup> Charles Muscatine, too, stresses the moral dimension of the *fabliau*, its ethics and what it means in the medieval French context and what this particular genre can tell us about this very period.<sup>12</sup> To Muscatine “the *fabliau* ‘cosmos’ is a particularly material one,”<sup>13</sup> the result of which is a specific kind of materialism brought to the fore in the genre’s keen interest in food, drink, and, especially sexuality. To Muscatine the *fabliau* is best seen

if not as the production of a social class, then as the expression of a subculture that, like the large and powerful contemporaneous subculture of Christian religion, runs across class lines and forms its membership on another principle.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the *fabliaux*

represent a valuesystem that coexists, along with an indeterminate number of other valuesystems, in a wide range of individuals in the culture. We might say that the individuals who share this system, by virtue of sharing it, constitute a cultural stratum, or subculture, that has, among other things, its own literature and its own history.<sup>15</sup>

I would argue that this particular system of values is perhaps most conspicuously brought to the fore in the abundant use of obscene diction and where the rich interplay between *utilitas* and *delectatio* is most profitable for study. More than scholars like Nykrog,<sup>16</sup> Ménard,<sup>17</sup> Muscatine,<sup>18</sup> and perhaps even more than E. Jane Burns<sup>19</sup> and Simon Gaunt<sup>20</sup> (who do not use these terms) I want to focus on obscene *utilitas*. Moreover, much like Jaques Ribard to whom “on a trop tendance à confiner [the *fabliau*] dans une fonction de pur divertissement”,<sup>21</sup> I wish to stress the qualities of the *exemplum*

and *utilitas* and its complex interplay with *delectatio* (a perspective hardly to be found in Ribard’s essay) in a number of *fabliaux* which are studied more in detail than is usually the case.<sup>22</sup> The reason is that I firmly believe that every text has to be approached primarily as a “literary universe” in itself.<sup>23</sup> Moreover with N. J. Lacy I wish to stress that “we should not expect to be able to make generalizations applicable to the *fabliaux* uniformly” but to begin by “respecting its richness and essential diversity”,<sup>24</sup> which, in my mind, calls for the careful and fairly exhaustive reading of texts chosen from a certain perspective.

Since my approach involves reading representative *fabliaux* in their entirety, with a particular emphasis on the explicit and gross description of sexuality and its interplay with the *utilitas-delectatio* dichotomy, my approach is, as far as I know, new to the field. It goes without saying that a project like the present one is in great need of constraint. For this reason, I have restricted myself to exploring the description of bawdily and obscenely expressed sexuality and its relation to the important *utile/utilitas-delectatio* dichotomy both in its own capacity, and in the light of the intertextually relevant entities of *Genesis*, *Proverbs*, *The Song of Songs*, misogynic stereotypes of female immoderate lust and deceit (both premedieval and medieval in origin and kind), selected hagiographic and theological writing, the doctrine of *fin ‘amors*,<sup>25</sup> and certain aspects of medieval naturalism.<sup>26</sup> Here I concur with Bloch:

Les fabliaux appartiennent à un corpus médiéval de textes latins et vernaculaires conçus à la fois pour l’instruction et le divertissement (i. e. *utilitas* and *delectatio*, our remark). A l’inverse d’autres formes littéraires de la même période, la noble “chanson de geste”, la lyrique courtoise, et le roman chevaleresque, qui veulent inspirer et émouvoir, ces oeuvres scandaleuses sont pleines de la célébration des appétits du corps: sexualité, économie, gastronomie, et aussi ce qui semble d’être le besoin humain de rire. [...] L’ethos des fabliaux rejoint le profond courant de naturalisme médiéval [...] est synonyme de “l’esprit gaulois” Ces textes appartiennent à cet “autre Moyen Age” en opposition à la culture officielle, et à la grandeur des enseignements de l’Eglise en matière d’argent, de nourriture et de sexualité.<sup>27</sup>

Greater limitation is obviously in order, but it will be presented in due course and when contextually motivated. Finally, a note on the translations: Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own, and I must emphasize that clarity of meaning has been my aim, not stylistic elegance and literary touch. Indeed, I must confess that the latter would have been beyond the scope of my competence insofar as English is not my native language, but since I hope to reach a wider audience than those fluent in Old French I have decided on this solution, nevertheless.

*II. Carnal Pleasure and the Battle between the Sexes. Four fabliaux.*

A house-wife is dreaming:

El dormir, vos di sanz mençonge  
 que la dame sonja un songe,  
 q'ele ert a un marchié annel.  
 Ainz n'oïstes parler de tel!  
 Ainz n'i ot estal ne bojon,  
 ne n'i ot loge ne maison,  
 changes, ne table, ne repair,  
 o l'an vandist ne gris ne vair,  
 toile de lin, ne draus de laine,  
 ne alun, ne bresil, ne graine,  
 ne autre avoir, ce li ert vis,  
 fors solemant coilles et viz.  
 Mais de cez i ot sanz raisons:  
 plaines estoient les maisons  
 et les chambres et li solier,  
 et tot jorz venoient colier  
 chargiez de viz de totes parz,  
 et a charretes et a charz.  
 Ja soit ce c'assez en i vient,  
 n'estoient mie por noiant,  
 ainz vandoit bien chascuns lo suen.  
 Por trente saus l'avoit en buen,  
 et por vint saus et bel et gent.  
 Et si ot viz a povre gent:  
 un petit avoit en deduit  
 de dis saus, et de neuf et d'uit.  
 A detail vandent et en gros:  
 li meillor erent li plus gros,  
 li plus chier et li miauz gardé.  
 La dame a par tot resgardé,  
 tant s'est traveilliee et penee  
 c'a un estal est asenee  
 qu'ele en vit un gros, un lonc,  
 si s'est apoiee selonc.  
 Gros fu darriere et gros par tot,  
 lo musel ot gros et estot;  
 se lo voir dire vos en voil,  
 l'an li poïst giter en l'oïl

une cerise de plain vol  
n'arestast, si venist au fol  
de la coille, que il ot tele  
com lo paleron d'une pele,  
c'onques nus hom tele ne vit.  
La dame bargigna lo vit,  
a celui demanda lo fuer:  
“Se vos estiiez or ma suer,  
n'i donriiez mains de deus mars.  
Li viz n'est povres ne eschars,  
ainz est li miaudres de Laranie,  
et si a coille loreanie  
qui bien fait a uan d'aumaje:  
prenez lou, si feroiz que saje,  
fait cil, demantres qu'an vos proie.  
– Amis, que vaudroit longue broie?  
Se vos i cuidiez estre saus,  
vos en avroiz cinquante saus;  
jamais n'en avroiz tant nuleu,  
et si donrai lo denier Deu,  
que Deus m'an doint joie certaine!  
– Vos l'avroiz, fait il, por l'estraïne,  
que ver vos ne me voil tenir.  
Et tot ce m'an puist avenir  
qu'a l'essaier m'an orez:  
je cuit qu'ancor por moi direz  
mainte oreison et mainte salme!”<sup>28</sup>

Here, the context is nothing like the ones of the Occitan countercode. The scene is rather one of everyday life and the persons belong rather within bourgeois circles, i. e. a social setting very much typical of so many a *fabliau*.<sup>29</sup>

Narratologically speaking, there is a narrative first person voice who is not identical with any of the participants of the actual plot — a textual arrangement very much typical for the genre as such<sup>30</sup> — opening and closing the text:

D'une aventure que je sai,  
que j'ai oï conter à Douai,  
vos conterai briement la some,  
q'avint d'une fame et d'un homme  
ne sai pas de chascun lo non.  
Preudefame ert, et il prodom,  
mais tant vos os bien afichier

que li uns ot l'autre mout chier.  
 [...]
   
 La nuit furent mout bien ensamble,  
 mais de ce lo tieng a estot  
 que l'andemain lo dist par tot,  
 tant que lo sot Johanz Bodiaus,  
 uns rimoières de flabliaus,  
 et por ce qu'il li sanbla boens,  
 si l'asembla avoc les suens:  
 por ce que plus n'i fist alonge,  
 fenist la dame ci son çonge.<sup>31</sup>

In bringing the text to an end the narrator discloses the historically sure identity of one of the greatest of *rimoières de flabliaus*, Jean Bodel. The textual arrangement is interesting as the latter is presented in the third person; thus there are two narrators, unless Jean Bodel refers to himself in both persons, not too likely an arrangement.

The Occitan countercode is strictly lyric; *cansó*, *tensó*, *cobla*, *partimen* or *porquiera*. The latter, being a subspecies of the *pastorela*, embodies not only the lyrical (i. e. being poetry) but also the epic (a story is being counted) and the dramatic (there are actual lines uttered or quoted). However, in our *porquiera* there is no exterior narrator present, the protagonist being the knight himself seeking [amorous] adventure.

In the Occitan countercode blatant sexuality reigns uncontested: texts such as “Eu venh vas vos, fauda levada”, “Us fotaires”, the *coblas* of *L'affaire Cornilh*, *La porquiera* could in a certain sense be labelled instances of what S. Marcus has described in terms of *Erototopia*, i. e. nothing but sexuality and sexual encounter[s] are to be found in the given text.<sup>32</sup> “Le sohait des Vez” is also a kind of *Erototopia*, not in a fictitious landscape like the one of the *pastorela/pastourelle* or the relatively absolute autonomy of the other Occitan texts where there is no specific temporal or local setting present within the text, but as a vivid and, in general terms, realistically described erotic dream, placing the text much nearer a conceived and possible reality. What is realistic is not only the fact that this woman has an erotic dream, but also the fact that dreams have a logic of their own and a wider frame of possibilities e.g. as regards phallic size and sexual prowess. The *fabliau* is quite rich in descriptions of more or less enormous organs, the most remarkable one being, perhaps, the one belonging to the apprentice in “Le fevre de Creil”:

Devers le retenant avoit  
 Plain poing e gros er.II.de lonc...  
 Tozjors en aguisant se tient

Por retrère delivrement,  
Et fu rebraciez ensement  
Come moines qui jete aus poires...  
Rouges come oingnon de Corbueil;  
Et si avoit si ouvert l’ueil  
Por rendre grant plenté de sève,  
Que l’en li péust une fève  
Lombarde très parmi lancier  
Que jà n’en lessast son pissier...  
Ne que une oue à gorgueter  
S’ele éust mengié un rain d’orge.<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly, “the only other comparable description is that of the prize merchandise”<sup>34</sup> in “Le sohait des Vez”. Of course, organs of this size are more “reasonable” in a dream context, or for that matter, in the “fictitious reality” of erotic literature in general or pornography in particular than in reality.<sup>35</sup>

In “Le sohait des Vez” the narrator takes considerable care in describing the reasons for the lady’s dream, how she, overjoyed, receives her husband with hugs, kisses, plenty of food and [unwisely] wine, eagerly looking forward to her reward:

Un jor ot li prodom a faire  
fors do país: en son affaire  
fu bien trois mois fors de la terre  
por sa marcheandise querre.  
[...]  
Ne cuidiez pas que il anuit  
sa fame, qant ele lo voit;  
tel joie con ele devoit  
en a fait, com de son seignor:  
ainz mais n’en ot joie gaignor.  
Qant l’ot acolé et baisié,  
[...]  
Mout ot la dame bon talant  
de lui faire auques de ses buens,  
car ele i ratandoit les suens  
et sa bienvue a avoir.<sup>36</sup>

Her husband falls asleep and her indignation turns into anger:

“Ha! fait ele, com or se prove  
au fuer de vilain puant ort,

qu'il deüst veillier, et il dort!  
 Mout me torne or a grant anui:  
 deus mois a que je avoc lui  
 ne jui, ne il avoques mi:  
 or l'ont deiable endormi,  
 a cui je l'otroi sanz desfance!"<sup>37</sup>

Despite her frustrated desire she decides not to wake him up because she does not wish him to think her a "glutton", "Mais ne l'esvoille ne ne bote,/ qu'i la tenist sanpres a glote"<sup>38</sup>), an obvious reference to the medieval standard notion of female sexual appetite and capacity as being far superior to that of the male. Her desire is momentarily quenched only to be aroused in sleep with her compensatory dream as a result.

The conceptual frame of her dream is conspicuously materialistic; sexuality is made a market and a market of a very special kind, which Bodel/the narrator stresses by means of enumeration and contrast:

Ainz n'oïstes parler de tel!  
 Ainz n'i ot estal ne bojon,  
 ne n'i ot loge ne maison,  
 changes, ne table, ne repair,  
 o l'an vandist ne gris ne vair,  
 toile de lin, ne draus de laine,  
 ne alun, ne bresil, ne graine,  
 ne autre avoir, ce li ert vis,  
 fors solemant coilles et viz.

Supply and demand govern the description which is strongly vivified by means of a detailed account of the marketing procedures and the differentiation of prices according to size and desirability. Conditions are harsh: poor women (as is normally the case within the *fabliau*, the setting is strictly heterosexual<sup>39</sup>) have to accept only small "pricks". This is not the case of our lady, who is obviously a woman of considerable means (and appetite!) and who starts bargaining for an enormous one. The message is twofold: money can buy anything desirable, even if the coveted object is a "prick", and, it takes an enormous "prick" to satisfy the needs of a lady such as this one. The vendor is somewhat recalcitrant, but finally they settle on a price and the lady raises her hand to confirm the purchase by means of the customary slap of palms, but of course — the context being that of the farcial *fabliau* — she strikes her husband in the face instead. She is back into disappointing reality:

Et la dame hauce la paume,  
si l'a si duremant esmee.  
Quant cuide ferir la pamee,  
son seignor fiert, mout bien l'asene  
de la paume delez la caine  
que li cinq doiz i sont escrit.  
La paume li fremie et frit  
del manton deci q'an l'oroille,  
et cil s'esbaïst, si s'esvoille  
et en son esveillier tressaut.  
Et la dame s'esvoille et saut,  
qui encor se dormist, son vuel,  
car sa joie li torne a duel.  
La joie en veillant li eslonge  
don ele estoit dame par çonge:  
por ce dormist, son voil, encor!<sup>40</sup>

The husband is surprisingly gentle when urging his wife to tell him the reason for her slapping him in the face, while she is at first unwilling to tell the embarrassing truth a possible reference to the well-known medieval cliché of woman as notoriously prone to suppress truth. If this is the case, the allusion to this female fault is nothing like the more or less vituperative outbursts of so many other medieval male commentators (and female ones, for that matter, e.g. Chaucer's Wife of Bath<sup>41</sup>):

“Suer, fait il, car me dites or:  
que vos songiez a cel cop  
que vos me donastes tel cop:  
Dormiez o veilliez doncques?  
– Sire, je ne vos feri onques,  
fait cele, nel dites jamais!  
– Tot par amor et tot en pais,  
par la foi que devez mon cors,  
me dites que vos sambla lors:  
ne lo laissez por nule rien!”<sup>42</sup>

Now she willingly(!) tells her dream, “et mout volantiers li reconté”,<sup>43</sup> and asks her husband's forgiveness which is no problem as he is aroused by her warm body, a fact described in no indirect terms as his excitement is accounted for by an explicit reference to his stirring member. The psychology is interesting as he is obviously not put off by her explicit account of the magnificent “pricks” for sale in her dream but more than ready to pardon her:

si fis comme fame endormie:  
 por Deu ne vos coreciez mie,  
 que se je ai folie faite,  
 et je m'an rant vers vos mesfaite,  
 si vos en pri merci de cuer!  
 – Par ma foi, fait il, bele suer,  
 je vos pardoin, et Deus si face!”  
 Puis l'acole estroit et enbrace,  
 et li baise la boche tandre;  
 et li viz li conmanche a tandre  
 que cele l'eschaufe et enchante.<sup>44</sup>

The references to God, sin and forgiveness are rendered *en passant*, profane sexuality being the uncontested topic. At first, the husband's reward for being so tolerant is not very great: having placed his erect member in her hand, he asks her what she thinks of it and is blatantly scorned:

“Suer, fait il, foi que me devez  
 ne se Deus d'anor vos reveste,  
 que vausist cestui a la feste,  
 que vos tenez en vostre main  
 – Sire, se je voie demain,  
 qui de teus en aüst plain cofre,  
 n'i trovast qui i meist offre,  
 ne qui donast gote d'argent:  
 nes li vit a la povre gent  
 estoient tel que uns toz seus  
 en vaudroit largement ces deus:  
 teus com li est, or eswardez  
 que la ne fust ja regardez  
 de demande prés ne de loin.<sup>45</sup>

Being something of a believer in “erotic *metron*” he good-humouredly asks her to make the best of the situation and to make do with his unimpressive “prick”, something she actually seems rather willing to do:

– Suer, fait il, de ce n'ai je soin,  
 mais pran cestui et lai toz çaus  
 tant que tu puisses faire miaus!”  
 [...]  
 La nuit furent mout bien ensamble,<sup>46</sup>

This text is remarkable not only for its very direct sexual language, a feature shared with a considerable number of other medieval texts, especially *fabliaux*,<sup>47</sup> but even more so because of its striking lack of fundamental misogyny. The wife’s sexual appetite is of course both very strong and taken for granted, but she is not scolded for it but treated rather in a sympathetic way. Accepting the husband’s attitude as the fundamental ideologic position of the text, we have to view the message to be something like “you have to adapt yourself to reality (female sexuality being stronger than male) and your given situation and cope with it as best you can. Obviously, the husband of our *fabliau* can not offer his wife dreamlike sexual bliss but humbly asks her to make do with his not too impressive “prick”, the implicit message being that they are both realists. The reason for her acceptance is not explicitly stated but it might be anything from actual affection for her husband to realism: she knows full well female plight in patriarchy.

Anyway, what makes this text less misogynic than so many other medieval ones dealing with female sexual appetite is its message of *ecce femina*, “frailty thy name is woman”, without condemnation, explicitly theological or not. The wife of this story is certainly one of the many “women on top”<sup>48</sup> and an obvious example of the general pattern of the *fabliaux* where “over fifty per cent of male-female conflicts shows the woman winning”.<sup>49</sup>

The concepts of *Dolssor conina* (to borrow Marcabru’s expression) and *Ecce femina* also govern “La Damoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre”<sup>50</sup> but apart from “foutre”, “vit” and “coille”, licentiousness is expressed by means of the use of imagery: “les métaphores utilisées à cette occasion (poulain, fontaine) permettent d’éviter toute dénomination courante des choses indicibles”.<sup>51</sup> However, sexuality is very much the core of the matter in this story where a young girl who cannot stand gross or obscene language is duped by a young hypocrite who, while pretending to be a “brother in spirit” to her, succeeds in making love to her.

The young girl is presented in strikingly harsh words directly in the opening lines of the text:

En iceste fable novele  
nos conte d’une damoisele,  
qui mout par estoit orgueilleuse  
et felonnesse et desdaigneuse:  
que – par foi, je dirai tout outre –  
ele n’oïst parler de foutre  
ne de lecherie a nul fuer,  
que ele n’aüst mal an cuer  
et trop en faisoit male chiere.<sup>52</sup>

The perspective is obviously one of moral judgment: she deserves to be criticized or even punished because of her faulty qualities, i. e. being somewhat unnatural as she cannot stand words like “foutre” or “lecherie”. The anonymous author’s perspective is most striking as it displays an obviously naturalistic point of view: sex is natural, hence hypocrisy must be condemned even in the case of a young girl. This attitude is strikingly close to that of *Le roman de la rose* where Jean de Meung makes Reason chide hypocrisy as to the “direct” vocabulary of sexual matters. Sex is natural, good, and actually the meaning of divine creation; thus there should be no restrictions as to its description, an attitude which makes hypocrisy downright sinful:

Coilles est biaux nons et si l'ains.  
 Si sont par foi coillon et vit,  
 Ainc nus plus biaux gaires ne vit  
 Et quant pour reliques m'oïsses  
 Coilles nommer, le mot prisses  
 Pour si bel et tant le prissasses  
 Que partout coilles aorassses  
 Et les baisasses en eglises  
 En or et en argent assises.  
 Je fis les moz et sui certaine  
 C'onques ne fis chose vilaine,  
 Et dieus, qui sages est et fis,  
 Tient a bienfait quanque je fis.  
 Comment? Par le cors saint omer,  
 N'oserai je mie nommer  
 Proprement les oeuvres mon pere?<sup>53</sup>

Of course there is a distinct difference between the two texts: in the *fabliau* there is no explicit mention of a religious context. Here, God is not referred to in order to prove the young girl’s unnaturalness. The context is strictly profane, which is, of course, the normal case in this genre. Perhaps you might say that the referential system is taken for granted and thus implicit.

Morale is further enhanced by the description of the young girl’s father, presented both as a “prodome” (gentleman) and a “vilain”(churl). Unorthodox as the narrator may be in his attack on the young girl’s hypocrisy, his moral standards certainly seem more run-of-the-mill when he criticizes the girl’s father for being too indulgent toward his daughter and her whims. She always has her way:

Et ses peres l'avoit tant chiere,  
 – por ce que plus enfanz n'avoit–

q’a son voloir trestoito faisoit:  
plus ert a li que ele a lui.  
[...]  
Et savez por quoi li prodom  
n’avoit sergent en sa maison?  
La damoisele n’avoit cure,  
por ce qu’ele ert de tel nature  
que en nul sen ne sofrist mie  
sergent qui nomast lecherie,  
vit ne coille ne autre chose.  
Et por ce ses peres ne ose  
avoir sergent un mois entier—  
s’an aüst-il mot grant mestier:  
[...]  
Mais sergent a prendre resoigne  
por sa fille que trop endure.<sup>54</sup>

Now the young man — “qui mout savoit borat et guile” — is introduced and readily convinces the good man (who must be the typical simpleton of the genre) that his cherished daughter could be in no better hands than his own. The trickster convinces the poor father by means of a spectacular mock reaction as the *vilain* unsuspectingly tells him of his daughter’s reaction when hearing gross words and obscenities:

Daviez prist sa boche a terdre,  
et puis crache autresi et moche  
com s’il aüst mangiee moche.  
Au vilain dist: “Ostez, biaux sire!  
Si vilain mot ne devez dire!  
Taisiez, por Deu l’esperitable,  
que ce est li moz au deiable:  
n’en parlez mais la o je soie!  
Por cent livres je ne voldroie  
veoir home qui en parlast  
ne qui lecherie nomast,  
que grant dolor au cuer me prant!”<sup>55</sup>

Hypocrite comedy is striking: farcial facial expression is combined with religious verbal code (both God and the Devil are mentioned) in order to emphasize and disclose David’s trickster mentality and deceitful intent.

The daughter having overheard their conversation readily makes up her mind, convinces her father — in no way unwilling — to take on David, as the young man is called.

She is so sure of his moral rectitude (or perhaps she is full of ruse as well, we are not told) that she tells her father that David can sleep with her when it is time to go to bed, the reason being “mout me sanble de boene foi / et que en boen lou ait esté!”<sup>56</sup> This argument — as striking as it is ridiculous (perhaps the young girl is not only a hypocrite but a fool as well — the narrator leaves us in suspense as to the actual reason) — leads to the young couple ending up in bed.

The description of the young girl is strikingly different when it comes to her physical appearance and the vocabulary used is rather that of courtly romance or troubadour poetry:

et Daviez s’ala gesir  
en la chanbre o la damoisele,  
qui mout ert avenanz et bele:  
blanche ot la char com flor d’espine:  
s’ele fust fille de raïne,  
si fust ele bele a devise.<sup>57</sup>

However, the text immediately returns to “fabliau normality”: “Daviez li a sa main mise / sor les memetes tot droit, / et demanda ce que estoit.”<sup>58</sup> The courtly attitude briefly reappears in the young girl’s answer: “Ce sont mes memeles, / qui mout par sont blanches et beles: / n’en i a nule orde ne sale.”<sup>59</sup> What is interesting here is the young girl’s need to justify what seems to be the very existence of her young bosom. Implicit here is her probable delight when being touched like this. Her defense is very much in line with Reason’s argument as to “coilles” and points to nature-given sex as inherently good. Like the Alisoun of “The Miller’s tale” who also favored direct approach<sup>60</sup> she appreciates blunt physical contact but unlike the former she stresses professed *decorum*. Obviously, the young girl of our *fabliau* here finds actual sexual intercourse to be more than all right as long as euphemism is the verbal code accompanying it. However, codal tension is stressed as the narrator continues his use of uncourtly language stressing the actual generic properties of the text:

Et Daviez sa main avale  
droit au pertuis desoz lo vandre,  
par o li viz el cors li entre,  
si santi les paus qui cressoient:  
soués et coiz encor estoient.  
Bien taste tot o la main destre,  
puis demande que ce puet estre.<sup>61</sup>

It is not only the the young girl who takes to euphemisms when talking about the genitals but the young man as well, not forgetting his tacticts for a moment:

“Par foi, fait ele, c’est mes prez,  
Daviet, la ou vos tastez,  
mais il n’est pas encor floriz.  
– Par foi, dame, ce it Daviz,  
n’i a pas d’erbe encor planté.  
Et que est ce en mi cest pré,  
ceste fosse soeve et plaine?  
Ce est, fait ele, ma fontaine,  
qui ne sort mie tot adés.  
– Et que est ce, ici après,  
fait Daviez, en ceste engarde?  
– C’est li cornerres qui la garde,  
fait la pucele, por verté:  
se beste entroit dedanz mon pré  
por boire en la fontaine clere,  
tantost cornerroit li cornerre  
por faire li honte et peor.  
[...]  
Lors li reprist a demander  
et ses choses a detaster,  
tant qu’el l’a par lo vit saisi  
et demande:”Que est ici,  
Daviet, si roide et si dur  
que bien devroit percier un mur?  
– Dame, fet cil, c’est mes polains,  
qui mout est et roides et sains,  
mais il ne manja des ier main.”  
Cele remest aval sa main  
si trove la coille velue:  
les deus coillons taste, et remue,  
si redemande: “Daviet,  
que est or ce, en ce sachet,  
fait ele, sont ce deus luisiaus?  
Daviz fu de respondre isniaus:  
“Dame, ce sont dui mareschal,  
qui ont a garder mon cheval,  
quant pest en autrui compagnie.  
Tot jorz sont en sa compeignie.  
de mon polain garder sont mestre.”<sup>62</sup>

Animal imagery underlines the literariness of the dialogue and the very picture of the female genitals as a meadow and the masculine ones as a young horse not only speaks of literary tradition — especially, then, the image of the penis as a palfrey, yet another example of the ancient connection between the horse and sexual appetite and prowess — but also of contemporary courtly literature and also of religious parody — the *hortus conclusus* of the *Canticus Canticorum*. The very concept of a meadow, a horse with guards, a trumpetblower and wild beasts would have presented a most efficient allusion to intertextuality to a *connoisseur* audience appreciating the tensions between code and countercode, not only the very use of this particular imagery in this very context but also the wordplay reaching its climax(!) when the young, and perhaps not that innocent, girl asks David to allow his palfrey to graze and drink water on her meadow:

– Davi, met lou en mon pré pestre,  
 ton biau polain, se Deus te gart.”  
 Et cil s’an torne d’autre part:  
 sor lo paignil li met lo vit.  
 Puis a la pucele dit,  
 qu’il ot torne desoz soi:  
 “Dame, mes polains muert de soi:  
 mout en a aüe grant poine!  
 – Va, si l’aboivre a ma fontaine,  
 fait cele, mar avras peor!”<sup>63</sup>

This actually makes the ordinary listener/reader even more uncertain as to her innocence, but, again, the narrator skillfully avoids making a precise point as regards this potentially crucial matter. The audience is kept in suspension, not as to what happens, but as to the young girl’s actual awareness of what is going on. Her very use of this particular imagery reveals a certain sophistication which might be interpreted in terms of ruse, scheme and hypocrisy masking youthful and perhaps, or even probably, conscious lust, but we are left without a definite answer, also when the narrator’s voice again is heard, already having described the young man’s advances in no uncertain terms, “Et cil s’an torne d’autre part: / sor lo paignil li met lo vit”, now to close the story by means of circular composition, the verbal code, of course, still being that of blunt and explicit *fabliau* “telling it like it is”, thus breaking the touch of allegorical description, this “web of words that in another context would signify concepts associated with chivalric romance (the incongruity is deliberate and humorous”<sup>64</sup>) which is one obvious effect of the lovers’ conversation. Reality is firmly restored:

A tant li met el con lo vit  
si fait son boen et son talant,  
si qu’ele nel tient pas a lant,  
que qatre foiz la retorna!  
Et se li cornierres groça,  
si fu batuz de deus jumaus!  
A icest mot faut li flabliaus.<sup>65</sup>

Striking, here, is the author’s/narrator’s quite skillful juxtaposition of the two codes, his own, “li met el con lo vit”, stressing David’s performance, “si qu’ele nel tient pas a lant, / que qatre foiz la retorna” and the “pseuo-courtly one”, now tinged with a distinctly scatological touch, a fitting end to this exposition of the tension between hypocrisy and nature, “Et se li cornierres groça, si fu batuz de deus jumaus!”

This tension also governs one of the most spectacular of *fabliaux*, “Le chevalier qui fist parler les cons”, the climax of which would be the following passage:

En la chanbre ou cil se dormoit  
entra enz, tranblant comme fueille;  
a l’einz qu’ele pot se despueille,  
lez lui se couche, si l’estent.  
Et quant li chevaliers la sent,  
de mainteant s’en esveilla  
et durement se merveilla:  
“Qui est ce, fait il, delez moi?  
– Sire, nel tenez a desroi”,  
fait cele, qui fu simple et quoie,  
“quar la contesse m’i envoie.  
Une de ses puceles sui;  
ne vos ferai mal ne ennui,  
ainz vos tastonerai le chief.  
– Par foi, ce n’est mie grief!”  
fait li chevaliers, qui l’enbrace.  
La bouche li baise et la face,  
et li tastone les mameles,  
qu’el avoit mout blanches et beles;  
et sor le con la mein li mist.  
Et emprés li chevaliers dist:  
“Sire cons, or parlez a moi!  
Ge vos vueil demander por quoi  
vostre dame est venue ci.  
– Sire, ce dit li cons, merci!

Quar la contesse l'i envoie  
 por vos faire solaz et joie,  
 ce ne vos quier ge ja celer.”  
 Quant cele oï son con paller,  
 estrangement fu esperdue;  
 du lit sailli trestote nue,<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps even more spectacular as to what the “cunt” answers is the following version:

Je suis cousine et damoisele  
 Ma dame, qui a vous m'envoie  
 Pour vous faire solas et joie;  
 Molt volentiers i fust venue  
 Ne fust por estre aparceüe.  
 De moi pouez vostre bon faire  
 Einsis con il vous vourra plaire.”  
 [...]  
 “C'est li cons qui vous atant ci  
 Que vous maintenant le foutez  
 Et en faites vo privautez,  
 Et se mervoille durement  
 Que vous alez tant atendent,  
 Car por autre riens n'iert venue  
 Ma dame, qui lez vos gist nue.”<sup>67</sup>

How is this at all possible? Before commenting on the passages quoted above and in order to answer this question we have to examine briefly what is actually treated in the text before this remarkable encounter which really works as something of a *peripeteia*.

Among the critics there has been a certain amount of dispute as to the parodic content of this *fabliau* (and others). To Nykrog it is a question of “un véritable roman breton grossier”<sup>68</sup> whereas Ménard claims that it is impossible to find “un désir systématique de parodier les oeuvres d'inspiration courtoise”<sup>69</sup>, although he concedes the existence of “un vague souvenir des contes arthuriens “où l'on voit des fées au bain”<sup>70</sup>. Agreeing, in principle, with Ménard, I do however find it hard not to recognize Arthurian context, in this case “damsels or fairies in distress”, as intertextually relevant. The absence of a penchant for systematic parody of courtly literature among the writers of *fabliaux* does not impede the possibility of an occasional reference to an intertext well-known to a competent audience.

The text opens with an unusually lengthy metapoetic introduction where the narrative voice stresses the *fabliau* as recreation:

Flablel sont or mout encorsé:  
 maint denier en ont enborsé  
 cil qui les content et les portent,  
 quar grant confortement raportent  
 as enovrez et as oiseus,  
 quant il n’ a genz trop noiseus;  
 et nes a ceus qui sont plan d’ire,  
 se il oient bon flabeau dire,  
 si lor fait il grant alegance,  
 et oublier duel et pesance  
 et mauvaitié et pensement.<sup>71</sup>

The knight is initially described as a more or less destitute knight errant who has set forth for adventure but who seems to be totally out of luck. In order to obtain food and drink he has to pledge even his armour, something utterly disgraceful for a knight and a formidable obstacle when the news of a tournament to be presently held reaches him. Selling his master’s palfrey, his squire, Huet, finds a temporary solution to the problem. Travelling across the country they strike upon three young damsels naked in the bath, resembling, through their beauty fairies: “de beauté resanbloient fees”, [...] “les femes nues, / qui tant avoient les chars blanches, / les cors bien faiz, les braz, les hanches”.<sup>72</sup> Huet steals their valuable garments, the damsels — now in obvious distress — break into tears and turn to the knight for help. Being perfectly courtly — a fact stressed by the damsels themselves — he promptly makes his furious valet (a true *vilain*) return the stolen clothes to them. Now they offer the knight a reward. So far, this story, with the exception of a possible reference to materialism (the knight being destitute and hungry, i. e. preoccupied with wordly matters — a trait distinctly in line with the generic properties of the *fabliau*, but not the courtly romance), is perfectly in line with the patterns and plot of Arthurian romance. However, now the code is drastically changed as regards both lexicon and content: the damsels prove to be endowed with the powers of magic, i. e. fairies, but of such a remarkable kind as to make the knight embarrassed, suspecting them to be out of their minds:

La plus mestre parla avant,  
 quar des autres en ot l’ostroi:  
 “Sire chevalier, par ma foi,  
 ne volons pas, que il est droiz,  
 que vos ainsi vos ailloiz.  
 Richement nos avez servies,  
 rendues nos avez les vies,  
 si avez fait comme preudom.

Et ge vos donrai riche don,  
 et sachiez que ja n'i faudroiz.  
 Jamais en cel liu ne venroiz  
 que toz li monz ne vos enjoie,  
 et chascuns fera de vos joie,  
 et si vos abandoneront  
 la gent trestot quanqu'il aront:  
 ne porroiz mais avoir poverte.  
 – Dame, ci a riche deserte,  
 fait li chevaliers, grant merciz!  
 – Li miens dons ne riert pas petiz,  
 fait l'autre pucele en après.  
 Ja n'ira mes ne loig ne prés,  
 por qu'il truisse feme ne beste  
 et qu'el ait deus elz en la teste,  
 s' il daigne le con apeler,  
 qu'il ne l'escoviegne parler:  
 iteus sera mais ses eürs;  
 de ce soit il tot aseürs  
 que tel n'en ot ne roi ne conte.”  
 Adonc ot li chevaliers honte,  
 si tint la pucele por fole.  
 Et la tierce enprés reparole  
 si dist au chevalier: “Beaus sire,  
 savez vos que ge vos vieng dire?  
 Quar bien est raison et droiture  
 que, se li cons par aventure  
 avoit aucun enconbrement  
 qu'il ne respondist maintenant,  
 li cus si respondroit por lui,  
 qui qu'an eüst duel ne ennui,  
 si l'apelessiez, sanz aloigne.”  
 Donc ot li chevaliers vergoigne,  
 qui bien cuide que gabé l'aient  
 et que por noient le delaient.<sup>73</sup>

Now, the text has broken away from most things courtly, giving parody and gross humor as normative constituents for this *fabliau*. When the first damsel speaks, she uses words like “richement”, “servies”, “preudom”, “riche don”, “enjoie”, “joie”, concepts well rooted in the codal system of courtly literature.

However, the second lady delivers a different kind of speech where “feme”, (the word for ordinary woman in Old French) or “beste”(!) — a fundamentally misogynne

constellation (woman and beast as “equals”) — and “con” clash not only with the first damsel’s courtly wording but also with her own “eürs” (magic power) creating an emphasized tension between courtly and uncourtly verbal codes.

When the third damsel speaks, scatology is introduced, “li cus si respondroit por lui”, completely ruining what could possibly be left in terms of courtly code. Added to the conceptual two “mouths” of woman, the “ordinary one” and the vagina<sup>74</sup> is a third one, the anus, stressing the fundamental uncourtliness not only of the text but possibly of the female lower bodily parts as well. So far, the text is not clear on this point.

Initially indignant but now laughing, the knight now tells his valet what has happened and is scorned by him for having been so foolish; without grumbling the knight admits that Huet is probably right.

Now, a priest enters the stage, so to speak. He is a “worthy” representative of perverted priesthood, rich and very avaricious. He is also a lecher and in no way faithful to his vows — i. e. the very typical representative of “fallen clergy”, a medieval cliché, if any, frequent in the *fabliau* and literature related to it, the most celebrated examples being, of course, *Canterbury Tales* and *Il Decameron*. He offers the knight and his valet his company and to share his wordly goods with him.

Narrative economy is striking here: the priest displays his dishonesty and inadvertently exemplifies the authenticity, as it were, of the first damsel’s promised gift. For a moment the story is back into the magic realm of courtly romance: “Sire, fait il, se Dieus m’aïst, / *les fées* (my italics) distrent tot voir!” Huet tells his master to address “le con de cele grant jument”<sup>75</sup>. The knight follows his advise and is answered promptly:

Dist li chevaliers: “Ge l’ostroi.”  
Maintenant li commence a dire:  
“Sire cons, ou va vostre sire?  
Dites le moi, n’en mentez mie!  
– Par foi, il vait veoir s’amie,  
fait li cons, sire chevaliers!  
Si li porte de bons deniers:  
dis livres de bone monoie,  
qu’il a ceinz en une corroie  
por achater robe mardi.”  
Et quant li prestres entendi  
le con qui parole si bien,  
esbahiz fu sor tote rien;  
enchantez cuide estre et traïz.<sup>76</sup>

The priest, in his terror, throws everything to the ground and runs off, even leaving his horse. Of course, nothing of all this is in accordance with courtly adventure, which is

actually turned upside down giving plain farce as an obvious result; in the representative courtly romance the paradigmatic protagonist/hero would never stoop to attacking a priest, no matter the moral qualities (or lack of such) of the latter who in this case actually proves to be yet another example of the stereotype priest not observing the monastic rules of poverty and chastity.

Nor is chastity the name of the game when the narrator climaxes his story by confronting the knight and his valet with the countess and the count. The lady, “qui n’ert fole ne jangleresse”<sup>77</sup> is introduced, and her inclinations are immediately put to exhibition:

Ausi l’enbrace la contesse:  
plus volantiers que n’oïst messe  
le baisast vingt foiz prés a prés,  
se li contes ne fust si prés!<sup>78</sup>

Kissing a guest of distinction is well within the procedure of feudal and courtly code, but hardly wishing to do so 20 times. The lady is obviously already at this stage aroused by the knight. Unable to visit the knight’s bed herself, she sends one of her attending damsels there, the probable reason being an attempt at the sexual satisfaction of listening to her damsel’s description of her sexual encounter with the knight:

En une chanbre a grant delit  
li a fait faire un mout bel lit;  
toz seus se dort et se repose.  
Et la contesse a chief de pose  
apele une seue pucele,  
la mielz vaillant et la plus bele.  
A conseil li dist: “Bele amie,  
alez, et si ne vos poist mie,  
avuec le chevalier gesir  
tot belement et par loisir,  
dont nos amons mout la venue.  
Lez lui vos couchiez tote nue,  
si le servez s’il est mestiers.  
G’i alasse mout volentiers,  
ja nel laissasse por la honte –  
ne fust por mon seignor le conte,  
qui n’est encor pas endormiz.”<sup>79</sup>

The countess is no hypocrite thus confirming her own desire and the young damsel simply has to obey against her own will and does what she is told to do with the fright-

ening result of hearing her own “cunt” disclosing the lady’s scheme (cf. the quotation *supra*). The poor young woman tells her disbelieving mistress what happened. The latter is disappointed, superficially because of her damsel’s failure in “serving” the knight, and at heart (probably) for not getting the expected *fabliau* within the story. The tone here is pseudo-courteous, the idea being that the countess views her damsel’s behavior as lacking in courtliness, thus maintaining and further stressing the text’s parodic and fundamentally countercode character; courtly hospitality certainly does not imply sexual service! It is easy to imagine the reactions of an audience familiar with courtly romance, laughter by those appreciating *grivoiserie* and shock by those of more delicate tastes. *Lascivia feminae* is again emphatically stressed.

When the countess learns that the knight the morning after wishes to set forth on his journey without further delay, she promptly decides to make him stay in order to learn the truth about his extraordinary gift and no doubt also satisfy her lascivious curiosity. As she opts for a wager as a means of finding the truth in this matter, there is also a hint at a psychological need for vengeance governing her action: the knight has (unwittingly) “denied” her the satisfaction she hoped for and is to suffer defeat at her hands.

At the morning meal she dares the knight to prove in a wager that he really is the knight that can make the “cunts” talk. Her speech is a strange mixture of courtly code and its opposite as she in no way shuns gross language:

Et quant ce vint enprés disner,  
 Si comenciereent a parler  
 Li chevalier de maint affaire.  
 Mais cele, qui ne se pot taire,  
 la contesse, parla en haut:  
 “Seignors, fait el, se Dieus me salt,  
 j’ai oï paller chevaliers,  
 serganz, borgois et escuiers,  
 et aventures aconter,  
 mais nus ne se porroit vanter  
 d’une aventure qu’ooï hier!  
 Qu’il a çaienz un chevalier  
 qui tot le mont a sormonté,  
 quar il a si grant poesté  
 qu’il fait a lui le con paller,  
 teus hom si fait mout a loer!  
 Et sachiez bien, par sait Richier,  
 c’est li chevaliers qui vint hier!”<sup>80</sup>

The lady is not only lascivious, she is also full of deceit (another misogynous cliché) and fully determined to win the wager, even if foul play is needed. Now it is a matter more of getting the upper hand rather than satisfying initial curiosity, i. e. woman against man in rather curious a battle of the sexes. Here the “cunt” and “arse” are described rather as *characters* and allies to the knight:

Le chevaliers le con apele:  
 “Sire cons, fait il, or me membre  
 que quist vostre dame en sa chanbre,  
 ou el ala si tost repondre.”  
 Mais le cons ne li pot respondre,  
 qui la geule avoit encombre  
 et du coton bien estoupee,  
 qu’il ne pooit trot ne galot.  
 Et quant li chevaliers ce ot  
 qu’il n’a au premier mot pallé,  
 autre foiz le ra apelé;  
 mais li cons ne li pot mot dire.  
 [...]  
 Le cul apele maintenant,  
 si le conjure et si li prie  
 que tost la verite li die  
 du con, qui parole ne muet.  
 Ce dit li cus: “Quar il ne puet,  
 qu’il a la gueule tote plaine  
 ne sai de queton ou de laine,  
 que ma dame orainz i bouta,  
 quant en sa chanbre s’en entra.  
 Mais se li cotons estoit hors,  
 sachiez que il parleroit lors.”<sup>81</sup>

The count tells his wife to remove the cotton from her “cunt” which enables the latter to reveal the dirty trick the strikingly uncourtly lady has tried to pull and she is brought to immediate ridicule and shame.

How is this to be interpreted? Is this an obvious instance of gross *delectatio* pure and simple, or is there anything more to the matter than its obvious character of an “outrageously vulgar”<sup>82</sup> dirty story? To E. Jane Burns the countess of this *fabliau* is of the opinion that “the vagina should speak for women not men”;<sup>83</sup> i. e. the countess questions the sexual control of men over women described in this text. Burns makes the countess into something of a “proto-feminist” speaking up for women and their right to control their own bodies.

If this is the case, the *fableor* certainly is not on the side of the countess as she is silenced by her husband and the other knights roaring with laughter; the message no doubt being that woman (even if she is countess) should know her place, i.e. allow masculine control over her, her speech and sexuality. Also, the description of the countess as being lascivious and eager to come out on top, even by the use of deceit, efficiently undermines any “proto-feminist” tendency hidden beneath the surface of the text. If her object at all is to revenge her ridiculed maid by scorning the knight, her failure is so spectacular as to prevent any interpretation but one unfavorable to her; man is left on top.

This *fabliau* opens as obvious *delectatio*, as the initial parody of certain romance ingredients no doubt are meant to amuse the audience, rather than to question romance *per se*, e.g. by singling out its negative or ridiculous qualities (which would mean *utile*). This is also the case in the episode where the maid visits the knight in bed; the idea of her “cunt” speaking being so extraordinary as to give plain *delectatio* as its obvious result.

However, as the countess acts, *delectatio* gradually gives way to *utile*: the audience being served yet another “sermon” on lascivious and spiteful woman, an *exemplum* on how to deal with her: she should be forced to shut up. This insistence on control must be interpreted as fundamentally *utile*, the *fableor*’s introductory reference to recreation non-withstanding, even if form now and then depends on *delectatio* as a narrative strategy.

Is this mixture of *utile* and *delectatio* also pertinent to the structure of the other two texts discussed *supra*? In our reading of “Le souhait des vez” we stressed the absence of misogyny (explicit or implicit), its obvious tendency “to tell it like it is”. Certainly, woman’s sexual urge is strong, perhaps even overwhelming, but this is not something to be condemned but to be accepted, even if woman should come out on top. There is obvious *delectatio* also in this *fabliau*: the content of the wife’s dream, the very thought of a market of more and less impressive “pricks”, the farce ending with the wife accidentally unintentionally slapping her husband’s face and the final conversation with its mixture of abuse and tenderness. However, the husband’s reference to reality and his wife’s reaction to it, comic as they may be, certainly display more to the story than mere *delectatio*; the reasonable frame of reference for a stance like the husband’s no doubt is *utile*.

This non-misogynist treatment of female sexual desire under the sign of *utile* is reflected elsewhere in the *fabliau corpus*, as “lovemaking is praiseworthy, because it makes you completely forget poverty, boredom, and pain”;<sup>84</sup> the reason being: “Quar jone fame peüe / Sovent vouldroit estre foutue”, and “Seignor, qui les bons cons savez, / Qui savez que li cons est tels / Que il demande sa droiture, Foutez assez tant comme il dure”.<sup>85</sup>

There is even an instance of possible narrative sympathy with female sexual plight when the delicacy of a young girl is contrasted with the roguish roughness of the man penetrating her:

Au con trover mie ne faut,  
Lo vit i bote roidement:  
"Vaslez, tu quiers trop durement,"  
Fet la pucele qui sospire.<sup>86</sup>

This attitude is very different from that of so many *fabliaux*, not to mention *pastourelles*, where sexual violence, even rape is treated as not offending the system of values.<sup>87</sup> It is also a distinct instance of *utile*, serving to demonstrate a matter of obvious concern to the *fableor*.

In a rewarding study on sexual language and human conflict in the *fabliau* Sarah Melhado White stresses the penis being "a kind of totem"<sup>88</sup> (magnification working as the governing principle). She reads this text as a merger of realism (female dissatisfaction and feeling of deprivation) and unrealistic male wishful thinking. She also sees the story as the illustration of one woman's extravagant wish and one "equally extravagant wish in men, the wish for a phallus so large and inexhaustible as to realize the dreams of even the hungriest partner, an unreal, omnipotent penis, envied by male and female alike";<sup>89</sup> an obvious instance of *utile* (then, by means of superficial *delectatio*), although Melhado White does not discuss the text in these terms, referring instead to Freudian sexual psychology.<sup>90</sup> To E. Jane Burns, this *fabliau* voices a compensatory female dreamworld where a certain woman is allowed sex on her own terms, to choose a partner, a "prick" (an enormous one, of course) freely and also to choose when to have sex and not to be dependent on her husband in these matters.<sup>91</sup>

To S. Gaunt the wife's dream is about "men as appendages to dildoes".<sup>92</sup> Gaunt is very precise in his wording and I can do no better than to quote him directly:

a penis is not the symbol of man's authority over women and therefore the material sign of the phallus, but rather it is a more or less satisfactory tool with which women can satisfy their sexual needs. The text seems to ask: who needs men if you can have a penis without one? Or even more subversely: whose penis is this anyway? [...] In the dream of *Le Sobait*, the woman can have as many penises as she wants, provided she has the money. This *fabliau*, in fantasizing that penises may be disembodied and bought for a price, either singly or in bulk, challenges the entire edifice on phallic thought.<sup>93</sup>

Although stressing somewhat different aspects of the text in question, the two respective readings by Burns and Gaunt confirm our own in as much as they implicitly support our interpretation of it as an *essample* (the Old French term for *exemplum*), i. e.

as a text charged with *utilitas*. The question will be: what might an audience (and not necessarily an all-masculine one<sup>94</sup>) learn from it? The answer is the obvious one: more knowledge about woman and her sexuality. Bearing in mind the well-accepted medieval concept of woman as highly, or even excessively, sexual, a fact which is not likely only to have determined men’s views on women, but also women’s views on themselves, their urges and needs. There is an obvious lesson to be learnt from this *fabliau*: it is all very well (and natural) for a woman to dream about huge “pricks” and sexual satisfaction on her own terms, but she and her *moitié*, nevertheless have to make do with reality.

It seems reasonable to consider the two texts discussed so far as mainly structured by means of *utilitas*, but matters seem a bit more complicated as regards the *fabliau* about the damsel who could not stand the word “fuck”. Is the text rendered *supra* an example of *delectatio*, pure and simple, or *utilitas* or a combination of the two? The main reason for venturing an interpretation focussing on *delectatio* is of course the remarkable and often hilarious dialog between the damsel and David, the parody of romance discourse being crucial for such a reading. This hilarity is stressed in a version discussed by Gaunt and where “the damsel is not at all in control of the discourse she is using” [...] using a metaphor which is more vulgar than what she wishes to avoid naming”:<sup>95</sup>

Sor ses mameles mist sa mein.  
 “Qu’est ce, fist il, por saint Germain?”  
 La pucele sanz contredit,  
 Li dist: “Frere, se Deus m’aïst,  
 Ce sont.II. coilles de mouton,  
 Neant certes ne vos me[n]ton,  
 Fait ele, qui pendent iqui.”<sup>96</sup>

The probable effect of wording such as this one will be the laughter of *delectatio*, as far as the likely audience is concerned, but what happens, if we, with Gaunt, read the the text as describing a young woman having sex on terms of her own?<sup>97</sup>

Sire, por Dieu, le roi celestre,  
 Dites moi que ce puet ci estre?  
 Bele, fet il, c’est mes poulains,  
 Qui mout par est de grant bien plains.  
 Plus taste avant, si a sentues  
 Unes grandes coilles velues.  
 ‘Et qu’est ce ci, por saint Elaine?  
 – Douce, c’est li sas a l’avaine:  
 Ne vueil mie estre desgarnis.  
 – Sire, mout estes bien apris.”<sup>98</sup>

This strange mixture of courtly code, plain and even gross language works as something of a code enabling young David to advance further in his project of seduction. Gaunt comments:

What the damsel appears to be seeking is either a means of having sex without talking about it, or training a lover to talk in a way which she finds arousing. [...] The damsel is in control here: she is not the unwitting victim of a cunning man. This *fabliau* need not be read as the tale of an aristocratic woman suffering at the hands of a ruthless man because of her prudery, but rather as a text in which a young woman has sex on her own terms.<sup>99</sup>

To me this tastes more of *utilitas* than of *delectatio*: again we have a text about female sexuality on the woman's own terms. This dimension of *utilitas* is even more pronounced in a version concluding in the following terms:

Par cest essanple monstrer vueil  
 Que femes n'aient point d'orgueil  
 De foutre paller hautement,  
 Quant il foutent igalement:  
 Mieldres raison est que se haucent.  
 Teus en parolent qui l'essaucent,  
 Quar molt a entre faire et dire!  
 Mais li cus plus qui corde tire;  
 Por sa fille au vilain le di,  
 Qui tantost si se converti  
 Que le poulain au bacheler  
 Fist a sa fontaine abrever.<sup>100</sup>

This goes very well with the harsh wording used by the *fableor* when commenting on the young damsel's ways and manners in our version presented *supra*. The fact that this *fabliau* survives in five manuscripts preserving three versions,<sup>101</sup> the second of which being the one discussed by us *supra*, might of course complicate matters as regards *utilitas* vs. *delectatio*. However, taken together, these versions shows a more pronounced oscillation between *utile* and *delectatio* than is the case as regards the other two texts of our concern here; the reason being the dialog between the damsel and her partner constituting the bulk of the text, no matter the version. Nevertheless, we have yet another *essanple* (!) here; the "formula" of which would be *ecce homo et femina*, yet another instance of the *fableor* working with superficial *delectatio* and factual *utilitas*.

Then, what is the audience supposed to learn from so remarkable a text as the much-commented "Berangier au long cul"? To E. Jane Burns, "Berangier au long cul" is essentially about anatomical knowledge, about what might happen to a man so ignorant as to not know the difference between *con* and *cul*.<sup>75</sup> His failure to correctly identify

his wife’s genitals makes him vulnerable to humiliation, the result of which being an outcome with his wife firmly on top. She actually wears the pants with such daring as to make love to her paramour in front of her husband; an outrage that the cuckolded husband, for fear of the “long-assed” knight, dare not try to avenge. To Burns the root of the husband’s misconception and subsequent downfall is “the fabliau’s tendency to erase female genitalia by imposing the model of a male<sup>102</sup> asshole”,<sup>103</sup> the result of which being the husband believing “unknowingly that his wife’s anatomy should reflect his exactly”.<sup>104</sup> Burns’s reading of this *fabliau* is no doubt rewarding, but with Gaunt<sup>105</sup> I am sceptical to this *fabliau* describing more than the foolishness of *one single man*. To me it deals less with what men in general know about female genital anatomy than with the ignorant stupidity of a particular man in a given context. However (and more importantly to us here), Burns’s reading actually brings to the fore its *utile* properties.

The same is true of Gaunt’s reading which stresses less anatomical misconception and more unstable gender as structuring meaning. Gaunt concentrates on the fact that there are two versions (and three manuscripts) of “Berangier” that differ considerably as regards the importance of class. One of the versions dwells at length on the conflict between noble values and peasant ones, whereas the other one pays almost no attention to it.<sup>106</sup> Briefly commenting on Nykrog’s reading of “Berangier”,<sup>107</sup> Gaunt asks if the nobles in the audience presumedly laughing at the peasant being humiliated by his wife could also have been blind to gender being upset. Then, Gaunt, too, stresses the text as *essanple*; again this is done implicitly as such terminology is not directly used.

The version of the text chosen for our reading opens in the following interesting way:

Tant ai dit contes et flabiaus  
 que j’ai trouvé, viez et noviaus:  
 ne finai passez sont dui an!  
 Foi que je doi a seint Johan,  
 ne cuit que g’en face mais nul,  
 fors de Berangier au lonc cul  
 n’avez vos mie oï encore.  
 Mais, par mon chief, g’en dirai ore  
 si tost que ne tarderai gaire!<sup>108</sup>

Again, we have a *fableor* who identifies himself by name, Guerins (Garin<sup>83</sup>) but who — surprisingly — boasts of having been so prolific at his “trade” as to have grown tired of it, declaring that, now, — with the exception of this very one, “Berangier au lonc cul” — it is time to stop. This creates rather an ambiguous touch to the tale from the outstart: *delectatio* or *utilitas*, or a combination of the two?

Garin opts for dichotomic contrast as his main structuring device, when starting the story proper:

Oiez que Guerins velt retraire  
 que il avint en Lombardie,  
 ou la gent n'est gaires hardie,  
 d'un chevalier qui ot pris feme,  
 ce m'est vis, une gentil dame,  
 fille d'un riche chastelain.  
 Et cil estoit filz d'un vilain,  
 d'un usirier riche et comblé,  
 qui mout avoit et vin et blé,  
 brebiz et vaches; et deniers  
 ot a mines et a setiers.  
 Et li chastelains li devoit  
 tant que paier ne le pooit,  
 ainz dona a son fil sa fille.<sup>109</sup>

The conceptual frame is built around *courtoisie* and *vilainie*, “chevalier”, “une gentil dame”, “chastelain” and “vilain”, “usurier”, respectively; distinct references both to intraliterary features of both troubadour poetry and courtly romance and extraliterary sociohistorical reality, i. e. the decline of nobility and ensuing marital *mésalliance* on economic grounds, the result of which being shame and loss of values, decay. Our *fableor* is quite insistent here.

Ainsi bons lignaiges aville  
 et li chastelain et li conte  
 declinent tuit et vont a honte:  
 se marient bas por avoir,  
 si en doivent grant honte avoir  
 et grant domaige, si ont il.  
 Li chevalier mauvais et vill  
 et coart issent de tel gent,  
 qui covoiwent or et argent  
 plus qu'il ne font chevalerie:  
 ainsi est largesce perie,  
 einsi dechiet enor et pris!<sup>110</sup>

The literary intertext is quite obvious, and especially so to a noble or at least sophisticated audience (e.g. clerics with wordly tastes), as “largesce”, “enor” and “pris” taste not only of the troubadour poetry of Marcabru and his followers, but also of chivalric

romance, e.g. “Le Chevalier au lion” by the acknowledged master of the genre, Chrétien de Troyes, and their insistence on the decline of courtly values.

The dichotomy considered to structure the text as pointed out *supra*, also determines the continued description of the lady (embodied *courtoisie*) and her lord (embodied *vilainie*), the latter being a true glutton, contemptuous of those inferior to him in [acquired] rank. He is also an obvious coward and he even stoops to lying pretense when his lady tries to chastize him verbally by referring to her impressive ancestry: “Donc li ramentoit son paraige / ou tant a vaillanz chevaliers: / “As armes sont hardiz et fiers, / a sejourner n’amoient rien!”:<sup>111</sup>

Li chivaliers amoit repos,  
il ne prisoit ne pris ne los  
ne chevalerie deus auz;  
tartes amoit et flaons chaux,  
et mout despisoit gent menue.  
[...]  
“Dame fait il, g’ai bon renon:  
n’avez nul si hardi parent  
que ge n’aie plus hardement  
et plus valor et plus proece.  
Ge sui chevaliers sanz perece,  
le meillor trestot, par ma mein!  
Dame, vos le verroiz demain,  
se mes enemis puis trover!”<sup>112</sup>

Again, Garin uses acknowledged terms belonging to courteous vocabulary, this time allowing one of the protagonists to include them in his speech: “valor” and “proece”. Now ensues quite a detailed description of what happens when the “knight *vilain*” stages his fraud. Obviously, Garin knows full well his chivalric romance and how to use it to his own advantage as a narrator. Thus, the description of the “knight *vilain*” preparing himself to set forth for *aventure* could have been taken directly from authentic romance:

Et l’endemain, l’enjornant,  
li chevaliers leva avant,  
si fist ses armes aporter  
et son cors richement armer,  
quar armes avoit il mout beles,  
trestotes fresches et noveles.  
Quant li chevaliers fut armez  
et dessus son cheval montez,

si se porpense qu'il fera,  
[...]<sup>113</sup>

Here, however, the chivalric code determining the discourse is abruptly brought to an end: "comment sa fame engignera / qu'el le tiegne bon chevalier".<sup>114</sup> A true knight does not trick his wife by means of pretending to be a valiant knight, when he is not.

The knight then plunges into the obligatory wood of romance, the next to necessary "wild space" of *aventure*,<sup>115</sup> but instead of searching, and finding, *aventure*, the "knight *vilain*" ties his horse to a tree and shamelessly carries out his deceit. The ensuing description of the foolish man (cf. Garin's "Or escoutez que fist li sos!") ferociously "fighting himself", or rather his armor, by means of giving his own shield a violent beating ("Mien escient, plus de de cent cous / s'en part en l'escu a escous"<sup>116</sup>) and breaking his lance in four parts introduces farce as a narrative ingredient in the textual web.

Then, returning with his armor in shambles, he has the audacity and bad taste even to abuse his wife, thus, again stressing his own lack of merit addressing her in a most uncourtly manner:

"Traiez vos tost, fait il, arriere,  
quar ce sachiez: n'est mie droiz  
qu'a si bon chevalier touchoiz  
com ge sui, ne si alosé.  
Il n'a si preuz ne si osé  
en tot vostre lignaige: au meins  
ne sui mie matez ne veins,  
ainz ai los de chevalerie!"<sup>117</sup>

Of course, this serves to prove again what sort of man this so-called knight really is and that he fully deserves whatever might befall him: a cowardly, deceitful and churlish knight should be exposed, debased and dishonored; if not order is not restored.

Courtly romance is still the intertext when Garin goes on telling his *fabliau*, describing what happens when the baffled and intimidated wife regains courage and — after another feigned *aventure* by her husband — determines to see for herself what he really is up to. Garin allows himself considerable narrative space describing the way the lady reacts and the second "mock-expedition" into the wood undertaken by the "knight *vilain*". This time, however, the lady does not believe him ("De la dame n'est pas creüz / a ceste fois li chevaliers, [...] Bien set la dame et aperçoit / que par sa borde la deçoit"<sup>118</sup>) and sneaks after him when he goes to the wood for the third time.

This is the very narrative sequence where Garin most decidedly desautomatizes the normative discourse of romance by armoring the lady: "Et la dame unes armes quiet:

/ com un chevalier s'est armee / et puis sor un cheval montee”.<sup>119</sup> With the exception of active Iseut and damsels like Lunete in *Le chevalier au lion* and the remarkable Plaerdemavida of *Tirant lo Blanc* (still, they are quite feminine as to character and appearance), woman (especially the lady) in *roman breton* is normally docile and passive allowing things to happen to her. Thus the ordinary gender pattern of of romance is transgressed implicitly pointing out another “woman on top”. This means a mixture of genre between romance and *fabliau*, “woman on top” being one of its most prominent constituents.<sup>120</sup>

Normative romance as in Chrétien de Troyes is a mixture of *utilitas* and *delectatio* (*utile dulci*): to the sophisticated listener/reader there can hardly be any doubt that there is a message, that there is *sen* to be discovered in the tale. In the introductory lines to his text Garin stresses the fact that we are to be told a *fabliau*, i. e. a text where *recreatio* is a most prominent factor giving *delectatio* as an important result regardless of the outline of the story as such.

So far, it is quite easy to interpret the text mainly in terms of pure *delectatio/recreatio*, the only ambiguous part of the text being the lines describing noble decline as a result of matrimonial *mésalliance*. *Delectatio* is — at least superficially — brought even more to the fore in the bizarre description of the cowardly “knight *vilain*” facing the grim lady in knightly disguise:

[...]  
 et quant ot assez escouté  
 a tant a le cheval hurté  
 vers son mari, si li escrie:  
 “Vassal, vassal, est ce folie  
 que vos mon bois me decoupez?  
 Malvais sui se vos m’eschapez,  
 que ne soiez toz detranchiez!  
 Vostre escu porquoi laidangiez,  
 qui ne vos avoit riens meffait?  
 Mout avez hui meü fol plait:  
 mal dahait ore qui vos prise,  
 quant a lui avez guerre prise,  
 que vos estes coarz provez!”  
 Li chevaliers s’est regardez,  
 quant il a le mot entendu,  
 esbahiz fu et esperdu.  
 La dame n’a pas conneüe.  
 Du poig li chiet l’espee nue  
 et trestoz li sans li foï.

“Sire, fait il, por Dieu merci!  
 Se ge vos ai de riens mesfait,  
 gel vos amenderai sanz plait;  
 a vostre gré mout volontiers  
 vos donrai avoir et deniers.”  
 La dame dit: “Se Dieus me gart  
 vos parleroiz d’autre Bernart  
 quar ge vos partirai un geu:  
 ainz que vos partoiz de cest leu,  
 comment que vos jostez a moi;  
 et ge vos creant et ostroi,  
 se vos cheez, ja n’i faudrez,  
 maintenant la teste perdrez,  
 que ja de vos n’avrai pitié.  
 Ou ge descendrai jus a pié,  
 si me pranrai a estuper,  
 vos me venroiz el cul baisier  
 tres el mileu, o par delez.  
 Prenez c que mielz amerez  
 de ce gieu, ice vos covient!”  
 Et cil qui doute mout forment  
 et qui plains est de coardie  
 dit que il ne jostera mie:  
 “Sire, fait il, ge l’ai voé:  
 ne josterai a home né;  
 mais descendez, si ne vos griet,  
 et ge ferai ce qu’il vos siet”.  
 La dame ne volt respit querre:  
 tot maintenant mist pié a terre,  
 sa robe prist a sozlever,  
 devant lui prist a estuper.  
 Sire, metez ça vostre face!”  
 Et cil regarde la crevace  
 du cul et du con: ce li sanble  
 que trestot li tenist ensamble.  
 A lui meïsmes pense et dit  
 que onques si lonc cul ne vit.  
 Dont l’a baisié de l’orde pais,  
 a loi de coart hom mauvais,  
 mout pres du trou iluec endroit.  
 Bien l’a or mené a son droit;  
 a tant la dame est retornee.<sup>121</sup>

To Gaunt this might be an instance of parody, the presumed intertext being the battle-scene between Yvain and the knight of the fountain in *Le chevalier au Lion*.<sup>122</sup> Accepting this, we nevertheless have to stress the striking differences between Chrétien and Garin. To the competent listener/reader well-versed in romance and most probably familiar with Chrétien’s paradigmatic text these differences would most likely have been enhanced even further by the *delectatio/recreatio* produced by Garin’s *fabliau*. Such a listener/reader would probably have compared the purely chivalric setting of Chrétien’s text with its contrast of God’s fresh and beautiful nature and the ferocious battle between the two knights (two cliché ingredients in courtly poetry and romance), not forgetting the magic ingredient of the fountain itself with the strikingly less chivalric setting in Garin’s text. Instead of chivalric bravery we have cowardice, instead of unquestioned masculinity we have collapsed gender with a lady in arms ready for battle, instead of magic wonder we have gross obscenity, and instead of honesty and valor we have shame and stupidity.

To my mind, here is also a turningpoint as to the generic outline of Garin’s discourse to be found: so far romance has constituted the dominant code, but with the generically crucial concepts of *con* and *cul* romance decidedly collapses into *fabliau*. The reason for this, of course, is the introduction of gross vocabulary: in romance instances of sexually tinged coarse vocabulary are next to nowhere to be found.<sup>123</sup>

However, despite these *fabliau* ingredients, romance does not entirely vanish from the discourse as we have the description of the defeat and humiliation inflicted upon the “knight *vilain*” and also a “lady knight” a victorious “lady knight” disclosing “his” name. Instead of a name like “Le chevalier au lion”, a most courtly and fitting name for a true and valiant knight, more than able to prove his worth, we learn that the victorious “knight” goes by the ridiculous and generically outrageous name of “Berangier au lonc cul” rendered in normative romance fashion: “j’ai non Berengier au lonc cul, / qui a toz les coarz fait honte”.<sup>124</sup> Again, romance collapses into *fabliau*.

In an ordinary romance context, a knight with a name like “the long-assed knight” would be impossible, and so would a knight being cuckolded in such an outrageous manner as is the case here. The victorious lady hurries home, undresses, i. e. returns to her normal female self, and sends for her lover, a true knight, and entertains him in bed: “Dedenz sa chanbre tot a ese / l’en maine, si l’acole et baise.”<sup>125</sup> Now her husband’s humiliation is complete, having (unknowingly) kissed his wife’s behind, “quite near the very hole”, as the text explicitly states, he now has to suffer the sight of his wife openly entertaining her lover (who, by the way, is silent, yet another example of this lady being firmly on top(!)) in bed. Outraged, he protests only to be brusquely silenced by his contemptuous wife as she threatens to summon “Sir Berangier”. Defeated and brought to even more shame, her husband gives in and she, “qui ne fu sote

ne vilaine”,<sup>126</sup> has her way from now on. Romance has not only collapsed but is turned upside down: in his capacity as the “knight *vilain*” the husband has not only been defeated by his wife but also as a husband cuckolded in the open by his wife. This actually means that not only romance but normative *fabliau* is transgressed: the standard *fabliau* pattern of women cheating on their husbands does not present adultery as being committed by the wife to her husband’s face but as a clandestine act carried out by means of ruse and deceit.

*Supra*, we claimed that *delectatio* was stressed in the description of the bizarre encounter between “knight *vilain*” and his disguised wife. To an audience not too discriminating in matters of taste, e.g. one of knights, the very idea of a *vilain*, unworthy to be a true knight but feigning to be one, but being so stupid as to be unable to visually identify female genitalia and thus to expose himself to ridicule is most likely to have produced much laughter, i. e. *recreatio*. However, this text could also be interpreted in terms of an *essanple*, the message being: this is what might happen to a man who pretends to be what he is not and who is stupid enough not to recognize matters vital to successful life. He risks losing everything in the crucial matters of masculine dignity and honor. To a noble audience he would have deserved everything happening to him, but to a non-aristocratic male one, the crux of the matter would have been the wife coming so blatantly out on top. Of course, this, too, might have offended members of an aristocratic audience more than his shameful masquerade, i. e. one more anxious about masculine sovereignty over women than of social hierarchy as such. Complicating things, then, is of course the fact that the woman on top is an aristocrat, a factor strongly focussing gender and sex as discriminatory constituents in this particular context.

Again, the result is an obvious *essanple*, a lesson for men worrying about authority *vis-a-vis* women, the message being: be sure always to identify woman, no matter her disguise and deceit; her *con* and *cul* working as metonyms of woman as category. In my view Gaunt is right to stress gender mobility as structurally normative for the *fabliau* as such,<sup>127</sup> but I also see something of an essentialist notion working behind “Berangier au lonc cul”: no matter the disguise and deceit attempted by woman, she can always be known and disclosed by her genitalia, biology being the decisive factor when she is to be identified. The scandal of this particular *fabliau*, to allude on H. Bloch’s book,<sup>128</sup> would be a most spectacular example of woman having her way bringing extreme humiliation to her husband and letting him know it in the most direct terms imaginable, a lesson not only to him but to the audience as well. Of the texts discussed so far, I cannot help but seeing this *fabliau* as the one most evidently serving *utilitas*, the instances of *delectatio* notwithstanding.

### III. Cupidity and Stupidity

“La demoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre” and “Le sohait des Vez” both concentrate on the pleasures of carnal intercourse and the importance of genitalia as such (*dolssor conina*, albeit not in Marcabru’s sense), whereas “Le Chevalier qui fist parler les cons” and “Berangier au lonc cul” — despite explicit references to the genitals of those involved in the respective plots — rather concentrate on the battle between the sexes focussing “woman on top” as a structural and conceptual paradigm. “Les quatre sohaïs Saint Martin”, with all its pronounced *grivoiserie*, features a most curious battle of the sexes concentrating both on cupidity and stupidity. S. Melhado White offer a succinct summary of this *fabliau* and its moral:

Saint Martin appears to a peasant and rewards him for his devotion by granting him four wishes. The peasant’s wife persuades him to let her make the first wish. She wishes that his body be covered with penises. Erect male organ spring up all over the peasant’s body. He retaliates by wishing her body covered with an equal number of vulvas. They regret their wishes and use the third one to wish that the genitals disappear, forgetting to say that they want to keep their original ones. When these vanish along with the others, they must use the last wish to restore the status quo ante of one apiece. Moral: A man should never ruin opportunities by consulting his wife.<sup>129</sup>

To the difference of the vast majority of *fabliaux*, this one smacks of the supernatural folktale<sup>130</sup> with a touch of mock hagiography added to it: Saint Martin offers his devoted *vilain* (this is the way the peasant is addressed both by his wife and the saint!) four wishes<sup>131</sup> — the context being in no way religious but materialist:

“Vilains, dist il, tu m’as mout chier:  
Ja ne voras rien conmancier,  
Que toz jorz au conmancemant  
Ne me nomes premieremant.  
Je t’an randrai ja ta deserte:  
Laisse ton travail et ta herte,  
Et si soies joianz et gaiz.  
Je te donrai quatre sohaiz:  
Ja ne t’estuet mais traveillier,  
Ne matin lever ne veillier.  
Or t’an reva tot lieemant:  
Je te di bien veraiemant,  
Ce que tu ja sohaideras  
Par quatre foiz que tu l’avras.

Garde toi bien au sohaidier,  
Tu ni avras nul recovrier!”<sup>132</sup>

Merry, the peasant returns home only to be scolded by his wife who is the one wearing the pants in this household: “Sa fame, qui chauçoit les braies, / Li a dit: “Vilains, mal jor aies!”<sup>133</sup> Thus, it is established from the very start that the wife, again, is another “woman on top”. Her husband tries to soothe her, telling her of his encounter with the saint and the promised four wishes. His perspective is purely materialist:

Quatre sohaiz me dona ore;  
N’an fu nul soaidié encore,  
Devant q’äüsse a toi parlé  
Selonc ce que m’avras loé  
Demanderai isnelemant:  
Terres, richece, or et argent!”<sup>134</sup>

Pleased by what he has to tell and, presumedly, by his humble tone, his wife immediately adopts an altogether different attitude, her choice of words parodying courtly discourse, “biaus dolz amis”, but, being the one wearing the pants, she desires the first wish. Reluctant, and all of a sudden surprisingly daring, the peasant gives in only when she has promised not to change him into an animal; his own examples being a goat and a horse, animals symbolically charged with strong sexual meaning in medieval thought, but to let him remain a peasant. Misogyny is his obvious frame of reference when speaking:

– Taisez, fait il, ma bele suer,  
Je ne lo feroie a nul fuer!  
Fames ont mout foles pansees:  
Tost demanderiez fusees  
De chanve o de laine o de lin.  
[...]  
Je les (i. e. the wishes) voldrai toz sohaidier;  
Car ce sachiez que je crainboie,  
Se lo sohait vos otroioie,  
Que tel chose ne deïssiez  
Que vos de moi ne joïssiez.  
Je ne conois pas vostre tor:  
Se disiez que je fusse or  
Une chievre o une jument  
Gel seroie tot auramant.<sup>135</sup>

Misogynist cliché is shown even more at work when — as an answer to her husband admonishing her (“Por Deu, tel chose sohaidez / Ou je et vos aiomes preu!”<sup>136</sup>) — the evidently lascivious woman presents her extravagant wish which is immediately fulfilled. Here, the passage is so remarkable that quotation at length is motivated:

– Je di, fait ele, de par Deu,  
Que tot soiez chargiez de viz:  
Ne remaigne oil ne nariz,  
Ne teste ne braz ne costé  
Qui ne soient de viz planté.  
Et si ait chascuns viz sa coille,  
Si ne soient baien ne doille;  
Toz jorz soient li vit tandu:  
Si sanbleroiz vilain cornu!”  
Et sitost con ele l’ot dit,  
Si saillent do vilain li vit,  
Li vit li saillent par lo nes,  
Et par la boche de delez.  
Or poez oïr granz mervoilles:  
Li vit li saillent des oroilles,  
Darriere, aval et amont,  
Et par davant en mi lo front;  
Tot contreval, desi q’as piez,  
Fu li vilains de viz chargiez.  
Li vilains fu de viz cornuz,  
De totes parz mout bien vestuz:  
Sor lui avoit maint vit carré,  
Et grant et grox et rebolé;  
Maint noir, maint blanc et maint vermoil.  
Bien poïst en giter en l’oil  
Une feve, tot de plain vol:  
N’arrestast, si venist au fol  
De la coille qui desoz pant!  
Mout ot ci bon sohaidemant!  
Maint vit i ot et lonc et grox;  
Sor lo vilain n’ot si dur os  
Don vit ne saillent merveillous.  
Li vit li saillent des genoz!<sup>137</sup>

In this passage we witness an instance of twisted and absurd [re-]creation where a man is transformed into a “phallic porcupine”, to borrow a happy expression from Melhado White.<sup>138</sup> The *fabliau* explicitly uses the word “mervoilles” to describe this remarkable

process where potent “pricks” spring from his nose, mouth, ears, forehead, back and knees to cover his entire body. He is even “horned”, an obvious reference to the traditional romance concept of *cornu*, i. e. cuckolded — a furtive allusion to his actual marital status, as it were.

The reason, is, as might be expected, the wife’s dissatisfaction with her husband’s sexual prowess:

– Sire, dist el, je vos di bien  
C’un seul vit ne me valoit rien:  
Sanpres iert mous con uns boiaus;  
Mais or sui riche de viz baus!.<sup>139</sup>

Again, we witness compensatory female desire springing from weak masculine performance (cf. “Le Sohait des Vez”). To E. Jane Burns this *fabliau* wife really says “I want more than one prick, more than this monolithic phallus, more than this phallogocentric world view”<sup>140</sup> It may very well be so, although I, personally, find the wife quite “phallogocentric” as to her wishes, her desire being what it is, but, to me, focus, nevertheless, is set on the question of sexual satisfaction or dissatisfaction rather on phallogocentric ideology, *per se*, a strategy inscribing yet another *fabliau* into the essentially misogynist frame of reference labelled female appetite and insatiability. Thus, the thematic and conceptual bond with not only “Le sohait des Vez” but also with texts like “La Damoisele qui sonjoit”, “Le Vallet aus douz fames” and “Cele qui se fist fotre sur la fosse de son mari” (to sensitive minds at least, probably the most outrageous and perhaps most chocking of *fabliau* titles to be found) is stressed.

Initiative and reversal of roles are prominent in “La Damoisele qui sonjoit” whose protagonist literally wishes to be on top also during the very act itself, when her mate’s stamina fails him. The story relates another female dream; this time it is a young damsel dreaming about a handsome man. In her sleep she is the victim of an intruder who penetrates her three times. Once she realizes what has happened to her, she laments her lost virginity, but — being a young healthy woman — she wants to have sex again, this time awake to enjoy it to the full. Being exhausted, the man is not quite up to her demands. Provoked, she strikes him and refuses to let him leave the room, again an obvious reversal of a prevailing standard pattern of male dominance. This is what she says to him:

‘Par cui passastes vos l’esponde,  
qant je me dormoie en mon lit?  
Cuidiez vos por vostre grant vit  
avoir moi si estoutoiee?  
Je sui encore saine et haitiee

plus que vos, au mien escient!  
 Se je de vos ne me deffant,  
 Don sui je pire que ribaude:  
 vos en avroiz ja une chaude!  
 Or faites tost, si alez jus,  
 car je revoil aler desus:  
 ce n'est pas, ce m'est avis, honte,  
 qant home faut, se fame monte!<sup>141</sup>

The crucial lines are, of course, the ones where she claims that she is healthier and more energetic than he is — an implicit reference to his shamefully slack member, and an explicit one to superior female appetite — and her suggested remedy: “I want to be on top; the way I see it, it is no shame if a woman mounts, when the man fails”. As pointed out by e.g. Burns, Gaunt, and Muscatine,<sup>142</sup> the sexual repertoire of the *fabliau* rarely exceeds that of ordinary heterosexuality, the missionary position being the preferred one. Gaunt finds it “striking that the *fabliaux's* view of what constitutes acceptable sexual practices seems to coincide with that of penitential literature”,<sup>143</sup> where anal and dorsal (often confused) are considered bestial; copulation from behind, *more canino*, was considered unnatural by theological, canonical and legal authorities and, thus, severely condemned.<sup>144</sup> However, there are *fabliaux* which stress variety without specification:

Cilz s'aparoille et monte sus  
 Qu'amont, qu'aval, que sus que jus;  
 Ainsis fist à pou de sejour  
 Dès le couchier jusques au jour.<sup>145</sup>

Others hint at or describe sex *more canino*: in “Gombert et les deus clerks” one of the students takes the miller’s daughter “derriere et encoste”,<sup>146</sup> and “[a]nother ingenious clerk works again and again, “*par darriere*”, to affix the tail on a silly girl who wants to fly in the air”.<sup>147</sup> In “La Gageure” intercourse is clearly dorsal when the young man who has been promised requited love if he agrees to kiss his beloved’s behind; while preparing his “sacrifice”, he changes his mind:

Yl leve sus le dras derer,  
 Puis pensout si à bon mester  
 Yl sake avaunt un bon bordoun,  
 Si l'a donné en my le coun,  
 Un gros vit et long et quarré,  
 Si l'a en my le coun donné;

Ensi à ly de ces bras l'afferma  
Ne poeit gwenchir sà ne là.<sup>148</sup>

The probable thought behind this would be: the young man goes from ridiculous courtly subjection (or plain stupidity) to natural male action, straightforward copulation, even if it happens to be a case of “desire against the law”.

In his excellent survey of the subject Muscatine stresses the existence of “a number of expressions, so rare as to elude accurate modern comprehension that might enlarge the picture; and a number of scenes leave one in doubt as to precisely what is going on:”<sup>149</sup>

E.g.: à la torcoise (V, 209), *creponer* (*Liv*, 177, 305n); and *culoner* (III, 240) and *culeter* (III, 81; *Liv*, 189), which, though based on the word *cul* (“ass”), in context probably do not refer to anal intercourse, but either to intercourse from behind, or to the conceit commonly found in the *fabliau* that during normal intercourse the *cul* of the male moves, and that of the female is beaten upon by the male’s testicles.

[...]  
Cil la vait aus jambes saisir,  
Si l’a couchie toute enverse;  
Ne la prist pas a la traverse,  
Ainz l’a acueillie de bout.

[He grabbed her legs and laid her down backwards; he didn’t take her *a la traverse* (side-ways?), but had her *de bout* (endwise?)]<sup>150</sup>

Interestingly, the astonishing stanzaic poem “Richeut”, a mock-heroic romance rather than a *fabliau*, as to its contents and with a prostitute as its protagonist/heroine, is much more exhaustive and explicit as to positional possibilities in intercourse than is any *fabliau* proper:

Sanson les fout totes sovines,  
Les genoz lor met as poitrines,  
Il croist en coste  
Et a copresse et a soposte;  
[...]  
A bachet et a pissechien.  
Plus set Sansons,  
Car il les croist a estupons  
[...]  
Maintes en monta sor les dos  
A cui il fist croistre les os.<sup>151</sup>

Although it is in no way as explicit in these matters as is “Richeut”, the scandal of “La Damoisele qui sonjoit”, nevertheless, is as prominent as it reverses the natural order so paramount to medieval man.

In “Le Vallet aus dous fames” female lust and insatiability are presented in unequivocally *essanple* terms. In this *fabliau* a young man is stupid enough as to boast to his father that no single woman would be able to satisfy him and that at least eight, nine or even ten would be required for such a mighty task. His father, “in his wisdom”, being *sage* is utterly important in the world of the *fabliau*,<sup>152</sup> is sure that one would be more than enough, but advises him to try one for a year and then take another eleven ones (a curious reference to polygamy and a possible reference to the heretic harem, as concubines were not officially accepted at this time,<sup>153</sup> i.e. perversion of anything natural, accepted, and sanctioned by law, both profane and canonic), if she shouldn’t meet all his needs. The young wife, having heard her husband bragging, decides to test him. He is not only exhausted but he actually falls ill:

Ains que passat le demi ans,  
Fu il si las, si recreans,  
Si ot megres les meiseles  
Que ce semble deus viez asteles,  
S’est plus jaune que pié d’escoufle;  
Son cors ne vaut une viez moufle,  
Si a les euz si enfossez  
Et si parfont el chief plantez  
Que ce samble qu’il eit langui.<sup>154</sup>

His lesson is evident: a man trying to keep up with female lust is bound to fail and risk even his life, a wordly parallel to the much-awed daughters of Eve in patristic tradition.

It is hard to find a text more adamant in its insistence on female insatiability than “Cele qui se fist fotre sur la fosse de son mari”<sup>155</sup>, where not even grief at the very grave of the departed husband is able to prevent the mourning widow from seeking sexual pleasure.

A squire and a knight come across her at the grave and the squire bets the knight that he will be able to seduce the widow, the implicit idea, of course, being that no woman, no matter the situation or circumstances, is able to abstain from sexual intercourse, even if scandal and outrage await her. The squire approaches her and claims to be even more in grief than she is. Being naturally curious, she asks him why and he answers that he killed his only true love by “fucking” her, “en fotant”. Instantly, she throws herself on her back, claiming that she wants to die in the same way. She is disappointed:

Si li enbat el con lo vit,  
 Si que ses sires bien lo vit:  
 De rire se pasme a bien poi!  
 'De quoi me viaus tuer, de coi,  
 Fait la dame, qui si me foz?  
 Ençois i moroies tu toz  
 Que tu m'aüsses ensi morte!<sup>156</sup>

No doubt, the *fableor* is most daring here, mixing two distinct discourses, that of *decorum* in as serious a matter as death and lascivious *fabliau* describing yet another male failing to satisfy yet another craving female. To Gaunt this extraordinary *fabliau* focusses not only on female lust but at least as much on failed virility.<sup>157</sup> He no doubt has an interesting point here but to me the widow's outrageous behavior (it could hardly have been judged otherwise) is the main factor in establishing the text as yet another *essanple* serving the *utilitas* of misogynine thought. To me there is more at stake here than the widow challenging the squire to prove that his "preposterous story" (Gaunt's words<sup>158</sup>) is true: to me it seems at least equally reasonable to take the story at face value, i. e. the lady has no wish to die, but plays along, in order to get a "bonus lay" out of the blue, as it were.

Then, the female protagonist of "Les quatre souhaits Saint Martin" and the others discussed have reversal of natural and lawgiven values in common, no matter the differences in story and plot. One thing that these female protagonists have in common is definitely a conspicuous lack of innocense, a feature that sets e.g "Les quatre souhaits Saint Martin" apart from a *fabliau* like "L'esquirielle" which depicts a young woman (or rather girl) discovering the delights of life. This is what she, in her (to many a modern reader) rather charming "catalog of pricks" has to say (or rather, explodes into saying) when her prudish mother, having warned her about "Que cil homme portent pendant"<sup>159</sup> and having been forced to give in disclosing its, "Je te di bien que ce est vit",<sup>160</sup> finally gives in:

Quant la pucele ce oï,  
 Si s'en rist et si s'esjoï:  
 "Vit", dist ele, "Dieu merci, vit!  
 Vit dirai je, cui qu'il anuit,  
 Vit, chetive! vit dist mon pere,  
 Vit dist ma suer, vit dist mon frere,  
 Et vit dist nostre chamberiere,  
 Et vit avant et vit arriere  
 Nomme chascuns à son voloir.  
 Vous meïsmes, mere, por voir,

Dites vit, et je toute lasse  
 Qu’ai forfet que vit ne nommaisse?  
 Vit me doinst Dieus que je n’i faille!”<sup>161</sup>

However, we must again take into account the prevalent view on female sexuality in medieval thought. It might very well be that certain members of the audience listening to this *fabliaux* would find the young girl charmingly and innocently disclosing her carnal nature and smile or laugh at its description, whereas those of a more misogynic disposition would have frowned at yet another example of innate female corruption. The young girl blurts out “Thank God, prick”, [mild] blasphemy, to be sure, “I’m going to say prick, no matter who cares”, i. e. insolence, an only too familiar female fault according to patristic (and related) thinking. The enumeration of family members saying “prick” all the time hints at obsession with sex, and the young girl’s final line tells of her spontaneous need: a “prick”. Depending on the attitude of the listener/reader, her speech is either that of *recreatio/delectatio* or that of essentially misogynic *utilitas*.

In order to determine the attitude on these matters in “Les quatre souhaits Saint Martin” we have to consider the impact of the husbands’ “retaliatory wish and what ensues”. His wish more than matches that of his wife:

Je resohait, fait li bons hons,  
 Que tu raies autretant cons  
 Comme je ai de viz sor moi:  
 Autretant cons raies sor toi!”  
 Lors fu la dame bien connue:  
 Ele ot un con en la veüe,  
 Quatre en ot el front, coste a coste,  
 Et con detrés et con acoste,  
 Et con devant et con darriere.  
 Si ot con de mainte meniere:  
 Con droit, con tort et con chenu,  
 Et con sanz poil et con velu,  
 Et con joene et con bien fait,  
 Et con pucel et con retrait,  
 Et con parfont et con a croce,  
 Et con bellonc et con sanz boce.  
 Con ot au chief, con ot as piez!”<sup>162</sup>

The peasant is quite satisfied, but his wife is furious, stressing the fact that she won’t be able to walk unrecognized or unknown in the street. She will be “bien conneüe”, a pun (essentially untranslatable) parallelling “Lors fut la dame bien connu” (wellknown and

“well-cunted”). The wife is not only garrulous, lascivious and mean, but also stupid, the result of which being that they are left with no genitalia after the third wish, as her husband is equally foolish. She points out that they have one wish left, and for a second, forgetting sex, she stresses that they still might be very rich (an argument, bound to impress her husband), only to recognize the altogether vanished genitalia. The couple are furious, recognizing what has happened and the absolute need for regained genitalia:

Lors fu la jantis dame irie  
 C'on de son con ne trova nie,  
 Et li prodom, qant il revit  
 Qu'il n'avoie mie de son vit,  
 Refu de l'autre part iriez.  
 “Sire, fait ele, sohaidiez  
 – Lo cart soait encor avon –  
 Que vos aiez vit et je con:  
 Puis si seron comme devant,  
 Si n'i avron perdu noiant.”<sup>163</sup>

The ending smacks of proverb and *essanple*:

Si n'i perdi ne gaignaa,  
 Car ses viz li est revenuz,  
 Mais ses soaiz a il perduz...  
 Mout duremant s'an repantoit  
 De ce que sa fame creoit.  
 Qui plus croit sa fame que lui  
 Sovant en a au cuer anui!<sup>164</sup>

To me, the result is strongly emphasized *utilitas*, achieved by pronounced *utile dulci*, the obscene “catalogs” being the *fableor*'s main recourse. The message is: do not be so foolish as to believe (and, even worse, obey) your wife, but be sure to be the one wearing the pants in your household. Thus order won't give in to chaos, the intertext, of course, being man as woman's head (S:t Paul and patristic tradition). Actually, I detect another, and, admittedly, more implicit allusion to the Bible: in the manner of Eve fooling Adam into eating the forbidden fruit, our “Eve” fools her husband into forgetting his “God”, the saint, the result being a lost Eden with its combination of sex and riches. Order has to be restored and the price is high.

To Melhado White, this *fabliau* has several morals.<sup>165</sup> To her, one message to be found in it is “women are mysterious creatures”<sup>166</sup> so they had better be left alone and not consulted as there is no way of knowing what they want. I cannot quite agree to

this; in my mind it is quite obvious what this wife wants: she wants to go on wearing the pants, have better marital sex and get rich, so there is nothing mysterious about her, and certainly not to the average consumer of *fabliaux* within its particular context. When, because of her own doings, things turn out so bad for her, (we have every reason to expect her to have been perfectly satisfied with her husband kept in ridicule) she opts for sexual normality instead of riches: with all her “cunts” she would have been a monster, i. e. a creature cursed by God, a standard ingredient in medieval thinking.

Despite her own emphasis on the moral qualities of our *fabliau*, Melhado White actually stresses *recreatio* with a touch of *utilitas*, and does not differentiate audience reaction (her “orgasm in laughter”<sup>167</sup>) from the text itself and its description of the disappointing world with its low quality sex life; Melhado White generalizes a bit here as the text does not speak of general dissatisfaction in sexual matters, but of the wife’s. Worse is that she blurs the ontological distinction between textual world and audience response: there is no “orgasm in laughter” in the text and we know absolutely nothing about the amount of sexual satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the members of the audience. What we have is the text itself and its implicit readers and what it has to say about properties relevant in its cultural context. This is not quite clear in Melhado White’s presentation.

Both Burns (cf. *supra*) and Gaunt comment on “Les quatre souhaits Saint Martin”. To Burns the vaginas found all over the wife’s body make “her physical state reflect the exaggerated libido that her body is supposed to have contained and concealed”.<sup>168</sup> I agree with Burns but I also want to stress the transformation of the wife into a representative for her entire sex, defined as it is by “the cunt”, the latter working as a metonymy for woman, as her identity as a female lies in this very body part governing her thoughts, dreams, wishes and actions.

Also, I wish to stress the fact that it would be equally justified to view this husband with his assorted “pricks”, long, square, fat, short, puffy, curved, and pointed as they are, as representing not only himself but the entire male sex with its “penile possibilities”. Thus, man, too, is known by his prick, at least in this context.

When discussing the remarkable transformations and their results, Gaunt is so subtle and precise in his choice of words, that, again, I can do no better than to quote him at some length:

The implication is that the woman is ‘known’ and ‘recognized’ because of the proliferation of genitals on her body. Yet the diversity in what the vaginas can signify means we in fact know nothing about this woman: any significance attached to one of the vaginas may be contradicted by that of another. The discourse which seeks to define women through their genitals is exceeded. The results of the third and fourth wishes may seem to suggest that genitals are necessary markers, but does the reassuring image of the peas-

ant and his wife with just one set of genitals each, and in the right place, efface what has gone before? We are in fact left with the troubling knowledge that the return to the *status quo* entails loss and lack; of the four wishes, of the wealth they might have brought, of the abundance of genitals, of the pleasure these might have afforded. Normality is now patently unsatisfactory.<sup>169</sup>

Is Gaunt really right when claiming that we cannot know anything about this woman, as the vaginas might contradict each other? I am not altogether convinced: what is there really to know about a given woman in a given *fabliau*? Is there more to the wife here than what the text tells us explicitly about her, that she is covered with “cunts”, or, implicitly, that she metonymically represents woman in her sexually defined essence? Also, and more importantly, Gaunt and I read the abundant genitals differently. To him, they might have afforded great pleasure to the couple (something which is really never hinted at in the text, where the suddenly produced “pricks” and “cunts” are described rather as a nuisance (to put it mildly), whereas I see them as the epitome of collapsed order. Also, to me, the return to normality or *status quo* is more than “patently unsatisfactory”: all-important natural order is restored and the wife loses her pants.

The couple in “Les quatre souhaits Saint Martin” are stupid and so are several of the characters touched upon or discussed *supra*, and their stupidity is more or less matched by that of Marion in the short “Gautier et Marion” who farts through intercourse and explains “N’oïtes vos le pucelage / Que s’enfoï quant vos boutastes”,<sup>170</sup> the servant woman in “Le Maignien qui foti la dame”,<sup>171</sup> who, when catching a glimpse of her mistress’s *con* from behind thinks that the latter’s innards are falling out, or the innocent young girl in “Cele qui fo fotue et desfotue”<sup>172</sup> where she asks a young man for a crane he has captured. The young scoundrel agrees, demanding in exchange a *foutre*, but she does not know what is meant by that and says that she does not have one. He insists that she indeed must possess one and starts groping her. The rest is easy to imagine. However, nobody is so stupid as the young man in “La sorisete des estopes”, not even the spectacular fool in “Le sot chevalier” who is so ignorant in sexual matters that his mother-in-law has to teach him the realities of the marital bed; even after having been married for a year “Ne savoit que cons estoit / Ne porquant loé estoit”.<sup>173</sup> This saddens the young wife: “Moult en pesa la damoisele / Qui vauisist ses deduis avoir; / Mès cil n’avoit tant de savoir / Qu’il séust au con adrecier”.<sup>174</sup> The problem is that her husband does not know the difference between the *con* and the *cul*. The mother in law is called in to resolve the marital trauma and does so by exposing her own genitals in order to “lui donner une leçon d’éducation sexuelle dont on ne peut qu’admirer l’originalité”.<sup>175</sup>

Si a les cuisses descubertes  
Et puis a les jambes ouvertes

- Se li monstra dant Connebert,  
 Puis li a dit: “Sire Robert,  
 Véez nul rien en cest val  
 Ne contre mont, ne contre val?  
 Oïl, dame, dist-il, .II. traus.  
 Amis, com fais est li plus haut?  
 Il est plus lons qu’il ne soit lez.  
 Et com fais est cil par dalez?  
 Il est plus cours, ce m’est avis.  
 Gardez là ne voist vostre vis,  
 Quar il n’est pas a cel oés fais;  
 Qui vit i met, c’est granz meffais;  
 On le doit ou plus lonc bouter,  
 Après si doit-on culeter,  
 Et, quant ce vient au daarains,  
 Adonc doit-l’en serrer les rains.
- Dame, dist-il, voulez-vous donc  
 Que mete mon vit au plus lonc?
  - Nenil, amis, à ceste foiz;  
 Il vous est or mis en defoiz,  
 Quar ma fille en a .II. plus biaux,  
 Et plus souèz et plus noviaus;  
 Foutez le plus lonc aquenuit,  
 Coment, qu’il vous griet ne anuit.
  - Dame, dist-il, moult volentiers;  
 Jà n’en ira il traus entiers  
 Que sempres n’i mete m’andoille.  
 Et que ferai-je de ma coille?
  - Amis, le plus cort en batez,  
 Quant vous au lonc vous combattez.”<sup>176</sup>

It is no doubt true that this *fabliau* illustrates “the sexual education” of an unusually stupid man, even by *fabliau* standards. The visual element is strong and it is quite easy to imagine an audience roaring with laughter at it being told, even more so if it were accompanied by antics and obscene gestures by the *jongleur/jongleurs*. Involving the mother-in-law is rather an ambiguous element in the text. To a certain extent the idea is comic but it is also “playing with conceptual fire” as incest is more than hinted at: the husband actually asks his mother-in-law if she wants him to penetrate her. Her rather cool answer referring to her own daughter’s *con*, sweet and beautiful as it is, is remarkably devoid of indignation, implying evidently loose moral standards. Outrage ought to have been her reaction, but, then, a woman, possibly old enough to be the husband’s old mother, per-

fectly willing to expose her own genitals to him, could not be expected to be strict in sexual matters. One thing, though, is inadmissible to her: sodomy; the man is told to avoid anal penetration at any cost. The anus should be “battered” by the “coilles”, a frequent ingredient in the *fabliau*. The scene presented here is so remarkable as to nearly block the possibility of interpreting it in terms of *utilitas*; to read it in terms of an *essanple* on the theme “beware of indecent mothers-in-law” just does not seem reasonable. Coarse *recreatio* is the only possible interpretative frame of reference as to this *fabliau*.

The plot of the remarkably hilarious “La sorisete des estopes”<sup>177</sup> is simple enough. A stupid man marries a young, vigorous and healthy woman with a pronounced sexual appetite and who is quite experienced in sexual matters having a priest as a lover. The priest is so lascivious as to wish to enjoy her even on her wedding night, a most remarkable hint at the concept *jus prima noctis*. The young woman is more than willing to agree to this and in order to bring this scandalous arrangement about she sends her foolish husband to fetch her “cunt” which is kept in town in her mother’s house! When asked for her daughter’s “cunt”, the mother-in-law gives him a basket of rags with a mouse hidden in it. On his way home and eager to try his luck the peasant tries to have intercourse with what he, in his astounding ignorance, believes to be the *con*, which, to his amazement and terror, runs away. Dejected, he returns home only to find his wife’s *con* in its place and is relieved. This farce opens in the following way:

Après vos cont d’un vilain sot,  
 Qui fame prist et rien ne sot  
 De nul deduit q’apertenist  
 A fame se il la tenist,  
 C’onques entremis ne s’en fu.<sup>178</sup>

Again, narrative authority is marked by the presence of a *fableor* introducing his text. Thus, from the very start, this peasant is presented as being a “sot”, an ambiguous designation of text and signal to the audience pointing out both *essanple*, “let us see what is to be learnt from this story”, and *recreatio/delectatio*, “let us have a laugh at the expense of yet another fool”, as possible interpretative paradigms. “Sot” is matched by “ne sot” (*reduplicatio*) stressing stupidity and ignorance (“ne sot” meaning “didn’t know”). As implied by the wording so far, our *vilain* is a fool in most matters, but the very aspect of ignorance stressed by the *fableor* is his protagonist’s want of knowledge in sexual matters making him the perfect cuckold. His stupidity is so total and amazing that he has not even tried to have intercourse with his wife, a fact that singles him out as being even greater a fool than his “colleague”, “Le sot chevalier”.

Of course, his wife is quite his contrast: she is experienced, having learnt full well “what men *know* to do”:

Mais sa fame avoit ja seü  
Tot ce que home sevent faire,  
Que, a la verité retraire,  
Li prestes son boen en faisoit,  
Quant il voloit et li plasoit.<sup>179</sup>

This textual arrangement means that *ignorance vs knowledge* is the dichotomy outlining the structural and narrative pattern and that it is established already at the outset. Her lover is a priest, one of the very many in the *fabliau* (cf. *infra*) which makes both her and him accomplices not only in adultery but in indirect blasphemy as well — marriage being a sacrament — a fact which implies her to be both cunning and intrepid in her schemes. The lovers’ dialog is highly spectacular in its audacity:

Lors dist li prestes: “Doce amie,  
Je voil a vos, ne vos poist mie,  
Avoir afaire s’il vos loist,  
Ainz li vilains vos adoist.”  
Et cele dit: “Volantiers, sire,  
Que je ne vos os escondire;  
Mais venez tost et sanz demore,  
Quant vos savroiz qu’il sera ore,  
Ainz que mes sires lo me face,  
Que perdre ne voil vostre grace.”<sup>180</sup>

Her last line in something of a tongue-in-cheek performance of remarkable hypocrisy, “grace” belonging in a perfectly different context, e.g that of confession, religious belief or ceremony. Also present is an implicit reference to this wife as a purely sexual creature: to her the identity of the man is less important than his ability to serve her well in sexual matters.

Having been satisfied by her paramour’s lovemaking, she is not at all impressed with her husband’s clumsy performance presented by the *fableor* rather in farcial terms:

Aprés ice ne tarda gaire  
Que li vilains s’ala cochier;  
Mais ele ne l’ot gaires chier,  
Ne son deduit ne son solaz.  
Et la prant entre ses braz,  
Si l’anbraça mout duremant  
– Que il nel sot faire autremant –  
Et l’a mout soz lui estandue;<sup>181</sup>

Again, his ignorance is stressed, both by means of his saying that he would like to “fuck her only if he would find her cunt” (here the fifth line of the *fabliau* is contradicted — comic impact obviously being more important to the *fableor* than logic), and by his believing her, when she tells him that her *con* is not there (!); the dialog bordering on the absurd:

- Et cele s'est mout desfandue  
 Et dist: “Qu'est ce que volez faire?  
 – je voil, fait il, vit avant traire,  
 Si vos fotrai se j'onques puis,  
 Se vostre con delivre truis.  
 – Mon con, fait ele ennesloipas,  
 Mon con ne troveroiz vos pas.  
 – O est il donc, nel me celez!  
 – Sire, qant savoir lo volez,  
 Jel vos dirai o est, par m'ame:  
 Muciez as piez do lit ma dame,  
 O je hui matin lo laissai.  
 – Par saint Martin, et je irai,  
 Fait il ançois que je ne l'aie!”<sup>182</sup>

When the foolish peasant has left home to fetch his wife's *con*, the priest, now referred to as “li chapelains”, returns to enjoy carnal pleasure with the unfaithful wife, the adulterous act taking place in the very marital bed, a marked sign of the illicit couple's lascivious daring and blatant lack of *decorum*. Meanwhile the cuckold reaches his mother-in-law's house and describes his errand in the following ridiculous terms: “Ma chiere dame / Vostre fille m'anvoie ça / Por son con, que ele muça, / Ce dit, as piez de vostre lit.”<sup>183</sup> She reflects a short while, realizes that, motivated by a “chose male”, her daughter has played a trick on her unsuspecting husband. Although ignorant of its nature she, of course, proves loyal with her daughter and her scheme, the implicit reference being an expected one: whenever a woman has an opportunity to do something wicked, she does so, either out of “female solidarity in wickedness or evil”, or out of individual inclination.

The mother-in-law finds a basket with rags in it and with a mouse hidden in it and gives it to her son-in-law, who immediately hurries away. Now, the *fableor* allows his simpleton of a protagonist to disclose himself and the remarkable amount of stupidity determining his actions. What he says is a “grant marvoille”:

“Ne sai, fait il, se dort o voille  
 Li cons ma fame, par Saint Pol:

Mais mout volantiers, par mon vol,  
 Lo fotisse ainz que je venisse  
 A l’ostel, se je ne cremisse  
 Qu’i m’eschapast a mi dez voies...  
 Et sel fotrai je tote voies  
 Por savoir se c’est voirs ou non  
 Que l’an dit, que il a en con  
 Mout doce et mout sæf beste”<sup>184</sup>

His speech is a strange mixture of sheer stupidity, religious commonplace and popular belief (mout sæf beste”) referring to woman’s bestial properties.

The description of his further actions exceeds most examples of stupidity in erotic matters in medieval literature: our *fableor* tells how his protagonist plunges his erect penis into the basket with its rags and how the mouse jumps out of he basket and runs away. The peasant is so strikingly ignorant and self-deceptive (“you see what you think and wish you see”) that he does not even recognize a mouse when seeing one:

Et si dit: “Deus, si bele beste!  
 Je cuit certes que de la teste  
 Ne soit pas encor sevre:  
 Si n’a gaires qu’ele fu nee,  
 Je voi bien que mout est petite.  
 Deu et a saint Esperite  
 La commant et au Sauveor!”<sup>185</sup>

There are two codes/discourses present here, one explicit, and one implicit. “Deus”, “saint Espereite”, and “Sauvoir” constitute the instances of the former one, Christianity with its doctrine and values, and “beste” representing the second one, “sodomy”. The point is that the peasant wants to “fuck” a “beste”, i. e. he confuses two “worlds” which have to be kept strictly apart; otherwise mortal sin is committed, i. e. However, our peasant is hardly a deliberate sodomite but a simpleton, but nevertheless, the *fableor* plays with one of the strongest tabus of medieval thought, that of man losing his essential humanity to his beastly side.

Our *fableor* takes considerable pains describing the absurd and distorted ways of his protagonist’s mind, paying much (and in a *fabliau* context unusual) attention to detail:

Je cuit certes qu’ele ait peor  
 De mon vit: si ot el por voir,  
 Par les iauz Deu, qu’ele vit noir  
 Et roige lo musel devant.

Las, or me vois apercevant  
 Que ele en ot peor a certes!  
 Lasse, com recevré granz pertes  
 Se ele muert, sainte Marie!  
 Ele iert ja noiee et perie  
 En la fosse se ele i antre:  
 Ele en a moillié tot le vandre,  
 Et tot lo dox et les costez!  
 Ostez, biau Sire Deus, ostez!  
 Que ferai je se ele muert?”  
 Li vilains ses deus poinz detuert  
 Por la sorriz, qui brait et pipe:  
 Qui li singes fait qant il rit.<sup>186</sup>

Had the mouse instead been a young girl, afraid of the peasant's black “prick” with its red “nose”, i. e. glans, it is not certain that the result would have been that of sympathy with her, either by the narrator, or by the audience; we have to take into account the often explicit brutality of the male protagonists when approaching woman and her vulva (cf *supra*). Then, to an audience more or less ready to accept male [violent] sexual aggressiveness, a protagonist so worried about possibly having frightened his victim, would probably have been considered to be unmanly and “soft”, and a protagonist like our peasant would certainly have been considered to be a downright ridiculous fool, worrying that this “beste” would perish in a ditch. Situational comedy is brought to the fore by the peasant wringing his hands in despair and the mouse looking like a monkey laughing!

This harangue is likely to have impressed the audience by its absurd, almost “surrealist” (to allow ourselves a deliberate anachronism) qualities and striking originality. It is hard to conceive an audience not roaring with laughter at the hilarity of this discourse now reaching its climax:

Biaux cons, doz cons, tost revenez!  
 Tote ma fiance tenez  
 Que mais ne vos adeserai  
 Devant que a l'ostel serai  
 Et tant que vos avrai livré  
 A ma fame, si delivré  
 Vos puis avoir de la rosee,  
 Faite en sera mout grant risee,  
 S'an set qu'eschapez me soiez!  
 Ahi, vos seroiz ja noiez,

Biaus cons, en la rosee grant!  
Venez, si entrez en mon gant:  
Je vos metrai dedanz mon sain!”<sup>187</sup>

The intertext is rather that of courtly romance, “biaus”, “[t]ote fiance tenez”, making the codal clash pronouncedly conspicuous as “biaus” certainly is not used about the *con*, but our *fableor*’s primary object is probably not that of courtly parody but enhancing the coarse comedy of his text at all costs. The effect is even stronger as the “cunt” is not normally qualified to be beautiful in the *fabliau*, “*Le Moine*” being the most remarkable exception.

Dejected, our protagonist returns home, and the narrator offers him his mock-sympathy: “Sachez qu’il n’estoit mie liez!”<sup>188</sup> He describes how his sullen protagonist goes to bed, still silent, and is addressed by his wife, the result of which being another dialogue, remarkable in its absurd comedy:

“Sire, don n’avez vos mon con?  
Je non, dame, je non, je non!  
Mar l’alasse je onques querre:  
Qu’i m’est la hors cheoiz a terre,  
Si est ja noiez en cez prez.  
– Ha, fait ele, vos me gabez!  
– Certes, dame, fait il, non faz!”  
Ele lo prant entre ses braz:  
“Sire, fait ele, ne vos chaille:  
Il ot de vos peor, sanz faille,  
Por ce qu’il ne vos conoissoit,  
Et chose qui li desplaisoit,  
Au mien cuidier, il faisiez.  
Et se vos or lo teniiez,  
Q’an feriez, dites lo moi?  
Je lo fotroie, par ma foi!  
Et voir en l’oil li boteroie,  
Ensi que je lo creveroie  
Por lo coroz que il m’a fait!”  
Et ele li dist entresait:  
“Sire, il est ja entre mes james.  
Mais ne vosisse por Estanpes  
Que il fust si mal atornez,  
Com il est en voz mains tornez  
Tot soavet et belemant!”  
Et li vilains sa main i tant,

Sel prant et dit: “Gel tain as mains.  
 – Or l’apaigniez don tot au mains,  
 Fait ele, qu’il ne vos estorde.  
 Et n’avez peor qu’il vos morde:  
 Tenez lo qu’il ne vos eschap!  
 – Voire, fait il, por nostre chat,  
 Fait li vilain, s’il l’ancontroit,  
 Ja Deus a merci nel m’otroit  
 Qu’il nel manjast, au mien cuidier!”  
 Lors lo commance a aplaignier,  
 Si sant mout bien qu’il est moilliez.  
 “Ha, las, encor est il soilliez  
 De la rosee o il chaî!”  
 Li vilains dit: “Ahi, ahi,  
 Com vos m’avez hui corecié!  
 Mais ja par moi n’en iert grocié  
 De ce que il est arosez –  
 Or vos dormez et reposez,  
 Que ne vos voil hui mas grever:  
 Las estes de core et d’aler.”<sup>189</sup>

The wife, pretending that her husband mocks her when telling her that her *con* is gone, cannot resist mockning him by taking him into her arms, explaining that he must have frightened her “cunt” and displeased it somehow. As her husband has not told her of his maladventure trying to “fuck” her “cunt” underway, this must be her own “subtle” way of disclosing her own antipathy to him. What is striking here, in my opinion, is her ambivalence, tenderness (or is it plain sexual appetite(?)) — the embrace paired with sport. This is probably our *fableor*’s furtive way of saying “*Ecce femina*”!

“Fucking” as punishment is introduced here, together with a female plea for tenderness: her husband should not “beat”, i. e. “fuck” violently, the *con* but caress it and not be afraid that it might bite him, a somewhat curious reference to the *vagina dentata* of misogynic thought.<sup>190</sup> It is as if the wife were saying to her husband: “my cunt is not threatening or dangerous; treat it gently, and you will be richly rewarded”, a message different in tone and scope, when compared with most *fabliaux* dealing with sex and relations between men and women and which more or less concentrate on dominance in carnal matters, on who is to be on top.

Then, is all this to be interpreted in terms of *recreatio* pure and simple, or is *utilitas* also to be found in all this hilarity? The misogynic commonplaces present in this *fabliau* no doubt point to the possibility of *utilitas* structuring this text (*utile dulci*), especially as it, too, is brought to an end by the means of *essanple* discourse:

Enseignier voil por ceste fable  
Que fame set plus que deiable.  
Et certainement lo sachiez:  
Les iauz enbedeus me sachiez  
Se n’è a esciant dit voir!  
Qant ele viaut om decevoir,  
Plus l’en deçoit et plus l’afole  
Tot solemant par sa parole  
Que om ne feroit par angin.  
De ma fable faz tel defin  
Que chascuns se gart de la soe  
Q’ele ni li face la coe!<sup>191</sup>

However, the text is so markedly “unrealistic” both as to the degree of the protagonist’s stupidity and the description of it (especially, then, with its focus on exaggerated farce) that I personally find it hard to believe that *fableor* intention and subsequent audience reception could have been determined by anything but *recreatio*. Then, here the *essanple* ending should not be taken as an instance of *utilitas* but as an example of a genre property transformed into an ingredient enhancing the qualities of another one: *utilitas* is transformed into *delectatio* to such an extent that this *fabliau* is set quite apart from the rest of the texts discussed so far.

#### IV. Priests and “Pricks”

In “La sorisete des estopes” the cliché figure of the lascivious priest makes a brief appearance. He is by no means without importance, his main function being to underline the illicit lust determining the wife’s scandalous conduct, the frame of reference being

the manipulation of taboos that have overtly Christian backing, particularly the perennial sexual activity of priests, nuns, monks, and friars. Occasionally the superior sinfulness of sexuality among the clergy is rubbed in by reference to religious office.<sup>192</sup>

Thus, we find a priest willing to teach the whore Alison *Credo in Deum* in a most inappropriate context,<sup>193</sup> whereas another priest is guilty rather of blasphemous idolatry kneeling to his mistress “as if before an altar” after having made love to her.<sup>194</sup> In “Aloul” we are told about a priest who sees his opportunity at enjoying sex with an unsuspecting woman. This is what he answers her when she innocently comments on the salutary effects of the morning dew:

Mès l'en se doit desjéuner  
 D'une herbe que je bien conois;  
 [...]  
 Corte est et grosse la racine,  
 Mès moult es bone medecine;  
 N'estuet meillor à cors de fame.<sup>195</sup>

This is most representative as far as the combination of priestly cunning and lasciviousness is concerned. What is original about is that the woman in question is quite innocent, “n'i entent nule figure”,<sup>196</sup> and therefore incapable of correctly interpreting the determinants “corte [...]et grosse” and “[bon] à cors de fame”. Original in this context is also the bishop of “De l'anel qui faisait les ...s grands et roides”<sup>197</sup> who does not appreciate the magic ring as sexual arousal is only disadvantageous and discomforting to him.<sup>198</sup> Normally, these *fabliaux* priests go out of their way to obtain sexual satisfaction, no matter the cost. We even find a monk bargaining for an attractive “cunt” at a market offering a reduced price together with prayers and psalms!<sup>199</sup> The following is what a prioress blurts out when recognizing the abbot as her abbess's lover:

“Par le langhe dont Dieus parla,  
 Compaignes, c'est nos viseteres;  
 Chi poons bien prendre materes  
 Orendroit à nos souverains.  
 Que feus d'infier arde les rains  
 Qui au riber espargneront;  
 Et tout cil qui em parleront  
 En mal soient de Dieu maudit!”<sup>200</sup>

Examples such as these are readily interpreted in terms both of *recreatio/delectatio* and of *utilitas* depending on their respective contexts. However, one might suspect a strong tendency towards a special form of *utile dulci* in *fabliaux* where the protagonists (and targets) are characters belonging within the religious sphere, the paradigm being rather something like *Ecce homo religiosus*, a fitting partner to fickle and lustful woman. The result, then, would be the shameful union between the alleged “sons of S:t Paul and “the daughters of Eve”. Here we need to point out that nuns, too, can be quite lascivious as is the case in “Des .III. dames qui troverent un vit”, a remarkable tale where three ladies turn to an abbess as to what to do with the “prick” they have found. She manages to fool them completely contending that it is not a *vit* but the bolt stolen from the convent door!<sup>201</sup>

These “prestres” display considerable sexual stamina, the price probably going to the priest in “Du prestre et d'Alison” who manages nine times during one night,<sup>202</sup> but

they only indulge in heterosexual intercourse, a fact which explains the shock and disgust displayed by an intended messenger when he learns that a certain knight wants to “sodomize” a certain priest. He protests vehemently:

[...]  
Si le (foutrai) .III. u .IIII.  
– De Dieu me saing, filium patre;  
Faites le crois, seigniés vous vous, Sire  
Comment osastes vous che dire?  
– Osai, pour quoi? – Cose despite  
Che n’afiert fors que sodomite.  
[...]  
Sire, c’est tout contre nature,”  
Fait li Escuiers, que vous dites.  
Saigniés vous du sain Esperite;  
Votre manière avés perdu.<sup>203</sup>

So does the unhappy priest in his refusal, protesting the outrage:

Amis, par Dieu, onc je n’irai:  
Ne jà, se Dieu plaist, ne serai  
En lieu de femme desous home.<sup>204</sup>

The absence of performed clerical sodomy in the *fabliau* is interesting as one might suspect a certain amount of censure at work here: of course, sodomy must have been part of gossip and rumor concerning the members of the church but — with the exception of a text like the one referred to here (and consequently wholly condemned) — it does not enter the *fabliau*, a reflection of the fact that the attitudes toward sodomy, at least as represented in literature, had changed considerably since the late 11th century when it is even a theme in the poetry by a few prominent members of the church:

Obiciunt etiam, juvenum cur more locutus  
Virginibus scipsi nec minus et pueris.  
Nam scripsi quaedam quae complectuntur amorem;  
Carminibusque meis sexus uterque placet.<sup>205</sup>

Errabat mea mens fervore libidinis amens...  
Quid quod pupilla mihi carior ille vel illa?  
Ergo maneto foris, puer aliger, auctor amoris!  
Nullus in aede mea tibi sit locus, o Cytherea!  
Displicet amplexus utriusque quidem mihi sexus.<sup>206</sup>

Crinis flavus, os decorum cervixque candidula,  
Sermo blandus et suavis; sed quid laudem singula?  
Totus pulcher et decorus, nec est in te macula,  
Sed vacare castitati talis nequit formula...

Crede mihi, si redirent prisca Jovis secula,  
Ganymedes iam non foret ipsius vernacula,  
Sed tu, raptus in supernis, grate luce pocula,  
Gratiora quidem nocte Jovi dares oscula.<sup>207</sup>

The priest of “*Li Prestre ki abevete*”<sup>208</sup> by Garin is typical in his utter lack of priestly qualities. The plot is extremely simple. Again, we have a cunning and lusty wife who, despite her being “*sage, courtoise et bien aprise*,”<sup>209</sup> is in love with her parish priest, “*Et cele le prestrë amoit / vers lui avoit tout son cuer mis*,”<sup>210</sup> although her husband loves and cherishes her to the best of his ability. The priest, madly attracted by her, decides to visit her and “talk to her”. However, when he arrives there he finds the married couple at table, eating and drinking. He spies at the couple through the keyhole and cries: “*Que faites vous la, boine gent?*”<sup>211</sup> The peasant promptly tells him that they are having a meal, only to receive a most astonishing answer: “*Mengiés faites? Vous i mentés: / il m’est avis que vous foutés!*”<sup>212</sup> The peasant is indignant (and probably shocked at this priestly impudence) and answers: “*Taisiés, sire, non faisons voir: / Nous mengons, ce pöés veoir.*”<sup>213</sup> The priest is utterly shameless staging his trick:

Dist li prestres: “*Je n’en dout rien,  
vous foutés, car je le voi bien.  
Bien me volés ore avuler.  
O moi venés cha fors ester,  
et je m’en irai la seoir;  
lors porrés bien appercevoir  
se j’ai voir dit u j’ai menti.*”<sup>214</sup>

The peasant is foolish enough to comply with the priest’s wish, the result of which being the priest resolutely making love to the only too willing housewife: he does with her “what women want more than anything”:

maintenant le prent par la teste,  
si l’a desous lui enversee,  
la roube li a souslevee,  
si li a fait icele cose  
que femme aime sor toute cose:  
le vit li a el con bouté,

puis a tant feru et hurté  
 que il fist che que il queroit.  
 Et li vilains abeuveitoit  
 a l’huis et vit tout en apert:  
 le cul de sa femme descouvert  
 et le prestre si par desseure.<sup>215</sup>

Confusion of *con* and *cul* is frequent in the *fabliau* but this is hardly the case here, which would leave us with a priest that is not only shameless enough to copulate with a married woman but whose also violates another taboo as the act smacks of *more canino*, judging from Garin’s description of the view presented to the wretched peasant. The latter cannot believe his eyes but is easily convinced by the priest that what he thinks he is watching, copulation *in flagrante*, is only an illusion due to an enchanted door!

This *fabliau* does not offer any *essanple* ending but for the brief proverbial line: “Maint fol paist Dius!”<sup>216</sup> This is hardly enough to warrant a reading in the sign of *utile dulci*. If one opts for reading this text as a sort of *essanple* in the negative, the message being yet another illustration of the corruption of priests (and wives), it is read more as one belonging within a defined corpus of *fabliaux* rather than “on its own merits”. Taken isolated, “Li prestre ki abevete” is more of an amusing trifle than an *essanple*. However, *utilitas* is not entirely excluded but would actually be brought to the fore, if the audience were to be sensitive enough to the ambiguity of “mout le tenoit en grant certé”: “L’auteur exploite ici la double acception de *certé*: ‘affection’, mais aussi ‘disette’. À la lettre on peut traduire “Le vilain la chérissait beaucoup” mais la signification ironique suggérée par le contexte c’est qu’il ‘la tenait en grande disette sexuelle.’<sup>217</sup> This would leave the audience a clear message à l’*essanple*: beware of the sexually frustrated woman, an easy prey for the lustful priests.

If “Li prestre ki abevete” might be somewhat ambiguous as to *utilitas* and *delectatio*, this is hardly the case as regards “Le prestre crucefié”,<sup>218</sup> a text which, in my opinion, is structured by unambiguous and vehement *utilitas*, as it were. The word “essanple” in the very opening line does not, however, automatically imply that our *fableor* from the very outstart limits the interpretation to *utilitas*; as demonstrated *supra*, the word *essanple* does not in itself unequivocally point to *utilitas* as the interpretative frame. At this stage the introductory sequence of “Le prestre crucefié” is open to both *utilitas* and *delectatio*:

Un essanple voil coumencier  
 Qu’après de monsignor Rogier,  
 Le franc mestre, le debonaire,

Qui bien savoit images fere  
 Et bien entaillier crucefis:  
 Il n'en estoit mie aprentis,  
 Ainz entailloit et bel et bien.  
 Et sa fame sor toute rien  
 Avoit aamé un prevoire.<sup>219</sup>

Again, we find a plotting wife, madly in love with a priest, but, for once, not a stupid husband but one who is more than able to read his wife's face and mind:

Ses sires li a fait a croire  
 Que au marchié voloit aler,  
 Et un ymage ou lui porter  
 Dont il avra asez deniers.  
 Et la dame mout volentiers  
 Li otroie, s'en fu mout liee.  
 Et il vit sa chiere haitiee,  
 Si se prist a apercevoir  
 Qu'elle le vouloit decevoir,  
 Sicomme ele a acoutumé.<sup>220</sup>

Thus, his plan is quite simple, an implicit reference to his wife being, if not stupid, at least not cunning enough to guess his scheme. Also, implicitly added here, is the idea of her being ruled by her own lust preventing her from seeing things clearly. To put it bluntly: her *con* is her master, not her husband.

The latter goes to town, stops there for a while, waiting for the right moment to come, literally shaking with anger: “De mautalent et d'ire tremble”.<sup>221</sup> To me, the fact that the husband is more than a match for his wife, together with his fury, speaks for *utilitas* being gradually established as the interpretative frame of the discourse.

Once back, he sees the illicit lovers together at table and has the door opened to him. The priest is overcome by fear and despair and at a loss as to what to do, but the wife, as might be expected, tries to solve the dilemma by means of a simple trick:

Li prestres n'ot par ou fuir.  
 “Deus, dist li prestres, que ferai?  
 Dist la dame: “Je vous dirai:  
 Despoilliez vous et si alez  
 Laiens, et si vous estendez  
 Avec ces autres crucefis.”  
 [...]  
 Le fist li prestres, ce sachiez:

Trestouz nus s'est lués despoilliez,  
Emmi les ymages s'estut,  
Comme s'il fust dolez de fust.<sup>222</sup>

The husband, more than a match for his scheming wife, immediately understands that the priest has hidden among the crucifixes. The wife's choice of words is quite remarkable: “ces autres crucefis”; it is as if she views the priest to be an innocent victim, a stunning conception which proves that her mind is perverted. The frame of reference is, of course, indirect blasphemy: the idea is that the priest, a sinner *grand style*, is to be mistaken for an image of Christ on the cross, the Son of God, and of no sin. This priest is hopelessly guilty in three respects: he is expected to be perfectly chaste, he isn't, he is definitely not supposed to commit adultery, he does, sacrilege, always an absolute outrage, should be unthinkable in his case, he commits it; thus he fully deserves what is coming to him.

The furious husband forces his frightened wife to light a candle and follow him; he immediately spots the wretched priest, unable to hide himself, given away by his genitals:

Et li sires tout aroument  
Le prevoire tout estendu  
Vit, si l'a bien reconeü  
A la coille, et au vit qui pent.<sup>223</sup>

Thus the priest's blasphemy is doubly brought to the fore: his “instruments” of sin are there to behold, whereas the crucified Christ's genitals are always covered in Christian art. The priest's “penance” is utterly cruel as the fierce husband castrates him on the spot, grimly mock-pretending that he has to correct a mistake:

“Dame, fait il, vilainement  
Ay en cest ymage mespris:  
J'estoie yvres, ce vous plevis,  
Quant telz membres je y laissé.  
Alumez, si l'amenderé!”  
Le prestre ne s'osa mouvoir:  
Et ge vous di tretout por voir  
Que vit et coilles li trencha,  
Que onques riens ne li laissa  
Que tretout n'ait outre trenchié!<sup>224</sup>

Whatever illusive realism there is to be found so far is resolutely broken here by the *fableor* as the priest instead of dying runs away (a narrative *finesse* as his dying would

have made him too much like Christ(!)) only to be beaten by two churls passing by, thus exposed to even more ridicule and shame. In another context this sequence, especially, the husband crying out “Seignor, prenez mon croucefis / Qui orendroit m'est eschapé”,<sup>225</sup> would have indicated *delectatio*, but this is hardly the case here, taking in consideration the context. Actually, our *fableor* seems eager to stress the non-comic character of his piece, as he concludes his story by explaining his *essample*:

Cest essample vous moutré bien  
 Que nul prestre, por nule rien,  
 Ne devoit autrui fame amer,  
 N'a cele venir ni aler  
 Qui onques fust en chalengage,  
 Qu'i n'i laissast la coille en gage:  
 Si comme fist prestres Coustanz  
 Qui i laissa les trois pendanz.<sup>226</sup>

There can be no doubt that this is an instance of pure and unequivocal *utilitas*: the intertextual reference, the sixth commandment demanding the constance (!) the priest, despite his name, so fatally lacks, is impossible to interpret in terms of sport or parody, thus *delectatio/recreatio* must be ruled out.

“Le prestre taint” by Gautier de Leu displays considerable similarities with “Le prestre crucifié” but is less strictly focussed on unequivocal *utilitas*, as more distinct comedy is exploited. This “aventure est et bone et bele”<sup>227</sup> and opens by means of a remarkably introduction where the *fableor* not only describes how his *fabliau* came about in Orléans but also how displeased he was, having to stay at a “ostel”, fit for the devil! The likely reason for an inclusion of a digression such as this one will be the setting of a jocular mood directing the tentative interpretation of the text.

After 30 lines it is time for the introduction of the protagonist, a truly good man, who bestows his favors on a neighbor priest who repays him badly as he covets his wife, who, unluckily for him (and probably unexpectedly for an audience familiar with the typical *fabliau* wives) is absolutely unwavering in her faithfulness to her husband and thus bent on resisting his advances:

[...] Or vos diroi  
 de cele aventure d'ouen,  
 devant la feste seint Johan,  
 qu'avint en la cité d'Orliens,  
 chés un bourgeois qui mout grant biens  
 fesoit un prestre son voisin.  
 Li borgeis n'eüst ja bon vin

ne bon mengier dont il menjast,  
que au prestre n'en envoiast.  
Mes li prestre mout poi prisoit  
quant que le borjois li fesoit:  
mieus vosist gesir o sa fame  
qui mout estoit cortoise dame  
et fresche et avenant et bele.  
Le prestre chascun jor l'apele,  
de s'amour forment la requiert.  
La bone dame dist ja n'iert  
qu'ele face a son mari tort  
– s'el en devoit prendre la mort –  
ni vilanie ne hontage.  
Et de ce a el cors grant rage  
que le prestre l'en a tant dit.<sup>228</sup>

She is so furious that she physically assaults him, but the priest is more troubled by the fact that she has turned him down than having been beaten on the head. He tries to find a solution to his problem and believes that he has struck luck when he catches sight of “lady Hersent”, an expert in these matters:

si a dame Hersent veüe,  
la marrugliere del mostier,  
qui mout savoit de tel mestier.  
Il n'a el mont prestre ne moigne  
ne bon reclus ne bon chanoine,  
se tant feïst qu'a li parlast,  
que de s'angoise nel getast.<sup>229</sup>

Their absolute lack in moral standards (the enumeration of priests, monks, hermits and canons stressing the perversion of Christians ideals) is brought strikingly to the fore when the priest pays her from the chest of alms, recommending her to God (!):

Prent tost le prestre, si li baille  
dis sous qu'il out en s'aumosniere  
Lors se lieve la pautonniere  
qui des deniers ot plein le poing,  
si li a dit: “A grant besoing  
doit l'en bien son ami aidier!”  
Si s'an departi sans targier  
et li a congié demandé,  
et i la commanda a Dé;<sup>230</sup>

Dame Hersent pays a visit to the chaste lady in order to persuade her to accord the priest his wishes, but the latter is infuriated and sends her away by means of hitting her in the face for her shameless insolence. Pale with shame and covered with sweat (!) dame Hersent complains to the priest, who proves himself fully capable of stopping at nothing: he decides to threaten the good couple with excommunication, an extraordinary transgression of his priestly role and power which bears striking witness to his extreme corruption and vile conduct. The good husband is surprised to hear the priest explaining the alleged outrage committed by his wife but is prudent enough to ask her for the truth, which she immediately tells him. He believes her without reservation and stages a trap for the lecherous priest, asking his wife to help him with his scheme. In brief, their plan is that she is to pretend that she will comply with the priest's wishes and that she is to ask him for money as well. Obviously, the priest does not only violate his vow of chastity, but also that of poverty. The husband is to pretend that he has gone away on business, thus offering the priest the opportunity he is waiting for. Having arrived at the house, even bringing a fat goose (the priest, then, is a glutton too (!)), he undresses and jumps into a hot bath that the housewife (as planned by the husband) has prepared. Now is the point when the husband returns and situational comedy is brought to the fore:

Et li prestres ne tarja guere,  
 deschauciez s'est et despoilliez:  
 el baing qui fu apareilliez,  
 voiant la dame, s'en saut nu.  
 [...] et endementre  
 le prestre saut du baing et entre  
 en autre cuve qui fui pleine  
 de teint de brasil et de greine,  
 ou la dame le fist saillir.  
 – Bien sera teint, n'i puet faillir,  
 enceis qu'il ise de la cuve! –  
 Or est li prestres en estuve  
 que la dame a bien covert.<sup>231</sup>

Now ensues a somewhat bizarre interlude when “dant Picons” (i. e. “Sir Picon”), the husband, at the request of the maid, prepares the sauce to go with the goose and to carve it (an obvious reference what is awaiting the priest). Here, situational comedy reaches its climax:

“Alon garder ou est le teint,  
se mon crucefiz est bien teint,  
que l'en le m'a hui demandé.  
Alon le trere, de par Dé!  
Dansele, fetes cler le feu,  
si le metton en plus haut leu!”  
Quant la parolle entent li prestre,  
dedenz le teint plunge sa teste,  
por ce que ne fust conneü.  
A tant Picon s'est esmeü:  
vers sa cuve s'en est alez,  
sa fame et ses serjanz delez,  
qui le covercle sus leverent.  
Le prestre estendu i troverent  
en tel maniere com s'il fust  
ouvré en prierrè ou en fust.  
Par piez, par cuises et par braz  
lors le pranent de totes pars,  
sus le lievent plus d'une toise.  
“Dieus, fet dans Picons, com il poise!  
ne vi crucefiz tant pesast.”<sup>232</sup>

The husband wishes the same kind of vengeance as the wronged husband in “Le prestre crucefié” but the priest manages to escape, “li prestre a la coille enpoignië, / et vet fuiant aval la rue”.<sup>233</sup> Before this happens more situational comedy is presented:

Le cler feu, qui vers son dos raie,  
li fet son baudoïn drecier:  
or n'ot en li que corecier!  
La dame o un cil le regarde,  
et dant Picons s'en est pris garde.  
Sa mesnee vot fere rire,  
a sa fame commence a dire:  
“Dame, fet il, je vos afi  
que mes tel crucefiz ne vi  
qui eüst ne coille vit,  
ne je ne autre mes nel vit.”<sup>234</sup>

The image of the “crucified priest” and the fire speaks not only of crucifixion but also of hell (the fire burying his back), an interesting clash. However, Christ was not the only one to be crucified but so were the two robbers sentenced to die with him. Crucifixion, then, does not only imply salvation but also punishment. In this sense it is only

proper that the priest should suffer the hellish fire tormenting him. His erection (fire is also a symbol of passion), note the metaphor chosen, “baudoïn”, meaning both ass, donkey and penis, i.e a metonym expressing animal lust, is remarkable in this context, not only for its grim comedy, but also as a probable illustration of the priest’s true self, always ruled by his lust as he is. Another aspect is also present: the purging burning at the stake, i.e cleansing and punishment at the same time, a most medieval concept.

Interestingly, there is no *essanple* ending here, nor has there been any mention of such an intention or design earlier in this *fabliau*, a fact which decidedly reduces *utilitas*. To me, the amount of comedy, especially the situational one, directs the interpretation of this text toward *delectatio/recreatio*. However, the similiarity between it and “Li prestre crucefié” cannot be left unconsidered, leaving *utile dulci* as a likely interpretative mould for “Le prestre taint”, “this is what might happen to a priest ridiculing his vows, especially the one of celibacy”, but the stress is more on ridicule than on vehement denunciation. Also, which in my opinion, reduces *utilitas*: with the possible exception of her commenting the priest’s genitals and comparing them with her husband’s (a sudden spurt of insolence (?) not mentioned by Burns), the housewife is depicted as a model of marital loyalty with her husband, making her more of a sister-in-spirit with the model wives of romance and certain theological writing<sup>235</sup> than with the typical *fabliau* wife. What is left of *utilitas* is devoid of misogynic cliché, a most unusual trait of a text within the genre in question.

There is another *fabliau*, “Connebert” by Gautier le Leu, which diplays strong sadistic bent when the wronged husband (in this case a blacksmith) is to punish the priest violating sacred matrimony. This text, which, among other things displays the theme of the vagina being “an orifice to be nourished by male sperm”, “Qant li orlages fu chëuz / Et Connebert fu repeüz”<sup>236</sup> is a mordent parody of courtly romance:

“Amie doce,  
 Don estes vos trestote voie?”  
 Ele respont: Se Dex me voie,  
 Vostre est mes cuers, vostre est mes cors  
 Et par dedanz et par defors,  
 Mais li cus si est mon mari.”  
 [...]
 .....li cus soit siens  
 Mais je lo li batrai sovant;  
 Ce li met je bien en covant.”<sup>237</sup>

The reference to courtly code, “Vostre est mes cuers, vostre est mes corps”, commented on by e.g. Nykrog,<sup>238</sup> combined with the coarse reference to sodomy creating considerable codal clash, point more to *delectatio* than to *utilitas*. The couple is caught in the

act, and when offered two hundred pounds in ransom, the blacksmith turns the offer down. Instead he wants “vo coille qui maintes foiz / Me bat mon cul sor mon defoiz”.<sup>239</sup> Then, it time for action, and for revenge:

Don li va la coille enhaper,  
 Qui il avoit au cul pandue.  
 Sor l'estoc li a estandue,  
 Si a feru cinq clos parmi,  
 Les quatre entor et l'un parmi.<sup>240</sup>

Muscatine summarizes the rest:

The smith then lays a razor on the block and sets fire to the bundles of fuel around the forge. Faced with death by burning, the victim castrates himself and flees. What he leaves behind — ‘balls as big as two kidneys; the skin so big and ruddy you could make a purse out of it’ [...] — is found well roasted in the coals and is eaten by the dogs.<sup>241</sup>

This falls somewhere between the distinct *utilitas* of “Le prestre crucefié” and the *utile dulci* of “Le prestre taint”; perhaps the best way of putting it would be *utile dulci* with more stress on *utile* than on *dulci*. Of course, a member of the audience enjoying coarse sadistic humor for its own sake would have it the other way around; Gautier leaving the interpretative frame open for both possibilities.

This is perhaps less the case with the very short “Le prestre et le leu” (28 lines) where a peasant digs a ditch to trap his wife’s lover, a priest. He falls into it and so does a prowling wolf (a suitable “companion” for a *prestre amant*, a special kind of wolf with women as his prey), and the servant girl sent by the wife to look for the priest. The peasant gets his revenge: he kills the wolf, castrates the priest, and chases the girl away. Order is restored.

“Frere Denise” by Rutebeuf is a more complicated text than the other ones discussed here. Its two protagonists are the seemingly pious young girl Denise and a friar, Simon, who desires her and convinces her to enter his order in masculine disguise. She becomes “frere Denise”, the name being androgynous in Old French.<sup>242</sup> Gaunt provides us with a most elegant summary of this *fabliau*, and, again, I can do no better than to quote him:

Brother Simon has her admitted to his order and he is then able to have his way with her whenever he wants.[...] One day Denise and Simon are eating at a knight’s house when his wife realizes Denise is a woman. She insists on being confessed by Denise, but as soon as they are on their own forces her to confess what has happened and to abandon her sinful life. The knight and his wife threaten to expose them unless Simon provides a suitable dowry for Denise, which he readily contrives in order to avoid scandal. The wife dresses

Denise in her own fine clothes and takes her back to her mother, telling her she has been in a convent. Denise is then found an eligible husband and marries.<sup>243</sup>

The “ostensibly serious prologue”<sup>244</sup> runs as follows:

Li abiz ne fait pas l'ermite:  
 S'uns hom en hermitage habite,  
 S'il est de povres draz vestuz,  
 Je ne pris mie deus festuz  
 Son habit ne sa vesteüre  
 S'il ne mainne vie ausi pure  
 Coume ses habiz nos demoustre.  
 Mais mainte gens font bele moustre  
 Et merveilleuz semblant qu'il vaillent;  
 Il semblent les aubres qui faillent,  
 Qui furent trop bel au florir:  
 Bien dovroient teil gent morir  
 Vilainnement et a grant honte!  
 Uns proverbes dit et raconte  
 Que tout n'est pas ors c'on voit luire.<sup>245</sup>

A proverbial opening such as this one normally indicates the *utilitas* of the *essanple*. If compared with the other *essanple* openings touched upon *supra*, this one stands out as the most elaborated one, by far. In the other texts the *fableors* are content just to briefly connect the opening with the *essanple* and then to hurry on to the tale itself and, thus, to offer less of an exposition than is the case of “Frere Denise”; the theme being the wicked doings of a perverted monk, and [perhaps] those of an equally wicked young girl. The proverbial opening goes very well with the continuation of the story where the narrator’s comments on Denise being a noble and virtuous maiden (28–29) and how she rejects marriage in order to serve God and Mary, the mother of God as a virgin (24–27). She is told by Simon that it would be easier for her to defend her virginity in his religious order than at home (58–65), two possible intertexts being the Latin *vita* and the Old French *vie* of Saint Euphrosina which tell how the saint disguises herself as a monk in order to escape from home and devote herself to God.<sup>246</sup> Rutebeuf allows considerable narrative space to criticizing Simon for his wicked ways (82–108), the result of which being the possibility of interpreting the *fabliau* as the story of a lascivious monk harrasing an innocent victim who, luckily, is finally rescued by a crafty woman.

In his elegant and mainly convincing reading of “Frere Denise” Gaunt brings to the fore the ambiguity of the text, how the proverbial opening might actually refer not only to Simon but also to Denise founding his reading on two quotations:

Por ce m'estuet, ainz que je muire,  
Faire un flabel d'une aventure  
De la plus bele criature  
Que hom puisse troveir ne querre  
De Paris jusqu'en Aingleterre.  
[...]  
Frere meneur laianz hantoient,  
Tuit cil qui par par illec passoient.  
Or avint c'uns en i hanta  
Qui la demoizele enchanta,  
Si vos dirai en queil maniere.  
La pucele li fist proiere  
Que il sa mere requieist  
Qu'en religion la meïst.<sup>247</sup>

However, in my opinion, Gaunt rather underplays Simon's role in the opening: it is much more likely that “monk” actually refers to Simon, and him only, than also to include Denise.<sup>248</sup> It is true that the first line reads “Li abiz ne fait pas l'ermite”, but Gaunt does not pay enough attention to the following lines which constitute an elaboration of the introductory line. These lines are not open to any ambiguity as far as gender is concerned. On the other hand, Gaunt is much more convincing when he comments on “enchanta” as referring either to Simon bewitching Denise or that she finds him irresistible (Gaunt has “attractive”,<sup>249</sup> which is too weak, in my opinion). Denise is “conquise, mate, vaincue” (the sexual sense, here, is very strong), so with Gaunt we have to ask: how virtuous is really Denise? Rutebeuf, too, is quite elegant when describing the illicit couple's life in the convent:

Par sa contenance desut  
Touz ses freres frere Denise:  
Courtoiz fu et de grant servize.  
Frere Denize mout amerent  
Tuit li frere qui laians erent,  
Mais plus l'amoit fere Symons!  
Sovent se metoit es limons  
Com cil qui n'en ert pas retraiz,  
Et il s'i amoit mieulz qu'es traiz:  
Mout ot en li boen limonier.  
Vie menoit de pautonier  
Et ot guerpi vie d'apostre;  
Et cele aprist sa pater nostre,  
Que volontiers la recevoit.<sup>250</sup>

As Gaunt stresses, this passage is rich in sexual innuendo:<sup>251</sup> “retraiz” can mean a monk (i. e. a man withdrawn from the world), a lapsed monk (withdrawn from the Holy Order), but also the penis after intercourse (i. e. “withdrawn”), whereas “traiz” (Latin *tractus*) can refer both to a liturgical song and to a “strap which is part of a carthorse’s harness, thereby reinforcing the preceding sexual metaphor.”<sup>252</sup> The sexual charge of this passage is so strong that even *pater noster* takes on (blasphemous) sexual meaning. The result of all this is that Denise can hardly be called virtuous or be considered a victim, everything pointing to her delighting in sex with Simon and perhaps not only with him; “cortoiz fu et de grant service” implying that she might take on the rest of the brothers, as well. Then, we would be quite near the lascivious nunnery in “Masetto da Lamporecchio” by Boccaccio. The latter story, however, is quite “straight” as far as sexual identity and activity is concerned. This is not necessarily the case with “Frere Denise”, which implicitly allows sodomy, as we are not told whether the other friars, if at all copulating with her, know that their partner is a young woman in disguise, or if they believe “him” to be a young, and presumably attractive monk!

Accepting, reluctantly,<sup>253</sup> Gaunt’s constructionist reading of “Frere Denise” as a text about gender ambiguity, Denise having to dress up, not only in order to pass as a monk, but also to become a young woman again, it is time to try to establish whether “Frere Denise” is a showcase for *utilitas*, *delectatio* or the combination of the two, *utile dulci*. As might be inferred from the ambiguity present in the text, pointed out especially by Gaunt, and also by us, this is not too simple a task. There can hardly be any doubt that the opening together with the overtones of hagiography (by definition a genre of strict *utilitas*) decidedly point more to *utilitas* than to *delectatio*. *Utilitas* is certainly not necessarily ruined by Denise having entered the convent in disguise (cf. Saint Euphryna), nor by the fact that she most willingly leads a lascivious life in the convent. Then, positive *utilitas* (that of hagiography) is overthrown by its negative equivalent; we are served yet another *essanple* telling us of the wicked ways of perverted monks and of fickle women lead astray. What about the knight’s wife “blowing the whistle on Simon and Denise’s fun” (Gaunt<sup>254</sup>)?:

[...] mout doucement li pria  
 Qu’ele fust trestoute seüre  
 Que ja de nule creature  
 Ne sera ses secreiz seüz,  
 Ne qu’ele ait a home geü,  
 Ainz sera mout bien mariee:  
 Choisisse en toute la contree  
 Celui que mieulz avoir vodroit,  
 Ne mais qu’il soit de son endroit.

Tant fist la dame envers Denize  
 Qu’elle la en boen penceir mise.  
 Ne la servi mies de lobes:  
 Une de ses plus beles robes  
 Devant son lit li aporta;  
 A son pooir la conforta  
 Con cele qui ne s’en faint mie,  
 Et li a dit: ‘Ma douce amie,  
 Ceste vestireiz vos demain.’<sup>255</sup>

The name of the game her is deception. The lady plans to present Denise as a virgin and Denise colludes. Is this, too, an instance of *utilitas*? I would venture that it is, because to a listener/reader of a more or less straightforward and unsophisticated misogynic bent the entire *fabliau* would work as a clear *essanple* in the negative, both Denise and the knight’s wife being as cunning and devious as might be expected/feared. To a listener/reader, perhaps not less misogynic at heart, but more sophisticated in his tastes, the result would probably be that of *utile dulci*, a mixture of enjoying Rutebeuf’s narrative skills and appreciating the message. Pure *delectatio* is the least likely alternative: I have certain difficulties conceiving an audience so free from prejudice against women (not to mention wicked monks) as not to pay any attention at all to this *fabliau*’s inherent “lesson”.

Despite their differences as to structure, content, and message the *fabliaux* discussed so far directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, concentrate on one thing: the *con* and its powers both over woman possessing it, and over man desiring it and/or fearing it. Examples of this are legion in the *fabliau* and before moving to the next chapter I find it necessary for my purpose to dwell a bit more on the subject. As shown *supra*, a result of the *con* ruling woman is cuckoldry as a basic ingredient in several erotic *fabliaux*, the *con* being insatiable and the woman/wife cunning and devious in her schemes. Yet another example of the latter would be “La saineresse”. The ever present dupe or victim<sup>256</sup> is the easily fooled husband who still thinks that his wife has been visited by a female blood-letter, when her visitor, actually, was a male seducer. She is as bold as to tell her husband the whole story,<sup>257</sup> managing to fool the cuckold into believing one thing, whereas the audience understands another,<sup>258</sup> a clear example of *delectatio* based on the *fableor*’s skilful use of medical imagery, a frequent and well-known feature of courtly poetry:<sup>259</sup>

“Par .iii. rebinées me prist,  
 Et à chascune fois m’assist  
 Sor mes rains deux de ses peçons,  
 Et me feroit uns cops si lons;  
 Toute me sui fet martirier,

Et si ne poi onques sainier.  
 Granz cops me feroit et sovent;  
 Morte fusse, mon escient,  
 S'un trop bon oingnement ne fust.  
 [...]  
 L'oingnement issoit d'un tuiel,  
 Et si descendoit d'un forel  
 D'une pel moult noire et hideuse,  
 Mais moult par estoit savoreuse.<sup>260</sup>

The qualities of the *con* may vary considerably as may its “mistress’s” conception of it. The best illustration of this will be “Le jugement des cons” (“the cunt conundrum”), a rather absurd *fabliau* telling the story of three young sisters that have fallen in love with the same young man, Robin. Their uncle proposes to settle the dispute by means of a riddle: “Which is older, you or your cunt?” To Sarah Melhado White the young girls are “unabashed and well-informed”.<sup>261</sup> “Unabashed”, yes, but hardly “well-informed”, if we are to judge from their answers. The first one claims that her *con* is older than her as it has grown a beard which she has not! The second one claims that it is younger since it has not grown any teeth, which she herself has! This is the third sister’s reply:

– Oncles, dist ele, por nului  
 Ne leraï que ne le vous die –  
 Qui veüt, si le tiengne a folie:  
 Mes cons est plus jones de moi;  
 Si vous dirai reson por qoi;  
 De la mamele sui sevreë,  
 Mes cons a la goule baeë:  
 Jeüns est, si veüt aletier.  
 Or m’ose je bien afichier  
 Que j’ai bone reson troveë.  
 L’ame de lui soit honoreë  
 Qui jugera ces moz a droit!<sup>262</sup>

The first sister’s reply is merely stupid, “a grotesque antiface”.<sup>263</sup> The second one smacks of the intimidating concept of the *vagina dentata*, while the third one speaks of female tenderness and docility.<sup>264</sup> This *vagina dentata*, conceptually related to the one of “the hole leading to tell” found in “Du moine”,<sup>265</sup> i. e. the “dolssor conina” of Marcabru, has a counterpart in the monk dreaming about an “English girl’s cunt with its opening sweet as honey”:

L'entree ert douce comme miex,  
 Et s'estoit primes de ce point  
 Que li paus volages li point,  
 S'ot gros bauchet et sist sor boche.<sup>266</sup>

The latter two *fabliaux* are *essanple* texts telling us both of woman's *con* and man's (including a monk's) reaction to it and dependence of it.

In his dream our lascivious monk rejects a *con* offered him because of its unpleasant “lips”: “Il avoit les levres ansdeus / Maigres et plus noires que fer”.<sup>267</sup> This “vaginalized mouth” also appears in “Connebert” (cf. *supra*), in “Du Porcelet” where a woman possesses a “piggy” vagina which devours all the food her husband's “little nothing” has to offer, as “Quant plus manjue, plus fain a”.<sup>268</sup> It is also found in “Le Debat du cons et du cus” where it appreciates sausages, “Ersoir menjas tu une andoille”,<sup>269</sup> (a striking instance of timeless erotic imagery), and it is conceived as a “goule” (wide open or gaping mouth) in “Le Dit des cons”,<sup>270</sup> and in “Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler (cf. *supra*)” and “La veuve” with its “goulu Goliath”.<sup>271</sup> It also speaks, eg. in “Le chevalier qui fist les cons parler” (cf. *supra*) or in the remarkable “Debat du cons et du cus” where it complains of the disgraceful vicinity to the *cul*:

Mauvesement en exploita  
 Qui si près moi te herbérga  
 [...]
   
 Se tu fusses .I. poi plus loins,  
 Toz li mons fust à moi aclin;  
 Mès j'ai en toi si ort voisin  
 Que tu ne vas ne tu ne sez.  
 A toz cels dont tu es amez  
 Doinst Dame Diex male aventure,  
 Quar il le font contre nature,<sup>272</sup>

To Burns this is an example of the vagina conveying a patriarchal view.<sup>273</sup> To me this is rather an illustration of the conflict between accepted sexuality and sodomy, the reference to “love for the anus” as against nature being quite unambiguous. Furthermore, to me, this is not necessarily an instance of patriarchal ideology but rejection of a certain form of sexual conduct on [implicit] theological and ideological grounds. Of course, there are critics, especially constructionist ones, particularly those who champion “queer theory”, that would contend that patriarchy and theology/ideology necessarily amount to much the same thing, a position which is not mine.

Despite the fact that lovemaking is clearly enjoyed and also occasionally praised in direct terms as is the case in “La dame qui se venja du chevalier” where it is considered

“praiseworthy because it makes you completely forget poverty, boredom, and pain”<sup>274</sup> and that it is taken for granted that all women enjoy sex, especially young and healthy ones, “Quar jone fame bien peüe / Sovent voudroit estre fotue” (“Le Pescheor de Pont sur Saine”)<sup>275</sup> there can be little doubt that misogyny is more or less constantly and to varying degrees present, a fact already touched upon *supra*, but which merits more attention. Although it is true that contemporary *fabliau* criticism to a considerable extent stresses the complexity of the question, there can be little doubt that misogyny determines several *fabliaux* to such an extent that they approach much patristic writing, although they often concentrate less on woman as Eve’s incurable daughter, (or even worse as in “Du con qui fu fait a la besche”<sup>276</sup>) but more on what canonical law has to say about dominance and subjection between the sexes. As has been stated repetitiously, the root to most evil is woman’s nature as confessed e.g. by the wife in “Le chevalier qui fist sa dame confesse”:

“A paine porroit-l’en choisir  
 Fame qui se puisse tenir  
 A son seignor seulement,  
 Jà tant ne l’aura bel ne gent;  
 Quar la nature tele en ont,  
 Qu’els requierent, ce sachiez-vous,  
 Et li mari si sont vilain  
 Et de grant felonie plain,  
 Si ne nous oson descouvrir  
 Vers aus, ne noz besoins gehir;  
 Quar por putains il nous tendroient,  
 Se noz besoins par nous savoient;  
 Si ne puet estre en nule guise  
 Que n’aions d’autrui le servise.”<sup>277</sup>

At times woman is unwilling to confess her standards (i. e. that she is ruled by her *con* and its cravings for the *vit*). This is brought very much to the fore in “Le Pescheor do Pont sur Saine” where a fisherman who wants to put his wife to the test brings home a *vit* which he has cut off a drowned priest (!) and pretends it to be his own. Despite her protestations to the contrary, his wife is devastated and cannot help but showing that his “prick” is the only thing that matters to her in their marriage. Her relief is as comical as it is telling when she is finally convinced that her husband “has got his prick back”: “Mesire a son vit recouvré, / Nostre Sires i a ouvré”.<sup>278</sup> The *fableor* concludes his tale by means of yet another *essanple* ending:

Cil flabel nos raconte et dit  
 Que por la coille et por le vit  
 Tient la fame l'ome plus chier:  
 C'est veritee, par seint Richier!<sup>279</sup>

The message is clear: woman (not only this one but woman in general) appreciates man only for his genitals, a fact which bears witness to her narrow outlook on the world. She is all *con*, nothing else, a devastating attack in a context like the medieval one, so rich in intellectual activity and aspirations, the hedonist-materialist aspect<sup>280</sup> of the *fabliau* notwithstanding.

Woman is not only lascivious and cunning, she is also at times stupid enough to challenge man in his authority over her, as is the case with the wife in “De la coille noire”,<sup>281</sup> which is a story about a peasant who marries a proud and contemptuous lady. The *essanple* is there established already in the very plot: “you should not marry such a woman”. After five years of marriage (!) the wife, by looking through a hole in his trousers finds out that her husband’s *coille* is black. This makes her refuse sex with him and she brings him before an ecclesiastical court — the explicit design being to disgrace him in public, the implicit one, perhaps, being to ask for anulment. The real reason for his abstinence, is her argument, (the story’s logic is somewhat twisted, as it is she who now refuses sex with him) is his black scrotum:

Que cinc ans m’a bien meintenee  
 Mes barons; ains mès nel connui:  
 Ersoir or primes aperçui  
 L’ochoison por coi il remaint.<sup>282</sup>

The husband refutes her accusations claiming that she is to blame for their sexual abstinence: she has been most busy entertaining other men. The wife denies this accusation. This is the opening of the husband’s defense:

“A vous, sire, me claim  
 De ma fame, qui tot mon fain  
 A torchier son cul et son con  
 Et la roie de son poistron,  
 M’a gasté à faire torchons.”<sup>283</sup>

Of course, this not all too bright wife falls into the trap:

“Vos i mentés par les grenons,”  
 Fait ele, “dans vilains despers:

Il a cinc ans que ne fu ters  
 Mes cus de fain de n'autre rien."  
 "Non," fait il, jel savoie bien:  
 Por c'est ma coille si noircie."<sup>284</sup>

By means of his answer the husband manges two thing: he proves that her accusation of his refusing sex is false, and he also makes her confess her striking lack of hygiene. We are back at the theme of "Du con et du cus" but the attack is much more fierce here: woman should shut up as she is inherently stigmatized by her *con intra urinas et faeces*. Regardless of social station, no woman has the right to criticize a man for his "prick" or "balls", as she, by means of a metonymic procedure present in many *fabliaux*,<sup>285</sup> is directly identified with her repugnant or at times downright dangerous *con*. We are indeed very far from the monk dreaming about a sweet and delightful *con* to enjoy.

The rampant misogyny of "De la coille noire" also brands "La dame escoillee", yet another *essanple* teaching men not to let their wives dominate them. This is an unusually long *fabliau* which seems to have been put together by the fusion of two *fabliau* plots. The first one is about a man who has difficulties asserting his authority over his recalcitrant wife. He tries violence, but it does not work. The second plot describes another married couple, that of their daughter and her husband. This daughter has inherited her mother's indomitable spirit and lack of respect for men and her husband decides to put an end to these two women's insubordination. Sadism is conspicuous here: he mutilates his mother-in-law's thighs, and claims that he has found testicles there (they are bull's testicles brought to him by a servant for his trick): "Vos avez de nostre orgueil, / Vos avez de coilles come nos."<sup>286</sup> The mother-in-law is stupid enough to believe this and shocked into obedient subordination and so is her daughter, threatened to be "castrated" in her turn.

To Gaunt we are invited to laugh "at anyone stupid enough to believe that woman can have balls",<sup>287</sup> i. e. to read it in *delectatio* terms. To me, on the other hand, laughter will be secondary to the impact of an unusually fierce essentialist *essanple* bringing forth pronounced *utilitas*: "woman, stupid or not always *has* to be subordinated, whatever the cost." Melhado White has a good point when she contends that "Vos avez de nostre orgueil" smacks of *Superbia*, a vice in the league of Wrath, Covetousness, and Envy.<sup>288</sup> According to this *fabliau*, displaying *orgueil* like this makes both men and women sinners. Female *superbia*, however, is a worse sin than male *orgueil*, as it is also unnatural,<sup>289</sup> a feature which, to me, emphasizes the text's *utilitas* even more.

In "La dame qui se venja du chevalier"<sup>290</sup> and "La dame qui aveit demandoit pour Morel",<sup>291</sup> finally, we are back to women less ruled by *superbia* than by their *con*. The first lady is a sister-in-spirit to the damsel who could not stand the word "fuck" but enjoyed copulation as such. This "dame" is in the midst of making love to her paramour,

a knight, who is stupid enough to exclaim a gross vulgarity at the most sensitive of moments:

Le chevalier, qui est deseure,  
En mi le vis l'a esgardée;  
Si la vit de douchor pasmée,  
Dont ne pot celer sa folie,  
Einz dist une grant vilanie:  
Demanda li à cele foiz:  
“Ma dame, croitriez vos noiz?”<sup>292</sup>

Despite her enflamed *con* the lady is so chilled by the knight's vulgarity that she immediately withdraws her love to teach him a lesson, a clear instance of the courtly concept of *castiar*; in rather an uncourtly situation, the implicit intertext being the violated code of the romance.

“La dame qui aveine demandoit pour Morel” is most interesting as it opens using the discourse of courtly romance, especially in the description of the protagonists' life as a married couple, referring to the most well-known of relevant contexts:

Tristans, tant com fu en cest monde  
N'anma autant Ysoue la blonde  
Cum si.ii. amans s'entr'emmerent  
Et foy et honnor se porterent.  
Moult bel menoiert lor deduit  
Privéement et jor et nuit,  
Et, quant venoit à cel solas  
Qu'i se tenoient, bras à bras,  
Où lit où estoient couchié  
Et l'un près de l'autre aprouchié,  
Adonc menoiert lor revel.<sup>293</sup>

However, things turn problematic as the wife's appetites are much stronger than her husband's despite his cocky assurance that he will meet her demands. He proves himself to be something of a boor with a peasant's frame of reference (a most efficient breach with the initial courtly discourse) and his wife's reaction is immediate refusal:

“toutes fois qu'avec moi seras,  
Soit en lit ou en autre place,  
Et tu vourras que je te face  
Se jolif mestier amouroux:

Se me diras: “Biax freres doux,  
 Faites Moriax ait de l’avainne.”  
 Cele li respont com cortoise:  
 “Biax freres douz, de ce t’aquoise...  
 Miex aim c’on me couppast la gorge  
 Que je tel outrage féisse.”<sup>294</sup>

Her attitude notwithstanding, her *con* is so demanding that, despite her initial protestation, she complies with his wish, the result of which being his exhausted despair, as his hope for moderation on her part is shattered. His attempt to solve this problem is more than remarkable, even in a *fabliau* context: in his desperation he defecates all over her:

D’estre mal haitiez samblant fist;  
 Son cul torna en son giron,  
 Et li chia tout environ  
 Que bran, que merde, qu’autre choze,  
 Et se li dist à la parclose:  
 “Seur dès or mais te tien au bran,  
 Et ainsis com tu veus s’en pran;  
 Bien saches l’aveinne est fallie;  
 Fait t’en ai trop grant departie;  
 A noiant est mais li greniers  
 Dont Moriax a esté rantiers.”<sup>295</sup>

*Fabliau* misogyny reaches a maximum here: a woman/*con* so demanding deserves only *faeces*, the image and principle of *intra urina et faeces* determining the punishment. Again we are served the *utilitas* of the *essanple*: “women so immoderate in their lust as this one deserve only shit, no matter how courteous they may pretend to be.”

## V. Trubert

The likely *intentio* of “Trubert”, the longest of *fabliaux*,<sup>296</sup> is probably *delectatio/recreatio* or [coarse] *gaudium*, as it were, although there is even less *eutrapelia* [Aquinas’s concept of acceptable and decent recreation] to be found here than in Olsen’s example of the matter, “Le chevalier qui fist parler les cons”.<sup>297</sup> The skeletal narrative of the story is as follows: A young *vilain* (peasant) is sent to the market to sell the family’s only heifer. For the money he buys a goat which he has painted in multicolored stripes. A lady (actually the duchess of Burgundy) and her damsel-in-waiting catch sight of him and his wonderous goat and the *vilain* tricks her into bed as she is most eager to buy the

beast. So is the duke and the young trickster fools him into accepting a beating in order to achieve his goal. On the following day, the peasant returns to the court, this time dressed as a carpenter, his plan being to obtain more money. The “carpenter” tricks the duke into the forest to beat and rob him, after having managed to seduce the duchess once again, pretending to be the duke! The following day Trubert returns, this time masked as a physician and offers to heal the tormented duke. Alone with the duke in his chamber, the lad beats his victim, rubs his wounds with excrement, and steals away with money and a horse. Then, war is declared between the duke and King Golias and the young rascal disguises himself as a knight and offers to support the duke. He kills a woodcutter’s wife and scalps “her arse and cunt”, as the text brutally has it, and tricks the duke into believing that he has killed the king, pretending the hair to be the king’s beard and moustache. However, his scheme is found out and the duke sends soldiers to find Trubert. He nows takes on a third identity, that of a young girl. Not only the soldiers finding and bringing “her” to the court are enchanted but so are the duke and duchess. She is put in the service of young and innocent Roseite, their daughter, and the two girls share a bed, the result of which is Roseite’s pregnancy. The king wishes Roseite for his bride but the “servant girl” is sent instead. The false girl manages to escape the nuptial bed, deflowers a servant-girl and makes her join the king in his bed.

In his introduction to “Trubert” Douin de Lavesne seems to stress the very fictionality of his tale, evading any specific declaration as to his intent, which, then, is there in the story for the listener/reader to detect on his/her own. However, the very mention of the word “fabliaus” directs the listener/reader toward the (more or less competent) reception of the text as a more or less pronounced mixture of *utilitas* and *delectatio*:

An fabliaus doit fables avoir  
si a il, ce sachiez de voir:  
por ce est fabliaus apelez,  
que de faubles est aünez.  
Douins qui ce fabliau rima  
tesmoigne que il avint ja  
en la forest de Pontalie  
ot une fame hebergie.  
Veuve fame fu, sanz seigneur;  
mout feisoit petit de labor.<sup>298</sup>

Here, Douin gives a somewhat renewed definition of the genre “qui se prétend composé de differents épisodes (*fables* équivaut ici à ‘mensonges’, ‘fictions’), enchainés les uns aux autres”. However, in this respect Douin’s definition of the genre is neutral as to

*utilitas*, *delectatio*, and *recreatio*, which allows us to leave Douin's own definition of the text. Because of its *équivoque*, the phrase "mout feisoit petit de labor" is interesting: it might simply mean that she does not have to work hard, but, the text being a *fabliau*, it might also imply that she has no husband to wear her out sexually! A particular finesse, then, would be the fact that labor normally means work in the field;<sup>299</sup> the field also being a favorite place for sexual entertainment and a much used image for sexual intercourse! She has a son and a daughter, boorish and ignorant because of the place where she had raised them. The forest is heavily charged with meaning as it is the very place where everything uncourtly thrives the best and it is also the place of *aventure*, danger, tricks, treachry and magic in the romance.<sup>300</sup> "Trubert" might be considered not only a *fabliau* but also a mock-romance, as its parody of this prestigious genre is all-pervasive as to the structuration of the text<sup>301</sup> which makes the fableor's choice of location for the opening of his story a suitable one. The future trickster and protagonist of the story, the young man ("vallez") Trubert, has a bright idea and his mother is enthusiastic:

"Mere, fet il, vos ne savez,  
alons vendre nostre genice,  
s'avra ma suer une pelice,  
que bien veez qu'elle est trop nue.  
Tant com sera mal vestue,  
ne troverons qui la demant.  
– Biaus fiz, fet-elle, Deus t'ament  
quant tu as tel chose pensé!  
Mout as bien dit et bien parlé,  
toutjorz mes t'en ameré meus;  
maine la vendre, se tu veus."<sup>302</sup>

This works as the opening of the first of the five sequences structuring the text, "sot au marché" (vv. 1–396), [...], le Charpentier (vv. 397–1059), le Médecin (vv. 1060–1448), le Chevalier (vv. 1449–2226), la Femme (vv. 2227–2984).<sup>303</sup> "Trubert" is a proper name, "champenois ou picard" in origin, and "notait aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles l'ambivalence du sot médiéval: 'niais, ridicule, mais dangereux à cause de sa conduite imprévisible'" working as a signal, itself marking the likely ambiguity of what is to follow. If the *fableor* presenting his text (or the *jongleur* repeating it) in performance opens by mentioning the very title (this we cannot know), this effect would have been enhanced even further.

The theme of the "sot au marché" is explicitly stressed when the "vallet", after having been fooled into selling his heifer at far too low a price, buys a goat at too high a price. Trubert has his goat painted in several colors, thus seemingly proving himself to be an

utter fool, wasting money for no useful purpose. However, he is not the only fool: the duchess and her damsel-in-waiting catch sight of him through a window in a local castle and the lady asks the young woman (her name is Aude(!)<sup>304</sup>) to bring him to her as she is interested in buying this remarkable, but to the women, beautiful animal. The lady offers the young man money but he wants more:

– Dame, fet il, se Deus me saut,  
je la vos vendrai volentiers:  
un foutre et cinc sous de deniers  
la faz: itant en averai  
ou je des mois ne la vendrai.  
– Amis, du croistre vos taisiez  
et gardez que plus n'en pleidiez.  
De nos deniers en prenez tant  
que vos n'i perdez ja neant.  
– Par foi, fit cil, et je m'en vois!  
Certes ne la vendrai des mois  
se un foutre ou cinc sous n'en ai.  
Ja de tant riens n'en lesserai.<sup>305</sup>

The lady is scandalized at this shameless request but Aude wishes her to comply with the young man's wishes in order to get hold of the beautiful goat. When the lady indignantly protests, saying that the price is a “fuck”, Aude says that the “vallet” is nothing but a fool not understanding the proper meaning of the word “foutre”. She actually claims that when he has mounted her mistress, he will get off at once(!):

– Ne vos chaut, dame, c'est uns fos:  
meintenant que sera montez,  
descendra, et puis si avrez  
la chievre qui tant par est bele!<sup>306</sup>

Aude does not care much for proper conduct, and, obviously, neither does her mistress when tempted enough. The given intertext or interpretant is the entire *fabliau* depicting female weakness and vice and the entire tradition describing women as the daughters of Eve. Trubert is not quite the fool these women believe him to be:

Cil li a mis le braz au col  
si la gita enmi un lit  
si en a fait tout son delit.  
Aude se siet a la fenestre  
qui bien set de sa dame l'estre.

- Garde si voit le duc venant.  
 En la chambre s'en vint corant:  
 "dame, fet ele, que feisiez?  
 Par la mort Dieu, trop demorez!  
 Mes sires est ja a la porte,  
 se il vient ici, vos estes morte!"  
 Ce dit la dame: "Sus levez,  
 amis, et si vos en alez.  
 S'avec moi estiez trovez,  
 mort seriez et afolez.
- Dame, fet il, or vos souffrez!  
 Ançois sera uns mois passez  
 que de vos soie rasazez.<sup>307</sup>

Not only coy but also fearing for her very life, the lady won't hear of it and successfully buys him off, offering him money and to keep the goat for fear that her scheme would otherwise have been detected by her husband. In this lady and her damsel-in-waiting we have two examples of stereotype female cunning, interestingly enough, then, in combination with a certain amount of stupidity [the fascination with the multi-colored goat and the lack of ability to see it for what it is]. Also, they are religious hypocrites perfectly willing to send Trubert off, invoking God's blessing on him: "La Dame a Dieu le commenda / et la pucele, puis s'en va".<sup>308</sup> Aude, evidently more frightened of the duke detecting the duchess in bed with the "vallet", than indignant at the fact that her mistress obviously allows him to do more than to just mount her to immediately get off (the implicit meaning of course being that the duchess being a woman first and foremost really enjoys the unexpeced opportunity of sexual pleasure) actually comes close to blasphemy: "Par la mort Dieu, trop demorez".<sup>309</sup> Another representative ingredient, not only of the *fabliau*, but of mainstream misogynine thinking, is the absent husband not able to check his wife (and her lady in waiting), an implicit reference to the role designed to the husband by the church.<sup>310</sup>

Now, it is the husband's turn to prove himself also to be an utter fool unable to read reality correctly. Together with his equally foolish company of knights he is amazed at the sight of the spectacular beast and approaches the young rouge wishing to know its price:

- Amis, volez la chievre vendre?
- Oil, sire, se vos volez.
- Frere, dites que vos l'amez  
 et por combien je l'averai
- Volentiers, sire, le dirai:

pour quatre paus dou cul l'avrez  
et cinc sous; itant m'en donrez  
se ma chievre volez avoir.<sup>311</sup>

The duke takes the “vallet” to be a fool, “Amis, tu ne diz pas savoir”,<sup>312</sup> finding his conditions for selling the cherished goat absurd and proves himself to be a decent man wishing to offer the “vallet” a decent price and, at the same time hoping to avoid losing both the four hairs and his dignity. However, he gives in when Trubert won't budge, proving his own lack of judgement and sense, giving up his dignity and accepting humiliating treatment to obtain a simple beast. The given intertext is of course romance where noble knights are willing to accept such treatment (the outstanding example being Chrétien's *Le chevalier à la charette*), a most pregnant contrast. What is remarkable here is that the duke's vassals do not object to the duke humiliating himself, but we are not told the reason why. Are they fools too, or do they wish to see him humiliated? We are left with no answer or explanation, only ambiguity: they laugh, but they also insist that the duke is not to pluck the hairs himself. What ensues is a curious mixture of humiliation and sadistic infliction of pain:

Li dus li a le cul tourné,  
apareillié et descouvert  
si que toz li fenduz apert.  
“Trubert, frere, or en prenez  
de cele part que vos volez.”  
Et Trubert a apareillié  
un poinçonnet mout delié;  
en la nache li a feru,  
jusc'au manche l'a embatu  
si le ra mout tost a lui tret.  
A pou li dus ne crie et bret.  
“Amis, dit il, tenez vos coiz,  
mal m'avez fet a ceste foiz.  
N'i touchiez plus, je m'en repent,  
car trop i tienent durement  
cil poil, il m'avroient ja mort!”<sup>313</sup>

Trubert pretends indignation at the duke failing to keep his part of the bargain and also that he dare not do anything but to comply with the duke's wish to buy the goat and bring it with him to the castle to give it to the duchess as a gift but our *fableor* informs us as to the truth: “Et dit Trubert qui de tout boise”.<sup>314</sup> The trickster obviously is a sadist: when given the opportunity to cause the duke not only humiliation but phys-

ical pain as well, he grabs the occasion. The duke's remarkable stupidity is underlined also by his failure to recognize the nature of the pain inflicted upon him: he thinks that the hairs on his behind are too firmly stuck to come loose easily! He does not know his own body. The duke bends over and displays his naked "butt" in order for Trubert to perform his "operation". The duke's position is rich in connotations, the main one being sodomy (the structural parallel between Trubert's demands on the duchess ("fourtre") and on the duke (the "quatre peus du cul", i. e. a furtive reference to the frequent confusion of the *con* and the *cul* in the *fabliau*) stresses this even more). This makes him even more open to denigration: his position is the one of the man or woman (women are open to twofold intercourse *contra naturam*, that of vaginal copulation from behind, and of anal intercourse, cf. *supra*) being sodomized, i. e. the one being dominated, a position totally unfit for a duke, thought to be inherently superior to all, with the exception of his *pares* and of the male members of the royal house. Here we have a trickster, a *vilain*, crudely getting the better of his superiors. The duke is a worse fool than his lady, although morally far superior to her: he tries to treat the "vallet" decently, whereas she tries to fool him to obtain her goal, only to be tricked herself.

The duchess is scared almost out of her wits, fearing that Trubert has told her husband that he made love to his wife, but Aude is sure that this is not the case. Again, Douin does not explain the reason for this, but a likely explanation is that Aude now thinks him not to be quite the fool they had supposed and being more eager for his safety than to offend the duke and expose the lady to shame and (possibly capital) punishment.

Now ensues a curious domestic scene in the couple's bed chamber where they take turns at revealing their shame at having been so cruelly tricked by Trubert and Douin goes into such detail describing the lady's agony that he describes her very thoughts. "Ha Deus! car feüsse or la fors! / dit la dame; en tel leu iroie / que je jamés ne revenroie!"<sup>315</sup> She cannot endure her torment any longer and falls to her knees, clasping her hands, and begs for mercy. For a medieval duke, he is remarkably temperate in his reaction:

et je vos conterai comment  
 cil a la chievre m'engigna.  
 Tant me dit et tant m'enchanta  
 – je ne sai coment ne a quoi –  
 qu'en un lit se coucha o moi  
 et de moi fit ses volentez;  
 si me mena li desfaez.  
 Bien sai que j'en perdrai la vie,  
 car j'ai bien la mort deservie!

- Ne vos chaut, dame, or vos levez,  
 que ja por moi mal n’i avrez.  
 Bien puet une fame enginier  
 cil qui deçoit un chevalier!  
 Dame, voiant toute ma gent  
 m’a si mené, ne sai coment,  
 que ne puis sor mes piez ester.  
 Or en lesson le plet ester;  
 se la gent la hors le savoient,  
 tuit et toutes s’en gaberoient.<sup>316</sup>

Obviously, to the duke public disgrace is worse than anything else and he is perfectly willing not to exercise his right by both feudal and canon law to punish his wife who has violated her holy duties to him (after all, marriage is a sacrament and adultery blasphemy) in order to avoid such shame. The duchess wily suggests that the villain only managed to trick her into bed by means of sorcery and it is possible that the duke might even believe her as he himself is unsure as to what actually happened to him; he has difficulties standing on his feet.

When confronting the noble couple the second time, Trubert is well disguised having changed from the lout and supposed simpleton into a man of courtly manners. However, he does not appear as a knight but as an artisan, a carpenter, thus basically a *vilain*; nevertheless, although a man of decidedly more standing than a simple peasant, he deserves to be addressed *maître*:

Mes il est mout bien desguisez;  
 tout meintenant en est alez;  
 hardiement, teste levee,  
 a la duchesse saluee  
 par cortoisie touz premiers,  
 puis le duc et ses chevaliers.<sup>317</sup>

The introduction of the word “cortoisie” is probably meant to create some suspension as to what is to happen, Trubert being anything but courteous. The intertext is primarily the courtly romance, but the *fabliau* as well, as references to [more or less parodied] courtliness are not scarce in the latter genre.<sup>318</sup> Another distinct reference to the *fabliau* (and to the romance) is the description of the duke’s rich table:

Le mengier fut fost aprestez,  
 mout fu por le mestre amendez:  
 il i ot grues et roons,

pedriz, ploviens, malarz, plunsjons,  
 et autres mes i ot asez,  
 ne vos avroie hui toz nomez.  
 Il i ot assez a planté  
 si com Deus l'eüst devisé.<sup>319</sup>

Two things are worth noticing here: it is not altogether likely for a duke to have presented such a table to honor a carpentier and Douin is slightly irreverent, referring to God as a gourmand/gourmet. These two features of the text serve to mark the tension between “Trubert” and the ordinary generic patterns of the romance and the *fabliau* even more.

This tension is essentially derived from the constitutive dichotomy *vilain* — *courtois*, a dichotomy brought even more to the fore when Trubert farts and behaves in a most uncourtly manner toward Aude who is present at the table in order to honor Trubert and to make him happy (yet another unlikely feature creating generic tension):

Et por Trubert plus soulacier,  
 avec Aude le font mengier,  
 la damoisele la duchaise.  
 Il n'a dame jusq'a Pontaise  
 ne damoisele qui la vaille.  
 Trubert menjue et ele taille,  
 mout se paine de lui servir.  
 Quant ont mengié a grant lesir  
 et en dut les tables oster,  
 Trubert lesse un grant pet aler,  
 tel que tuit et toutes l'oïrent.  
 Li chevalier mout s'en aïrent,  
 mes ne sevent qui ce a fet;  
 n'i a celui honte n'en ait,  
 nes li dus an fu corociez.  
 Estrubert a bouté des piez  
 la demoisele se li dit:  
 “Damoisele, se Deus m'eït,  
 a toz nos avez fet grant honte!”  
 Et celle seur le pié monte,  
 samblant li fet que il se teise.  
 “Damoisele, par saint Gerveise,  
 ce dit Trubert, ce n'a mestier;  
 s'en m'en devoit les piez trenchier,  
 si en dirai je tout le voir.

- Amis, tu ne diz pas savoir,  
dit cele qui corpes n’i a,  
que par celui qui m’engendra  
je ne fis hui ci vilenie.<sup>320</sup>

Scatological humor is a main ingredient in all *contretex* as well as in the *fabliau*, but certainly not in the romance, its rhetoric excluding such violation of the verbal code. Thus “Trubert” displays yet another feature stressing its pronounced *fabliau* character. However, *courtoisie* is an important ingredient in the minicontext formed by the lines quoted here. Here, the difference between e.g. the scatological *coblas* of the Occitan *contretex* and “Trubert” is striking. The Occitan scatology forms the entire text where it is found, actually it works as its matrix engendering the text in its entirety, whereas in “Trubert” it is but an element found in a delimited part of an unusually long text working to stress the dichotomy *vilain-courtois*. This is further underlined by Trubert accusing young and charming Aude of such scandalous behavior: in an authentic romance no knight, in his right mind, and no other courtly person either, would even dream of committing such a *faux pas*. Aude is quite calm, “friend, you do not speak wisely”, and proves herself courtly enough not to make the situation even more painful, although feeling deeply hurt, [...] “et mout li poise durement” [...].<sup>321</sup> The duke is less courtly than she is, as he does not defend her, rebuking “the carpenter” for treating a young damsel in such a wretched manner. Instead, he amicably invites Trubert to join him for a hunt the following morning. In the romance such hunting parties are standard procedure for the nobility but the very idea of inviting a commoner for such an occasion would be an impossible violation of the rhetoric of this genre. Again, then, a standard feature of the romance is transgressed, parody being the obvious result.

An audience finding all this amusing would most certainly have appreciated as well the description of Trubert, a true lout, finding the bed given to him impossible to sleep in: it is far too comfortable: “Dormir cuida, mes il ne pot / que li bons liz oste et tot: / il ne l’avoit pas apris tel!”<sup>322</sup> He is base enough to immediately consider revenge, being utterly unable to appreciate the good intent:

“Hé Deus! dit il, com male couche!  
Que chancre li arde la bouche  
qui la fist feire et qui la fit  
et qui tant de plumeite i mist!  
Li dus la fit feire sanz faille:  
mes ne me pris une maaille  
se je ne m’en venge ainz le jor!”<sup>323</sup>

Now ensues a detailed description of his procedure not to make a single sound, a description bound to have enjoyed great success if it was not only told by the *fableor* or the *jongleur* but also enacted. Trubert's goal is the expected one, the lady's chamber where she sleeps together with Aude, her damsel-in-waiting. The situational comedy is enhanced by Trubert knocking softly on the chamber door and the duchess and Aude trying to establish the nature and meaning of the sound. They agree that it could only be the duke wishing to exercise his marital rights and Aude opens to "him", again proving their credulity, stupidity and inability to see things for what they are. Now it is time for extended erotic farce and *double entendre*, as disguised Trubert is not the only man wishing to enjoy the physical favors and charms of the duchess but the duke as well:

au lit la dame en vint tantost,  
 les dras lieve, au lit entra.  
 Ainz la dame ne refusa,  
 qu'ele croit que ce soit ses sires;  
 por ce ne l'ose contredire.  
 Et Trubert la dame rembrace,  
 autre chose ne quiert ne trace.  
 Touz ses bons et ses volantez  
 en fist et puis est retornez;  
 la dame dit en conseilant:  
 "Je m'en vois, a Dieu vos commant.  
 – Alez? sire, qui vos en chace?"  
 Et la dame Trubert rembrace  
 qui son seigneur cuide tenir.  
 "Par saint Lorenz, le bon martir,  
 sire, mout iés anuit legiers  
 et a merveilles bons ouvriers;  
 ne vos avint mes grant tans a."  
 Et Trubert si la rembraça  
 si recommence la berrie  
 et la damë en est mout lie.<sup>324</sup>

The duke wakes up, sexually excited, enters his wife's bed and makes eager love to the impressed but somewhat worried duchess: She cannot hold her tongue, comments on the duke's remarkable performance, but he is both insulted and scandalized because of her discourteous words:

Avec la dame vet gesir  
 li dus si la beise et acole.

Cele qui fu de bone escole,  
simple, cortoise et deboneire,  
li soufi ce que il vost feire;  
ainz de riens ne le contredit  
et nequedant bien s'en soufrist,  
que Trubert l'avoit bien soignie;  
ne set comment ele est guilie.  
A son seigneur dit en la fin:  
“Foi que vos devez saint Martin,  
savez vous or quantes foiz sont?  
Oïl bien, li dus li respont,  
un muet les porroit conter.  
– Se Deus me doint de ci lever,  
il sont a ceste foiz quatorze!  
Gardez la quinzième n'estorde,  
que nomper les devez lessier.  
Je ne sai que beüstes ier  
qui ainsi vos fet roide et fort.  
– Dame, fet, il vos avez tort,  
quant vos de ce me menez plet.  
Ne ferai mes ce que j'ai fet,  
encor vos soit et bel et chier,  
se je vos en puis conseillier,  
une foiz ou deus la semaine.  
Vos m'en avez fet bone estraine,  
dit la dame, a cestui lundi;  
se tant en faites le mardi  
et touz les autres jorz après,  
vos tenroiz mou le mestier pres!  
Adont se corroce li sires;  
par mautalent li prist a dire:  
Dame, dame, or mout trop gros  
bien savez geter vos seuros  
por moi escharnir et gaber.  
Ne sui pas si preuz ne si ber  
come estoit li fous a la chievre.”<sup>325</sup>

These lines are most interesting since they refer not only to the *fabliau* and the romance in terms of generic properties but also, and particularly, I would venture, as their intertext is so distinctly related to the doctrine of *amour courtois*, to popular belief, and to the teachings of the church. The duchess specifically mentioning the fifteenth time as a crucial one is probably a reference to popular belief, a reference found

also, e.g., in *Le roman de Renart*, “Il m’est avenu meinte nuit / Que je fotoie quinze fois / Mes j’estoie toujorz aroiz”.<sup>326</sup> The obvious intertext of the next two lines with their reference to the potion that makes him som “stiff and strong” is sexual magic, a common feature in medieval superstition and popular belief. When replying, the duke introduces another conceptual sphere than the one forming the lady’s speech, namely the courtly one. He says that she is wrong opening a discussion of this kind, but, nevertheless, he is willing to give her a polite answer and explanation, the key words being “bel”, “chier”, “conseiller”. However, he is not only being courteous, he also speaks in a manner befitting a husband in his role as her head, the role assigned to him by church doctrine. It is his duty to guide his wife, (regardless of station she is a true daughter of Eve, and by nature prone to sexual abandon, if given the chance) to the moderate, measured, and thus licit, carnal pleasure of the marital bed.<sup>327</sup> The duke’s reference to his making love to the duchess once or twice a week is very much in line with this doctrine but not the duchess wishing him to repeat what she believes to be his remarkable performance already the next day, an explicit reference to her insatiability. He is both outraged and scandalized by her gross words, they are “trop gros”, and he indignantly protests that he is not like the *vilain* with his goat. The connotations of this animal are often sexual in medieval *bestiaires*, so the double reference to rampant sexuality works to stress the difference between courtly moderation and animal lust, in beast and *vilain* (and woman (!)) alike. Thus, the interplay between text and doctrine here depend heavily on a specific aspect of *utilitas*, that of sexuality in medieval thought.

Now ensues a lengthy section of the text (lines 734–2389) whose intertext is the romance, the romance more or less turned upside down, but where the bawdy and the obscene do not constitute main elements in the narrative. However, there is one feature worth mentioning in our present context, the cruel murder of a peasant woman and morbid “operation” of her corpse. Trubert meets a country woman and mercilessly kills her, thus proving again that he is absolutely devoid of (courtly) virtues, that he is monstrous in his trickster activities:

“Dame, fet il, se Deus vos gart,  
 venez si m’aidiez a monter.”  
 Cele ne li ose veer,  
 a lui s’en vient, et il la prent,  
 a terre la giete et estent;  
 le cul et le con li coupa,  
 en s’aloire le bouta:  
 au duc en velt feire present.<sup>328</sup>

The likely intertext is the *pastourelle* with its frequent description of the knight raping the defenseless *pastoure*, Trubert here taking things a step further. The phrase “terre la

giete et estent” might very well work as the opening of the description of the rape, but the reaction of the audience is likely to have been strong at this desautomatization of a well-known pattern where there is no act of sexual violence in the ordinary way but mutilation of a dead body. Of course, one might argue that, at least to a modern reader, the sexual implications of Trubert’s horrible deed are too obvious to go unnoticed, but it is impossible to judge, whether this was the reaction of the members of Douin’s contemporary audience as well. We cannot know if their reaction was solely determined by indignation or shock at the atrocity of the deed or if they thought it a matter of more or less bad taste or if at least some of them even found it hilarious. We must keep in mind, when dealing with medieval texts, that *vilaines* did not matter very much, that both in real life and in literature they were actually defenseless and that every *vilaine* out on her own was an easy prey to any man (especially, then, a *knicht errant* who thought it his absolute right to ravage her<sup>329</sup>). As to the actual content of the passage quoted here, to my knowledge there is no similar account in other texts within the French *fabliau* corpus, where sexual mutilation is a punishment thought fit by jealous husbands wishing to seek revenge on clerics and priests committing adultery.

Now it is time for Trubert’s most daring enterprise in terms of disguise: he appears as a young and charming damsel in a remarkable feature of medieval “drag”. The ladies of the duke’s court are taken in by “her” appearance but surprised when hearing her spectacular name, a remarkable suspension of disbelief, as it is hard to conceive how Trubert managed such efficient disguise that not even Aude was able to recognize him. However, Douin, like his colleagues does care much for such trifle: to them effect is what matters. Again, situational comedy is the name of Doin’s game:

- Aude qui a le cors apert,  
 le nom demandē a Trubert:  
 “Coment avez vos non? fet Aude,  
 – Dame, en m’apele Coillebaude.”  
 Quant Aude l’ot si en ris  
 et toutes les autres ausis.  
 “Comment? Comment? Dites encor!  
 – Par foi, je nel dirai plus or:  
 je voi bien que vos me gabez.”  
 Dit la mestresse: “Si ferez,  
 je le voil et si vos en proi.  
 – J’ai non Coillebaude, par foi.  
 Einsi m’apele l’en d’enfance.”  
 Ce dit la mestresse Coutance:  
 “C’est assez biau non par raison!

Assez i a de mesprison  
 dou pendant qui i est nomez.  
 Entre vos ainsi l'apelez;  
 quant i avra autre mesnie,  
 si ait a non dame Florie.<sup>330</sup>

Again, the tension between *courtoisie* and *vilainie* structures the text, “Aude qui a le cors apert”, “sit ait a non damer Florie”, instances of the formulaic clichés of courtly literature *en gros* and “*Couillebaude*”, an obvious instance of *vilain* rhetoric, the name meaning “Gayballs”! Our *fableor* is a skillful author and the “balls” of the “damsel’s” name is a tongue-in-cheek reference to this trickster’s “drag” likely to have caused merry laughter, not only among the damsels of the text, but also among the audience, the text being enacted or not. The tension is further enhanced by Coutance calling her name beautiful and unsuitable at the same time, the reference being “that thing hanging down”. Implicit here, but certainly adding to the comedy, is the blurring of the sexes, the play with the well-established gender standards of the period: the one possessing a *vit* and *coilles* is the man, the one with the *con* is the woman, pure and simple essentialism. Here we have a person taken for granted to possess a *con* (the comedy, and irony (!) being that “she” does not) but named by the masculine genitals, a furtive marker of “her” true identity beneath the disguise. I have difficulties not believing the audience to fully appreciate Douin’s verbal trickery here.

It is time to go to bed and four of the fair damsels of the company are eager to share “Coillebaude’s” bed the first one out is probably Aude:<sup>331</sup>

Ce dit: “Damoisele Florie,  
 s’il li plest, avec moi gierra.  
 Au souper avec moi menja,  
 s’est bien raison qu’avec moi gise!”  
 Ce dit damoisele Felise:  
 “Lessiez la gesir avec moi,  
 mout m’iert bel et mout vos en proi!”  
 Ce dit Belisent la cortoise,  
 fille la sereur la duchoise:  
 “Avec moi gierra enquenuit,  
 soulaz me fera et deduit!”  
 Une petite en i avoit,  
 qui fille le seigneur estoit;  
 Roseite a non la damoisele.  
 C’est la plus droite et la plus bele:  
 si oil resambent de faucon,

blanche a la gorge et le menton,  
 la bouche petite et riant;  
 il ne covient plus bel enfant.  
 Aus autres dit: “Car vos teisiez,  
 ne vos ne vos ne l’avez;  
 anuit me fera compaignie!”  
 Et la mestresse li otrie,  
 ele ne l’ose corocier.  
 Les damoiseles vont couchier;  
 devant leur lit sont desvestues  
 et Trubert les vit toutes nues;  
 voit les conez bufiz, sanz barbe.<sup>332</sup>

*Courtoisie* of tone is considerable as the speech of these damsels is both sweet and polite. Again, however, there is another text present creating a certain *double entendre* as to what these presumed young and innocent women are really up to. The church teaches that women, ruled as they are by *luxuria* (and to medieval standards these young damsels are *women* to be sure, one of them, the youngest and sweetest, is to become pregnant from her experience with “Coillebaude”) can *never* be trusted in sexual matters, not even nuns, “Si l’une d’elles trouvait les circonstances propices à des jeux badins, elle ne tarderait pas à se prêter à ton vouloir, à s’abandonner à des caresses brulantes,”<sup>333</sup> so we cannot be sure that these damsels are perfectly innocent when wishing for Coillebaude to lie down beside them; they might even wish for sexual delight with her! We have to keep Burchard’s *Decretum/Corrector* in mind with its question, “as tu forniqué avec d’autres mauvaises femmes,”<sup>334</sup> when evaluating phrases such as “s’il li plest, avec moi gierra”, “Lessiez la gesir avec moi”, “mout m’iert bel” and, especially, “soulaz me fera et deduit” (“she will give me joy and pleasure”). Douin is consistent in his choice of code which explains the explicit wording when describing Trubert/Coillebaude, the *voyeur/voyeuse*, turning the audience, too, into *pseudo-voyeurs*. Genital detail is suddenly striking as the young damsels’ vulvas are described to be “fleshy and hairless” (the orig. has without beard). Trubert is burning with desire to join Roseite in bed and has to resort to trickery to have his way. He pretends to be bashful asking Roseite to put out the light, then he rapidly joins her in bed. The *double entendre* continues:

La damoisele l’acola  
 et dit: “Compaigne, bien veigniez!  
 Gardez tout a aise soiez  
 si ne vos soit de rien grevain.”<sup>335</sup>

Thus, it is hard to establish if it is a matter of pure tongue-in-cheek when Douin assures us that Roseite puts her arms around Coillebaude simply because of her being of such sweet disposition, or if, again, there is something else to it as well. The choice of the phrase “n’i entent point de vileinie” seems to be an implicit affirmation that young Roseite does not know any wicked [sexual] ways. However, the phrase “quanqu’ele puet, li fait solaz”<sup>336</sup> adds to the double entendre: her explicit aim is to please Coillebaude whom she embraces tenderly and here we have to keep in mind that they are both naked, a distinct marker of sensuality not only here but in the standard *fabliau* context as well. Douin is less explicit as to what Roseite actually does more than putting her arms around the other “girl”, thus adding to the tension developed as a result of the consistent ambiguity of the text. Anyhow, she is ignorant as to the full range of the physical realities of life as she does not recognize a male body when feeling and touching one, a fact which in itself is neutral as to Roseite being sexually experienced with other girls or not. These damsels are very young girls, as is shown e.g. when Roseite’s bodily charms are described; there is no mention of her breasts, which would otherwise be perfectly in order in a context such as this one, and there is an implicit possibility of Roseite reacting only to Coillebaud’s “prick”, not to “her” lack of distinct female bodily shape. Douin goes into considerable detail describing what happens now:

Roseite a sa cuisse le sent:  
 “Qu’est or ceci? dites le moi  
 – Volentiers le dirai par foi;  
 ce est un petit connetiaus,  
 il est petiz, mes mout est biaus.  
 – Qu’en faites vos? Par foi le met  
 gesir en mon con tel foiz est;  
 grant aise me fet et grant bien.  
 – Et voudroit il entrer ou mien?  
 – Oïl, se il vos connessoit,  
 mout volentiers i enterroit,  
 mes il covient acointier.”  
 Celle le prant a aplaignier;  
 Roseite entre ses mains le prent,  
 nule mauvestié n’i entent.  
 Belement le tient et manioie,  
 et li viz en sa main coloie.  
 “Certes mout l’avez or bien duit,  
 fet Roseite; ja me connuit;  
 il ne me mort ne esgratine!  
 Ele le tient parmi l’eschine:

la teste lieve et ele en rit;  
a l'entree dou con li mit,  
plus droit qu'elle puet l'i apointe,  
et Trubert ne fet pas le cointe,  
tout li a dedenz embatu.

“Onques mes tel beste ne fu,  
dit Roseite, se Deus me gart,  
Deus le vos sauve et le vos gart!  
Certes se un tel en avoie,  
por nul avoir ne le donroie!  
Pour Dieu, bele douce compaignie,  
proiez lui c'un po avant viegne,  
car mout m'est bon et mout me plest.

– A non Dieu, dame, s'il vos plest  
ja porroit si avant taler  
jamés ne porroit retourner,  
ne porroit retrouver la voie!”  
Dit Roseite: “Je le voudroie,  
mes qu'il vos venist a plesir;  
jamés n'en querroie partir;  
quanque il me fet, tot m'est bel,  
onques mes n'oi si bon joel!

– Dame, ja le verroiz joer,  
par leanz saillir et triper.

– Por Dieu, compaignie, or de bien feire!  
que ses jeus ne me puet desplaire!  
Et Trubert la commence a croistre,  
si que tout le lit en fit croistre.  
“Compaignie, or faites vos mout bien,  
huimés ne senti je si bien.  
Faites adés, que mout me plait,  
plus vos hastez et meus me fet.”  
Et Trubert si se resvertue  
si que trestoz li paus li sue.  
Andui ont bien fait leur afeire!  
Dit Roseite la deboneire:  
“Encore ne l'aquit je mie:  
foi que je doi sainte Marie,  
encor li couvendra entrer.

– Dame, lessiez le reposer,  
que traveilliez est de joer;  
ne l'an doit en pas si haster.”

Dit Roseite: “N’a mie mal”:  
 sa main a mise contreval,  
 le vit a sesi par la teste:  
 il ne li joie ne fet feste.  
 Dit Roseite: “Ci a mal plet!  
 Je cuit nos li avons mal fet;  
 asez estoit ore plus forz,  
 certes je dout qu’il ne soit morz.  
 Mout mal avriens exploitié!”  
 Tant l’a tenu et manoié  
 que pooir li est revenuz:  
 un pou s’est en sa main meüz.  
 “Coillebaude, vos ne savez,  
 certes il a esté pasmez:  
 revenuz est de pasmoison,  
 je croi qu’il n’avra se bien non”.  
 Mout ot chascun de son deduit,  
 onques ne dormirent la nuit.  
 Dit Roseite: “Mout m’esta bien!  
 – Gardez que n’en parlez a rien:  
 chascune le vodroit avoir.  
 – Ne vodroie por nul avoir,  
 feit Roseite, qu’en le seüst  
 ne que autres de moi l’eüst!”<sup>337</sup>

This passage is structured much like a miniature play: first Couillebaude’s “prick” starts to stir, to which Roseite responds by asking what it is, learns that it is a little rabbit which Coillebaude carries with her to put in her *con* whenever she wants pleasure and well-being (“act 1”). Then Roseite, after having asked if she might be allowed this experience as well, fondles the “rabbit” into full erection, puts it at the opening of her vagina, and is at once penetrated, and experiences instant delight (“act 2”). Roseite immediately wants to have another go, but Coillebaude implores her to let the little rabbit rest as it is exhausted. Roseite is unwilling but turns a bit frightened and remorseful when she notices its conspicuous lack of vigor. She thinks that she might have killed the rabbit but is relieved to find that all that it takes is the renewed caressing of it (“act 3”). Roseite and Coillebaude play again with the little rabbit and find such mutual delight in their game that they do not get any sleep that night. Coillebaude tells Roseite to keep silent about their secret and Roseite promises this; she wants no competition (“act 4”).

Both the troubadours of the Occitan *contretex*te and the *fableors* enjoy word play so it is no surprise to find the word “connetiaus” probably coined by Douin himself. The

words behind it are *connet* (a diminutive form of *con*) and *connin*, a little rabbit. Of course, the well-known image of the rabbit's rampant fertility adds to the wordplay, sexuality being the constituent determining the entire semantic field here.

Ordinarily in the *fabliau* there is rather little description of the sexual act taking place; the standard paradigm being the rapid mention of penetration and a reference to the number of times the couple engage in intercourse. Often, however, the size of the man's "prick" is pointed out (cf. *supra*), whereas the *con* as such receives rather little attention. Remarkably enough, Douin pays much more attention to Roseite's *con*, to what she does with the "prick" and to her sexual excitement than to Trubert's *vit* in itself, a quite reasonable explanation being a pornographic intent: our *fableor* might be out to arouse his audience, a feature not considered common in the case of the *fabliau*.<sup>338</sup> However, again, there might be more to it than this. To an audience familiar with the idea of women satisfying themselves and each other in *fornicatio* by using a dildo, (Burchart's *machinamentum*<sup>339</sup>) it would be easy to associate to tribadism as well as to ordinary heterosexual intercourse. The concept of *fornicatio contra naturam* was an important and dreaded one and I find it hard to believe that the audience would not have considered it as an interpretant of this scene. After all, Roseite wants to borrow Coillebaude's "rabbit" to put it in her own *con*, hardly an innocent wish. In my opinion, most modern commentators stress Roseite's innocence of behavior and intent too much. A young damsel like Roseite is certain to have had a confessor, a confessor whose absolute duty was to censure all *luxuria* with the aid of *questionnaires* like the *Decretum*. There is no mention whatsoever of Roseite's maidenhead and the phrase "plus droit qu'elle puet l'i apointe" ("pointing it as straight as she could") certainly implicates more than innocence. The only other reasonable explanation would be that she acts out of the instinct of one of Eve's many daughters! The following lines, especially those describing her pleasure (her *luxuria* (!)), implies that she may be coy (but also prone to light blasphemy, which is exactly what you might expect from a true daughter of Eve) but fully aware of what is really going on: when she says that she wants Coillebaude to move faster there is no longer any pretense. In her excitement she cannot keep to the image of the little rabbit: "Oh friend (the French has the word in the feminine), now your action is better; I have never felt so good! Keep on doing it, don't stop, it makes me wild with pleasure, *the faster you do it*, the better it is!" These are hardly the words of an innocent virgin not knowing what is going on! Douin is rather ironic juxtaposing "Encore ne l'ait je mie" with "debonaire" and "foi que je doi sainte Marie", as her wish is hardly that of a meek and pious damsel but that of a true and insatiable daughter of Eve, "encor li couvendra entrer". A reader not accepting my interpretation of Roseite as acting from *luxuria* and not from innocence, pointing to the fact that Roseite returns to the image of the rabbit, now dead tired, would in my opin-

ion disregard both the text as such and its interpretant: when talking about the rabbit, Roseite is no longer at the peak of her excitement and thus more able to play her game of pretense, i. e. able to disguise her true self, much, or even more, in the manner of the damsel who could not stand the word “fuck” (cf. *supra*). Thus, I am not quite convinced when Kathryn Gravdal in her otherwise excellent chapter on “Trubert” claims that Rosiete neither understands “the double significance of her words, nor the significance of her acts”.<sup>340</sup> I have no quarrel with Gravdal claiming that our *fableor* “forges the bunny-rabbit neologism not for its discretion but as a way of heightening the transgression of directly representing the sexual act by attributing such representation to the young daughter of the duke” nor by her claim that “[t]he sexual offense is multiplied by putting the word’s in Roseite’s sweet mouth”; sweet it no doubt is but hardly as innocent as Gravdal claims it to be.<sup>341</sup>

Now ensues the most blasphemous part of “Trubert” as Roseite becomes pregnant and the two fools, first the duchess and then the duke, are duped into believing that their daughter has become pregnant by means of a miracle, the daring choice of intertext being the Immaculate Conception:

Par foi, dame, toute nuit vient  
 a nostre lit uns colons blans;  
 il m'est avis, et bien le pans,  
 que ce soit un angre enpanez.  
 [...]  
 Coillebaude jure la mort  
 et quanque de Dieu peut jurer  
 qu'elle n'a curé de gaber.  
 “Mes sachiez bien, n'en doutez mie,  
 dou saint Espir est raemplie!  
 Trestoute est plaine d'angeloz!”  
 [...]  
 Au duc s'en va grant aleüre  
 si la a conté l'aventure  
 tout ainsi com cil li a dit,  
 et li sires grant joie en fit:  
 “Damedeus en soit graciez!  
 dit li sires; mout en sui liez  
 s'il est ainsi com dit m'avez.  
 [...]  
 Or seroie sote et vos soz  
 se Golias l'avoit a fame.<sup>342</sup>

This marks the culmination not only of blasphemy as a prominent constituent of “Trubert” determining the “strain of humor that recurs throughout *Trubert* in parodic prayers about the cross”<sup>343</sup> and which is “part and parcel of the villain stereotype”<sup>344</sup> the villain being inherently impious,<sup>345</sup> but also of the noble couple’s stupidity. The naming of the king already promised Roseite for his bride is interesting: Goliás refers directly to a genre, that of goliardic poetry with its assorted buffonery, a feature adding to the overall interpretative pattern of the text as parody.

Two paradigms clash, that of feudal and ecclesiastical code on the one hand and that of the scabrous *fabliau* on the other, when the chaplain turns to Coillebaude to comfort her and to stress her marital duties and is chocked to find Coillebaude revealing her true self. His frame of reference is easy enough to recognize for the audience well *au courant* with feudal values and canon law. Comedy is strong when Coillebaude pulls out his “prick” and so is the chaplain’s reaction; he does not think of cross-dressing or disguise but of sorcery, “he crosses himself a hundred times”, always a possibility when abnormal things appear — and what could be more abnormal in a historically given context where genitalia are the nature-given features separating the sexes — than a damsel with a “prick”?

Lez lui se mist li chapelains:  
“Dame, mout vos poez amer  
– mout la commence a conforter –  
et mercier nostre seignor,  
qui vos a fet si grant honor  
que demain serez mariee.  
De mout bone eure fustes nee!  
Et vos de bien faire pansez,  
si c’au seigneur que vos avez  
faciez tot son commandement!”  
Et Trubert par la mein l’aprent  
si l’en mena a une part:  
“Sire, dit il, se Deus me gart,  
mout m’avez or bien conseillie;  
toutjorz serez de ma mesnie!”  
Trubert si a fors trait le vit,  
si que li chapelains le vit.  
“Sire prestes, ce dit Trubert,  
vos oës ont eles teus bes?  
Quant li prestre vit le vit grant,  
cent foiz se seigne en un tenant,  
en fuie torne vers le roi,

et va criant a grant desroi:  
 “Seigneur, fet il, vos ne savez,  
 li dus nos a toz enchantez!”  
 Et quant Trubert oï le prestre,  
 jusques devant le roi n’arestre,  
 devant le chapelain s’avance,  
 il a parlé en audience:  
 “Seigneur, fet il, vos ne savez,  
 cist prestes est touz forsenez,  
 ainz mes ne vi tel chapelain,  
 jusq’au mon con a mis la main:  
 bien se va ne m’a esforcié.<sup>346</sup>

The indignant priest cries to be heard and to be allowed to defend himself but is brutally killed on the spot. Now the narrator intrudes to comment on his own text:

Onques mes hom a si grant tort  
 ne fu si malement menez.  
 [...]  
 Douins de Lavesne tesmoigne  
 qu’il est mout fous qui de tout soingne;  
 se li prestres se fut teüz,  
 il n’eüst mie esté batuz.<sup>347</sup>

Suddenly, there is more than a touch of unequivocal *utilitas* to be found in the text. It would be far-fetched to judge the indignation and the comment on the risk of meddling in the affairs of others as an instance of parody or *delectatio*. Actually, Douin, again, is rather daring as he criticizes a priest for not keeping his mouth shut in a situation such as this one. Of course, it is the very duty of a true priest to speak out when something like this happens.

King Golias is another fool ruled not by the fitting moderation and restriction of the true *sapiens et ingeniosus amator*<sup>348</sup> and the willingness to observe the required discipline of virtuous marriage<sup>349</sup> but by raging lust for Coillebaude’s body. Of course he is severely punished and in a most remarkable manner, he who does not know that his wife has no *con*, “Il est bien du tout enginiez, / ne set mie la traïson / de sa fame qui n’a pas con!”<sup>350</sup>

“Dame, ensamble gerrons anuit:  
 grant joie avrons et grant deduit,  
 car mout desir vostre soulaz;  
 [...]

Et Trubert adreice sa voie  
a l'esponde, la borse a prise  
ou sa pucelle l'avoit mise.  
Entre ses jambes l'a boutee.  
“Sire, fet il, quant vos agree,  
feites de moi vos volentez!”  
Seur le ventre li est montez  
li rois, c'autre chose ne quiert;  
son vit en la borse li fiert  
si que tot li embat dedanz.  
Trubert a tiré les pendanz,  
et li rois tire et cil l'estraint  
quanque il peut, riens ne s'en faint  
et li rois sache de rechief,  
mes de l'avoir ne vient a chief.  
Et Trubert durement le tient;  
desouz le roi s'afiche et gient  
ausi com fame c'on esforce.  
“Sire, vos m'ocïez a force,  
dit Trubert, et car vos soufrez!”  
De destreiche est li rois pasmez.  
Quant il revint de pasmoison:  
“Par foi, ainz mes ne vi tel con,  
fait li rois, ne sai dont ce vient.”  
Et Trubert qui mout bien le tient:  
Sire, c'est un con de biais;  
sifet con ne verroiz jamais.  
Au premier vos est ore estroiz,  
meus en istrez a l'autre foiz.  
Traiez le hors, vos m'ocïez!”  
Lor est li rois esvertuez;  
de roit tire par grant aïr,  
le vit fet de la borse issir.<sup>351</sup>

The king is a fool unable to see things for what they are. Like Roseite he is unable to recognize the true sex of his partner, which is all the more remarkable, him being a man and a king at that, taking into account the sexual practice of the time. What is remarkable, too, is the fact that there is no mention of the couple undressing or being naked, a necessary strategy for our *fableor* to make his scheme work. Here Douin's design seems entirely to be to expose the stupidity of the king and to subject him to ridicule, not to excite the audience sexually, hence the contrast between this episode and that of the *voyeur* scene (cf. *supra*).

To Gaunt, the episode of Coillebaude being deflowered by king Golias “highlights linguistic and sexual indeterminacy together”<sup>352</sup> and to him the king

fails to perceive the difference between a *con*, even a crooked one, [...] and a *borse*, and this can be read as a failure to perceive the value of sexual difference, as well as a failure to read signs correctly, as if the two were coterminous. Any hole can become a *con*, provided it is being manipulated by someone clever enough for someone stupid enough.<sup>353</sup>

To Gaunt, Douin makes his protagonist manipulate the perception of gender by means of allowing linguistic indeterminacy and gender indeterminacy to coincide through analogy. To Gaunt this means that Douin operates with a conception of gender which is “at odds with prevailing, essentialist views within medieval literature”<sup>354</sup> and that he sees both gender and language as arbitrary systems, “producing meaning through convention”,<sup>355</sup> and not as “natural, immanent properties of words or of sexed beings”<sup>356</sup>. Finally, to Gaunt, “Trubert manipulates the perception of one of the most important markers of hierarchy, and makes nonsense of it. If any hole or receptacle can be a vagina, how do we know what a woman is?”<sup>357</sup> As usual, Gaunt’s line of argument is stylistically elegant, sophisticated and perspicacious, but I wonder if he does not make too much of Douin as a thinker. For a *fableor* to question prevailing essentialism and to see both language and gender as arbitrary systems would mean considerable familiarity with non-orthodox philosophy, a fact which Gaunt does not comment at all. Also, when talking about “Trubert”, the adequate question is really not “how do we know what a woman is” but “how come the king does not perceive Coillebaude and her *con* for what they are”? Even if his interpretant is the ever threatening *vagina dentata* (again, a touch of *utilitas*, then), the simplest answer to the question is: he is this great a fool and also this easily duped as he is not ruled by intellect but by lust, i. e. he is not a full man in control of his emotions but rather like woman, *irrationabiliter!*

King Golias is not only ruled by excessive *cupiditas* but also by jealousy and this only makes him even more ridiculous and, again, this is accomplished by means of slightly absurd situational comedy:

- Li rois l'en prist a apeler:  
 “Qu'est ce? dame, ou volez aler?  
 Qu'est ce? dame, que pensez vous?  
 fait li rois qui tant est jalous.  
 Ou volez a ceste heure aler?  
 – Sire, je me vueil relever  
 por pissier, que mestier en ai.”  
 Dit li rois: “Avec vos irai.  
 – Sire, ce seroit vilenie.

Se m'en creez, n'i venroiz mie.”  
Li rois une cordelle prent,  
au pié li lie estroitement,  
Dame, dit li rois, or alez;  
que je trairai, si revenez.”  
Et Trubert est dou lit issuz.<sup>358</sup>

The very idea of a king being so jealous of his queen that he would even stoop to such *vilenie* as to follow her when she wants to leave for the toilet expressed here by the most uncourtly word “pissier” and to tie a string to her foot to see to it that she returns when he wants her to is likely to be a comically exaggerated reference to his passion controlling him and to his taking this rather pathetic step in order to get back on top of things and of Coillebaude. Douin goes on to tell his audience how Trubert walks straight up to the damsel-in-waiting's bed, ties the string to her foot and what follows when she wakes up. The trickster tells the astonished and frightened damsel that he is the king and that he wants her. Of course she dares not resist him and he has his way, “et Trubert trestout sanz plus dire / en fit toutes ses volentez”<sup>359</sup> and when the morning comes he tells the damsel, now in distress, all what he has done. No longer and rather suddenly Trubert seems not to be quite the same rogue and even comforts the despondent damsel (“Tolu m'avez mon pucelage”<sup>360</sup>) and tells her that she might save the situation by means of pretending that she is the queen, i. e. he turns her into a fellow accomplice and “trickstress”. She agrees and the story is brought to its end:

Quant li rois la cordele tret,  
cele se lieve entreset;  
tout maintenant au lit ala,  
sanz noise avec lui se coucha.  
“Dame, fet il, pou m'avez chier.  
Volez me vos mener dangier?  
Por coi avez tant demoré?  
Qu'avez fet? Ou avez esté?  
Vos n'amez gueres mon solaz!”  
Dit la damoisele: “Si faz,  
plus que je ne faz le samblant.  
Je vos conterai bien comment  
j'ai fet si longue demoree:  
puis ai esté tros foiz pasmee.  
– Dame, por coi pasmates vos?  
– En non Dieu, sire, tot por vos;  
por ce qu'orainz fustes pasmez.

- Je croi vos fustes ahenez  
 si en sui trestoute esmarrie!
- Dame, or ne vos esmaiez mie.  
 Sachiez que je vos ai mout chiere;  
 mout estes de bone maniere  
 et en vos sont toutes bontez.  
 Mes ersoir fui si enchantez,  
 quant ensamble fumes couchié,  
 tantost com j’oi vos touchié,  
 c’a poi que ne fui afolez.
  - Sire, ce me fit li rapez  
 de quoi beüsmes tant ersoir!
  - Certes, dame, vos dites voir.  
 N’a tel dame jusqu’a la mer.  
 Demain vos ferai coroner;  
 de mon reaume serez dame.  
 Onques ne fu si riche fame!
  - Sire dit ele, grant merciz!”  
 Atant est li rois endormiz  
 et la demoisele avec lui.  
 Braz a braz se dorment andui.<sup>361</sup>

The damsel turned “trickstress” easily dupes the foolish king by her words. Again, he is unable to tell the true nature of what is happening to him; to him there is no difference between the damsel, who is likely to have all the features of a true woman, and the man in disguise. His stupidity is taken a step further when Douin describes how Goliath even believes the presumed queen’s ridiculous reason for her overly tight *con*. Of course, the damsel’s readiness to try to dupe the king into taking her for his new queen is a less than furtive reference to medieval misogynic commonplace: “woman is never to be trusted; she tricks by nature”. The question is what an audience not familiar with the abrupt ending would have made of this. A more than possible alternative would have that the audience would have expected her to have been exposed and punished, a fitting end to such scandalous female treachery. “Trubert” ends by means of an intertextual reference to the romance, cf. e.g. *Perceval*, vv. 2025–27, “Tant li fit la nuit de solaz / Que boche et boche, braz a braz / Dormirent tant qu’il ajorna”.<sup>362</sup> To critics like Manoine, Badel, and Amaury Duval all this means that “Trubert” might be viewed as a subversive or revolutionary text but I think Gravdal is right to question their stance pointing out that it would be “anachronistic to say that the substitution of a deflowered servant is a high-minded act in a thirteenth century text. Trubert’s final gesture is as roguish as any of his earlier tricks”<sup>363</sup> especially if we take into consideration the

possible consequences for the “pucele”; Gravdal, being interested in other aspects of the text, does not dwell on this. She explains Douin’s transgressive parody as follows:

While parody is a transgression, a “crossing over” by its very definition (*para-odios*), it is also, in medieval literature, conservative. Even *Trubert* has a conservative side. It is a reappropriation of older literary traditions. In subverting the authoritarianism of the Virgilian wheel, *Trubert* recognizes and incorporates that very ‘authority’. This is what Kristeva called parody’s principle of “law anticipating its own transgression.” *Trubert*’s wild transgressions are authorized by the rules they break and the norms they mock; conversely, *Trubert* guarantees the ongoing existence of those norms and rules. In the very act of drawing on anterior models and established paradigms, Douin’s *Trubert* enjoys authorization and legitimacy. Douin challenges but also pays homage to law and hierarchy. “Parody is the custodian of the artistic legacy, defining not only what art is, but where it has come from.”<sup>364</sup>

Although Gravdal here, and elsewhere in her chapter on “Trubert” stresses its literary properties e.g. by means of a series of interesting observations as to the interplay and similarities between Douin’s text and *Fergus*, *Audigier*, the *Roman de Renart*, Guillaume de Blois’s *Alda*, “an important Latin intertext”,<sup>365</sup> containing, among other things, a possible “source of the Rosette scene”,<sup>366</sup> (“Inque uoluptatem Veneris resoluta uolutat / Secum quid sit ea cauda uel ille tumor”<sup>367</sup>) and, particularly, *Ipomédon*, a “byzantine romance”, characterized by eroticism and obscene language as well. There is strikingly little obedience to the rules of romance *decorum* in passages like the following ones:

Quant si beaus out les membres tuz,  
 K’en dites vus de cel desuz  
 Ke nus apelum le cunet?  
 Je quit qe asez fut petitet.  
 Vers le rei vait, un poi rui,  
 Ki estrangement la enbeli.  
 [...]  
 Chesun de cez ad ben gardé  
 A autre sa virginité  
 Or se entreatment tant par amur  
 Ke il se entrefoutent tute jur.<sup>368</sup>

*Ipomédon* has the frank use of four-letter words in common with the *fabliau* but deviates from the dominant pattern of the latter as the *con* is described to be beautiful, although in a “curious” way; “estrangement” is the word used.

Gravdal stresses herself the all-important “ethical, and therefore ideological”<sup>369</sup>

qualities of medieval literature. This means that the dichotomy *vilain* — *courtois* is not only literary but moral (and I would add ideological) as well: when Douin transgresses the codes and norms of the Virgilian wheel, he also transgresses medieval principles of hierarchy. I would actually argue that the tension between *utilitas* (it distinctly charges the obscene passages with added meaning) and *delectatio* is a chief reason for the text not being censored or banned during the Middle Ages: its more or less implicit references to canon law, to theological thought and teaching, and to feudal principles, point to “Trubert” not being viewed as a heretical or revolutionary text, a feature shared with the rest of the *fabliaux* discussed in our context. “Trubert”, however, is much different from the rest of the *fabliaux* as a king is the subject of merciless ridicule. P. Nykrog has pointed out that the *fabliau* normally shuns the representation of royal characters. This genre might well be recounted royalty but it cannot engage them in the plot, not to mention the description of various erotic contexts or situations.<sup>370</sup> To Nykrog “[c]’est une question de style”<sup>371</sup> and then we, again, have to keep in mind that “[s]tyle, by its very definition in the Middle Ages, means a strictly coded adequation between genre, social class, spatial setting, ethical behavior, and linguistic level.”<sup>372</sup> To me, the fact that Douin operates with very strong interpretants in the episode of Trubert, king Golias and the “pucelle”, is the factor most reasonably accounting for its realisation. Douin was certainly a more daring *fableor* than most, but he had to stop at something; had he not engaged the very interpretants commented on *supra*, I am sure that he had gone too far even in the eyes of a most lenient medieval audience.

Thus, “Trubert” is much more complex than the rest of the *fabliaux* treated in this study especially, then, regarding the interplay between *utilitas* and *delectatio* and to what extent it might be considered to be an *exemplum*. However, it has its degree of comical provocation in common with the others text. Initially I stressed the importance of treating the *fabliaux* individually, but taken together as a family of texts or as a genre, they nevertheless, and as shown, all have certain properties in common. So far, sexuality and obscenity have been discussed within the frame of the ethos of the *fabliau*, i.e. within the scope of medieval values and society. The *fableors* were not all but simple *jongleurs*, some of them were clerics as well. This means that they would have been familiar with rhetoric as it was taught in the Middle Ages. In our study we have concentrated on content when discussing the texts, but the linguistic properties of the particular *fabliau* rhetoric would also be of interest. When reading “Trubert”, e.g., the *descriptio*, especially the *effictio* (physical description) is conspicuous to say the least. When Douin describes young Roseite and the damsels, e.g., his *effictio*, although reduced to focus on female *pudenda*, clearly relates to the tradition of *descriptio feminae* founded primarily on Ovid (especially *Amores* 1.5) and *The Song of Songs*. A comparative study of the *effictio* (both female and male) of troubadour poetry, both mainstream

and *contrecode*, the love poetry of The *Carmina Burana*, manuals like *Ars Versificatoria* (Matthieu de Vendôme), *Poetria Nova* (Geoffroi de Vinsauf), and the *fabliaux* as discussed *supra*, would be of considerable interest. This is the subject of a forthcoming study.

## NOTES

- 1 Joseph Bédier, *Les fabliaux. Études de Littérature Populaire et d'Histoire Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 5e édition, Paris 1925, p. 10.
- 2 G. Cohen, *La vie littéraire en France au moyen âge*, Paris 1949; V.-L. Saulnier, *La Littérature du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1967; Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux – Étude d'Histoire Littéraire et de Stylistique médiévale*, Copenhagen, 1957; Jean Rychner, *Contributions à l'Étude des Fabliaux, Variantes, Remaniements, Dégradations. I. Observations*, Neuchatel 1960; Jürgen Beyer, *Schwank und Moral. Untersuchungen zum altfranzösischen Fabliau und Verwandten Formen*, Heidelberg 1969.
- 3 Glending Olsen, "The Medieval Theory of Literature for Refreshment and its Use in the Fabliau Tradition", *Studies in Philology* 1974, pp. 291–313, pp. 300–301.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 308.
- 5 *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux*, eds. A. de Montaiglon & G. Raynaud, Paris 1872–90, VI, p. 68: "Fabliaux are greedily devoured these days. Those who tell and transmit them have pocketed a lot of money from them, for they bring great comfort to the bored and the idle — as long as there aren't troublesome people around — and even to those who are full of anger: if they hear a good fabliau told, it gives them great solace and makes them forget grief, trouble, unkindness, and heavy thoughts" (trans. Olsen 1974, p. 308).
- 6 Nykrog 1954, pp. 72–104.
- 7 Ménard, *Les fabliaux: Contes à rire du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1983. 206–217.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109. Cf. also Bédier 1893, pp. 310–311; Nykrog 1957, pp. 100–103; Beyer 1969 138 ff.
- 10 Ménard 1983, pp. 109–110.
- 11 Meyer, pp. 121–122.
- 12 Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux*, New Haven & London 1986, pp. 73–104, 152–169.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- 16 Nykrog 1957, pp. 208–226.
- 17 Ménard 1983, pp. 143–165.
- 18 Muscatine 1986, pp. 105–151.

- 19 E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature*, Philadelphia 1993, pp. 31–69.
- 20 Simon. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 234–285.
- 21 Jacques Ribard, “Et si les fabliaux n’étaient pas des ‘contes à rire’”, in D. Bouet, P. Daros *et al*, eds, *Du mythique au mystique. La littérature médiévale et ses symboles. Recueil d’articles offert par ses amis, collègues et disciples*, Paris 1995, pp. 361–374, here: p. 362.
- 22 However cf., e. g., Sarah Melhado White, “Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French Fabliau”, *Comparative Studies in Social History* 1982, pp. 185–210; Rita Lejeune, “Hagiographie et Grivoiserie. A propos d’un Dit de Gautier Le Leu”, in *Romance Philology*, 1959, pp 355–65, Alexandre Leupin, “Le sexe dans la langue: la dévoration. Sur Du c. fabliau du XIIIe siècle, de Gautier Le Lieu”, in *Poétique*, 1981, pp 91–110.
- 23 Jurij Lotman, *Vorlesungen zu einer Strukturalen Poetik*, München 1972, pp. 9–50, 168–181.
- 24 N. J. Lacy, “Fabliau Women”, *Romance Notes* 1985, pp. 318–327.
- 25 See Moshé Lazar, *Amour courtois et fin ‘amors*, Paris 1964; Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-lyric*, Oxford 1965, vol. I; Ruth E. Harvey, *The Troubadour Marcabru and Love*, London 1989; Rüdinger Schnell, “L’amour courtois en tant que discours courtois sur l’amour,” *Romania* 1989, pp. 331–363.
- 26 As for the *fabliau* pertaining to medieval naturalism cf. e. g. Aldo D. Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley Los Angeles 1963, pp. 14–47.
- 27 Luciano Rossi, Richard Staub (eds.), *Fabliaux érotiques. Textes de jongleurs des XIIIe et XIIE siècles*. Edition critique, introduction et notes, Paris 1992.
- 28 *Fabliaux érotiques*, (FE)1992, pp. 142–146: “In her sleep, and I tell it to you without lying, she had a dream. She was at an annual fair and you have never heard of a similar one. There was no counter nor any ell-measure-stick, tent, warehouse, exchange counter, table, or stand, where, grey or speckled furs, linen, pincers, braziletto, cochineal, or any kind of food were to be sold; that is what she thought. Only “balls” and “pricks” were sold there, and abundantly. The warehouses were full of them and the rooms, and the granaries; and everyday and from every part of the region, there arrived carriers loaded with “pricks” delivered also in carts and wagons. Although they were brought there in considerable quantities, they were not cheap, because everybody asked a good price for theirs. For thirty *sous* you could obtain a good one and for twenty a beautiful and well-formed one. And there were even “pricks” for poor people; you could obtain a small one for ten, for nine, and for eight. People sold by retail and by the gross and the best ones were the biggest ones and best guarded ones. The lady looked everywhere and went to such trouble and pain that she finally came to a butcher’s shop where she saw a big and long one. Then she approached it. It was big at the root, (and big everywhere. It had an enormous snout. To tell you the truth, one could have thrown in its eye a cherry at full speed and it would not have stopped until it had reached the sack of the balls which was as big as the blade of a spade; never was a similar one to be seen. The lady started bargaining for the “prick” and asked the seller for its price. “Even if you were my sister, you could not give less than two marks for it. The “prick” is neither poor, nor weak; it is rather the best one in Lorraine and it has balls from

- Lorraine, which, this year, have performed very well; take it, as it seems to be your wish, that would be wise”, he says. My friend, what’s the use of bargaining too much? If you wish not to lose too much, you will get fifty sous for it. Never, and nowere, will you get so much for it. Besides, I will give you God’s farthing, because God wants me to enjoy it fully. – So be it. You have have it, says he, it is my first deal today and I don’t wish to be unacommodating to you. I hope that everything that you will wish to happen to me will happen, when you try it; I think that you will say many prayers and sing many psalms for my sake”!
- 29 See e. g. Muscatine 1986, pp. 24–46; Ménard 1974, pp. 46–107; Nykrog 1957, pp. 20–51 for rewarding discussions on the social setting of this genre.
- 30 Cf. e. g. Muscatine 1986, pp. 47–72; Ménard 1974, pp. 13–46; Nykrog 1957, pp. 140–175 for excellent observations on the literary techniques found in the *fabliaux*, esp. Nykrog on “the invention of narrators”, pp. 144–151.
- 31 *FE* 1992, pp. 138, 152: “I will tell you briefly the essential of an adventure that I know of and which I heard related at Douai about a woman and man, I don’t know their names, and what happened to them. She was a decent lady and he an honest man, and I can even assure that they loved each other very much [...] That night they had a very good time together, but in one regard I consider this man a fool: the day after he told everything just about everywhere, a consequence of which was that Jean Bodel, a fabliau rhymster, got to hear of it. And, since he found it to be a good story he made it one of his own. As he added nothing to it, this is where the lady’s dream comes to an end.”
- 32 Stephen Marcus, *The Other Victorians: Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-nineteenth Century England*, New York 1967. Cf. also Thomas C. Cooke, “Pornography, the Comic Spirit, and the Fabliaux”, in *The Humour of the Fabliaux*, eds, Thomas C. Cooke, Benjamin L. Honeycutt, Missouri 1974, pp. 137–162.
- 33 A. de Montaiglon, G. Raynaud, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, 6 vols., Paris 1872–90, I, pp. 231–232. I can do no better than borrow Muscatine’s spirited translation here: “Around the base it was a full fist thick, and two hands long. It kept itself always perked up to be drawn readily, and it got uncovered just like a monk reaching for pears. It was red as Corbueil onion, and it had an eye so open to give plenty of juice that if you threw a Lombard bean right into it you wouldn’t keep it from pissing any more than a goose would be kept from swallowing if she had eaten a grain of barley” (Muscatine, p. 119).
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Cf. e. g. Marcus, *passim*.
- 36 *FE* 1992, pp. 138–140: “One day, the gentleman had to leave the region; because of his business he was away for three long months to buy merchandise. [...] Don’t think that his wife was annoyed: when she saw him she celebrated him in the proper manner: she was never happier. [...] Her desire was to make him enjoy it as much as possible, because she expected the same thing, expecting to be satisfied in her turn.”
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 142: “Ha, she said, now he proves to be a stinking churl. He should have stayed awake and now he is asleep. I am really angry; it is already two months since we last slept together, he and I. Now the devils have made him fall asleep but I won’t give him up to them without resistance.”

- 38 Cf. N. 1 for the translation.
- 39 The *fabliau* norm is strictly heterosexual and mention of sodomy is rarely found. Cf. e. g. Muscatine 1986, pp. 124–125.
- 40 *FE* 1992, pp. 146–148: Then, the lady raises her hand and lowers it as hard as she can; planning to strike his hand, she instead hits her husband so hard that she leaves marks of her five fingers on his cheek. The cuff shakes him and makes his face burn from the cheek to the ear. He is surprised and wakes up with a stir. Now it is the lady's turn to wake up and to jump, she who would gladly have slept a while longer, because, now, her joy turns to pain. The awakening makes the joy she felt in her dream vanish; this is why she would rather have gone on dreaming.
- 41 Cf. the wife's prologue: "For half so boldly can ther no man / Swere and lyen as a woman can" (vv. 227–228).
- 42 *FE* 1992, p. 148: "Sister, now tell me what you were dreaming at the very moment when you slapped me thus: were you asleep or were you awake? – Sir, I have not slapped you, she said, don't pretend that! For the love, peace, and faith that you owe me, tell me what you were thinking and don't hide anything from me."
- 43 *Ibid.*: "and very willingly told him".
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 150: "I did it as a woman aslep; for the love of God, don't be angry; if I have behaved foolishly, I confess, and I implore you of all my heart to pardon me. On my faith, I pardon you, my very sweet sister, and pray God do the same. Then he puts his arms around her, holds her tight and kisses her sweet mouth; his "prick" starts to stir, because she excites and charms him."
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 150–152: "Sister, he says, for the faith that you owe me and that God will bestow his honor upon you, what would it have been worth at the fair, the "prick" that you hold in your hand. – Sir, I wish I won't live until tomorrow, if I lie. He who would have had a chest filled with similar ones would not have found anybody willing to make him an offer, nor give him any money, whatsoever. Even the "pricks" of the poor people were such that one of them would have equalled roughly two like that one. Thus, you can imagine that, there[at the fair], nobody would ever have looked at it or asked for it, far from it!"
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 152: "Sister, he says, I don't care, but take this one and leave the others be; that would be the best thing you could do. And that is just what she did, I think. // That time they had a very good time together."
- 47 Cf. e.g. Muscatine 1986 pp. 105–151; Nykrog, pp. 202–226; Ménard, pp. 143–165; Cooke, pp. 137–162; R.J. Percy, "Modes of Signification and the Humor of Obscene Diction in the Fabliaux", in Cooke, Honeycutt 1974, pp. 163–196; Gerald Marie Burger, *Le thème de l'obscenité dans la littérature française des douzième et treizième siècles*, Stanford Univeristy 1973 (microfilmed diss.), pp. 154–249; Sarah Melhado White, "Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French Fabliau", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1982, pp. 185–210.
- 48 Cf. e. g. L. Johnsen "Women on Top: Antifeminism in the Fabliaux", *Modern Language Review* 1983, pp. 298–307.
- 49 A. Ladd, "Classification of the Fabliaux by Plot Structure", in *Proceedings of the Interna-*

*tional Colloquium held at the University of Glasgow 23–25 September 1975, on the Beast Epic, Fable, and Fabliau*, ed K.Varthy, Glasgow 1976, pp. 92–107, p. 100.

50 In *Fabliaux érotiques* 1992, pp. 92–105.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

52 *Ibid.*, p.92: “In this new fable we are told of a damsel who was so excessively proud, perverted and disdainful — I have to go this far — that she could not hear uttered the word “fuck” and not feel nauseated and look very displeased.”

53 *Le roman de la rose, édition d'après les manuscrits BN 12786 et BN 378, traduction, présentation et notes par Armand Strubel*, Paris 1992, vv. 7112–7127, pp. 434–436: “Coilles” (“balls”) is a beautiful name and I like it, and so are “coillon” (“balls”) and “vit” (“prick”), nobody has ever seen (“vit” is of course an instance of wordplay on the two senses of the Old French *vit*, quite frequent in the *fabliau*) seen a more beautiful name; if you had heard me call the “balls” relics, you would have found the word so beautiful and you would have appreciated it so much that, everywhere you would have worshipped the “balls” and you would have kissed them, set in gold or silver, in the churches. It is I who made these words and I am sure that I have never made a base thing, and God, who possesses the wisdom, and whom we can trust, considers everything created by me good. How? By Saint Omer’s body, would I not dare name my father’s works properly?”

54 *FE* 1992, pp. 92–94: “And her father loved her so much — he had no other children — that he complied with all her wishes; he belonged more to her, than she to him. The two of them lived entirely on their own, they had no servants, female or male, despite their being rich. [...] And do you know why this gentleman did not have any male servant at home? The damsel did not want it because she was of those who would not have tolerated a servant who spoke of “fucking”, “pricks”, “balls” or other things [like that]. And this is why her father did not dare to have a male servant for an entire month although he very much needed one. [...] But he doesn’t dare to hire a servant because of his daughter to whom he is too indulgent.”

55 *Ibid.*, p. 96: “David starts wiping his mouth, then he also spits and sneezes as if he had swallowed a fly. “Stop, dear sir! he says to the peasant, you should not pronounce such a vulgar word!. Be silent, for the love of God in heaven, because that is a devilish word; don’t ever speak of it when I am present. I would not meet with somebody who speaks of it, nor mentions “fucking”, without feeling sick of the heart, not even for a hundred *livres*.”

56 *Ibid.*, p. 98: “to me he seems to be an honest man and he seems to have frequented decent places.”

57 *Ibid.*: “and, in the chamber, David went to bed with the damsel who was very sweet and beautiful: her flesh was white like a hawthorn flower; she was beautiful enough to be the daughter of a queen.”

58 *Ibid.*: “David put his hands directly on the damsels breasts and asked what they were.”

59 *Ibid.*: “She said: They are my breasts and they are beautiful and white; there is nothing dirty or sordid about them”.

60 Cf. particularly vv. 90–111, 522–527.

61 *FE* 1992, p. 100: “And David moves his hand straight down to the hole beneath the belly,

through which the “prick” enters the body, then he feels the hairs that have already started to grow: they were still soft and tender. He touches it all with his right hand and he asks what this might be.”

- 62 Ibid.: “On my faith, she says, this is my meadow, David, there where you touch but it is not yet in blossom. – On my faith, lady, said David, there have not been any herbs planted on it, yet. And what is that in the middle of this meadow, this ditch, nice to touch and open? – That is, she says, my fountain, which has not yet spurt forth. – And what is that just behind it, says David, in this slightly elevated spot? It is the hornblower who guards it, says the young girl, this is the very truth: if a beast entered my meadow to drink from the clear fountain, then the hornblower would immediately blow his horn to shame him and frighten him. [...] Then she started to ask him questions and to touch his things to finally grab him by the “prick”. “What is this here, David, she asks, so erect and hard that it might well penetrate a wall? – Lady, he says, it is my colt, which is very strong and healthy, but he has not eaten since yesterday morning.” Once more, she lowers her hand to touch and move the two balls and asks again: “David, what are these two things then in this pouch, are they two balls?” David answered rapidly: Lady, they are two grooms. They always accompany him, it is their duty to guard my colt.” There is another version where her fountain is located in a wood “un bos / Dont li mur sont tres bien enclos / De ma fontaine tot entor” (“a wood, with which the walls around my fountain are effectively enclosed on all sides”). Cf. R.J. Percy who also points out the image of the fountain as depending on the *Canticus Canticorum* for an intertext (Percy, p. 176).
- 63 – David, let him feed on my meadow, your beautiful colt, may God protect you.! He turns around and places his “prick” directly on her sex. Then he says to the damsel that he has pulled beneath himself: “Lady, my colt dies from thirst: he is in great agony! – Then, let him drink from my mountain, she says, don’t be afraid!”
- 64 Percy 1974, p. 177.
- 65 FE 1992, p. 104: “At once he puts his “prick” into her “cunt” and does everything he wishes to do, so well that she does not think him unmanly and weak, because he does it with her four times!. And each time that the blower grumbled it was battered by the two twins. This is how the *fabliau* ends.”
- 66 Ibid. pp.226–228: “Trembling like a leaf, she entered the chamber where the knight was resting; she undressed as fast as possible, lay down by his side, stretching her limbs out. When the knight feels her body, he immediately wakes up and is much surprised. “Who is that by my side” he says. – Sire, don’t consider this an outrage, because it is the countess who has sent me here, this sweet and calm damsel says. “I am one of her damsels-in-waiting. I won’t harm or bother you, quite the opposite; I will massage your head.– My faith, this does not displease me at all, says the knight embracing her. Then he kisses her mouth and face, caresses her very beautiful and white breasts and then he puts his hand on her “cunt”. Then the knight says: “Sir “cunt”, now, speak to me! I wish to ask you why your lady has come here. – Sire, mercy, says the “cunt”. It is the countess who has sent her here to offer you delight and joy; I won’t hide that from you!” When she hears her “cunt” speak, she is scared out of her senses and jumps out of the bed stark naked.”

- 67 Cf. Percy 1974, pp. 178–179 quoting Rychner’s edition: “I am cousin and maid-in-waiting to my lady, who sent me here to give you pleasure and joy; she would have been most willing to come here, were it not for fear of being discovered. You can do with me whatever you like, whatever might be your pleasure. [...] This is the “cunt” waiting for you here and for you to “fuck” it immediately and use it for your private pleasure, and which is much surprised that you are taking so long, for my lady lying beside you nude came for no other reason.”
- 68 Nykrog 1957, p. 174.
- 69 Ménard 1974, p. 207.
- 70 Ibid. p. 208.
- 71 *FE* 1992 p. 200: “Today, the fabliaux are much in vogue: those who tell and tell them make a good profit, thanks to them, because they mean considerable comfort to those who work and also to those idle, provided that there are not too noisy people present. Even those who are in great anguish experience considerable solace if they are told a good fabliau, so much, actually, that they forget grief, chagrin, apathy, and sad (the French has “black”) ideas.”
- 72 Ibid., p. 208: “because of their beauty they looked like fairies”, “the naked women who had such white fresh and wellformed bodies, arms, and hips”.
- 73 Ibid, pp. 212–216: “The oldest one spoke first on mandate of the others: Sir knight, on my faith, we do not – and this is right – wish you to depart like this. You have given us noble service, given us our lives back, and, thus you have acted as a man of honor. I will give you a rich gift, and please know that you will never be in want because of it: you will never get to a place and not be warmly welcomed by everybody: everybody will be happy because of you and the people will offer you everything they own for you to to dispose of as you see fit; you will never again be poor. – Lady, that is a generous reward, says the knight, thank you very much!” Immediately after this, the second damsel says: nor is my gift small; everywhere he travels and where he meets woman or beast – provided they have two eyes in their heads – if he does not deem it beneath him to address her “cunt”, it will be forced to speak. So great will his power of magic be, from now on, that it is quite certain that no king or count will ever possess something like it. The knight felt ashamed and considered the maiden to be out of her mind. Then the third one speaks and says to the knight: “Sire, do you know what I am going to say to you now? It is right and reasonable that, if, by chance, the “cunt” would be hindered from speaking, and that it would be unable to give an instant answer, the “arse” would answer in its place, without delay, if you call it, whoever might experience chagrin or discomfort. This made the knight feel shame, convinced as he was that they had made sport of him and that they kept him there for no reason.”
- 74 Cf. Burns 1993, pp. 54–58.
- 75 *FE* 1992, p. 218: “Sir, he says, God help me, the fairies told you the truth”, “this big mare’s “cunt”.
- 76 Ibid.: “The knight said: I agree, and instantly started saying to it: “Sir “cunt” where is your master headed? Tell me and don’t hide anything from me. – On my faith, he is going to visit his lady friend, sir knight, says the “cunt” and he is bringing a considerable sum of money, ten *livres* of good money which he has hidden in his belt in order to buy clothes

- on Tuesday. When the priest heard the “cunt” speak so well, he was most terrified and thought himself to have been fooled and subject to treason.”
- 77 Ibid., p. 222: “who was neither stupid, nor talkative”.
- 78 Ibid., p. 224: “The countess, too, kissed him: she would have done so twenty times in a row, and more willingly than listening to mass, had the count not been so close!”
- 79 Ibid.,: “In a chamber she had a bed prepared with the most exquisite and sumptuous comfort for him; there he was to sleep and rest all alone. But after a short while, she called for one of her maids-in-waiting, the most clever and beautiful one, and said to her in private: “My dear, and I hope you will not mind, go at once to sleep in a sweet and composed manner with the one whose arrival we all appreciate so much: lay down all naked and tend to him if it is required. I would very much like to go myself – I certainly would not abstain out of shame – if it were not that my lord, the count, is still awake.”
- 80 Ibid., p. 230–232: “When they had finished eating, the knights started to talk about many different subjects. And, she, who is unable to keep silent, speaks out in a loud voice: “My lords, may God help me, she says, I have listened to knights, servants, burghers, and squires talk and I have also listened to many adventures, but nobody could brag of such an adventure as the one I heard of yesterday! You see, here there is a knight who has outdone everybody else because he is so powerful as to force the “cunt” to speak to him. Such a man is worthy of much praise. And please know by Saint Richier that he is the knight who arrived yesterday!”
- 81 Ibid., p. 234: “The knight addresses the “cunt”: “Sir “cunt”, then tell me, he says, what did your lady go to fetch in the chamber where she so rapidly went to hide herself?” However, the “cunt” was unable to answer because its chaps were so very stuffed and filled with cotton that they could not move at all. When the knight finds that it [i. e. the “cunt”] does not react to his first call, he turns to it a second time. However, the “cunt” does not utter a single word to him. [...] Then he addresses the “arse”, conjuring and imploring it to tell him the whole truth about the “cunt” shutting up so completely. “The reason is that it is unable to, because its entire mouth is filled with either cotton or wool, I am not sure, which my lady put there, when she went to the room. But if the cotton were removed, I am sure that it would speak!””
- 82 Glending Olsen, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, Ithaca and London 1982, p. 138.
- 83 Burns 1993, p. 60.
- 84 Cf. Muscatine 1986, p. 121 on “La Dame qui se venja du chevalier”.
- 85 *Recueil general et complet des fabliaux*, (RGCF) III, p.69: “For a well brought up woman would like to be fucked often.”, RGCF II, p.137: “Noble sirs, you who know cunts well, who know that the “cunt” demands its share, fuck as much as you can”.
- 86 RGCF V, p.154: “He had no trouble finding her “cunt”, and rudely shoved his “prick” in: Sir, you are too rough in your love-making, said the panting damsel.” Cf. Cooke, p. 150, for a brief comment on this passage.
- 87 Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens. Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, Philadelphia 1991.

- 88 Melhado White, p. 198.  
89 Ibid.  
90 Ibid.  
91 Burns, pp. 56, 59–60.  
92 Gaunt, p. 265.  
93 Ibid.  
94 For the term cf e. g. Melhado White 1982, p. 200.  
95 Gaunt, p. 283.  
96 Cf. Jean Rychner, *Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux: Variantes, remaniements, dégradations*, 2 vols, Geneva 1960, II, pp. 120–35; Gaunt, p. 283: “Upon her breasts he put his hand. What is this, he said, by saint Germain?” Without hesitation the damsel said: “Brother, so help me God, these are two ram’s balls hanging here and I am not lying to you [fooling you].”  
97 Ibid., p. 282.  
98 Rychner, Gaunt 1995, p. 282: “Sir, by God, the king in heaven, tell me what this might be? – Fair one, he said, it is my colt, and he is a most fine one. She feels a bit further and touched his [the French has “unes,” “some, a pair of”] big hairy balls. And what is this, by saint Helen? – Sweet one, this is the sack of oats; I do not want to be without supplies. – Sir, you are very learned.”  
99 Ibid.  
100 Cf. Rychner, version D as quoted and translated by Gaunt, Gaunt 1995, pp. 283–284: “Through this example I wish to show that women should not be ashamed to speak openly of fucking when they are fucking: it is more reasonable for them to boast. People talk about it to increase its importance for there is a huge difference between doing it and talking about it. But the arse holds one tighter than a rope; and I say this to the peasant on account of his daughter, who changed her tune so quickly that she let the young man’s pony drink at her fountain.”  
101 Rychner II 1960, pp. 120–135; Gaunt 1995, pp. 281–285.  
102 Burns 1993, pp. 39–40.  
103 Ibid., p. 41.  
104 Ibid.  
105 Gaunt 1995, p. 255.  
106 Ibid., pp. 277–280.  
107 Ibid. p. 277.  
108 *FE* 1992, p. 242: “I have told so so many stories and fabliaux that I have found, old ones and new ones, that I have stopped [telling them] for two years! For the faith I owe St John, I don’t think that I will do that any more, except that you do not still know the story of “Long-assed Berenger”, but, on my head, I am so eager to tell it, that I will start right away.”  
109 Ibid.: “Then, listen to what Garin wants to narrate. In Lombardy, where people are not very brave, it happened that a knight chose a woman to be his wife and, as I understand it, she was a noble lady and the daughter of a rich lord of a castle. He, himself, was the son of a commoner, a rich and most wealthy usurer who possessed a lot of wine and grain, ewes

- and cows; and as regards money, he possessed it by the barrels. The lord of the castle owed him so much that he was unable to pay him and thus he gave his daughter to him.”
- 110 Ibid., p. 244: “This is how a good line falls into decay and how the lords of the castle decline and lose all their honor: they marry beneath their rank for money and because of this they should suffer unpleasant consequences and prejudice; and this is really what happens. Incompetent, vile, and cowardly knights come from such families: they desire gold and silver more than they dedicate themselves to chivalry. This is how generosity has lost; this is how honor and merit fall into decay.”
- 111 Ibid., p.246: “Then she reminds him of her lineage where there have been so many valiant knights: “They were bold and proud at arms, and in no situations did they enjoy being idle.”
- 112 Ibid., pp.244, 246: “The knight was fond of eating: in his eyes honor and praise were not even worth two cloves of garlic. He was fond of cakes and warm puddings, and held common people in contempt. [...] My lady, he said, I have quite a good name, you have no relative, no matter how bold he might be, that I do not surpass in valor and prowess. I am a knight who does not know hebetude, quite the best, on my honor. My lady, tomorrow you will see if I find my enemies or not!”
- 113 Ibid., p. 248: “The day after, at daybreak, the knight was the first one to rise, he had his armor fetched, donned his armor well, because he possessed beautiful, new armor that had not been used before. When the knight is in armor and mounted on his horse he ponders on what to do [...]”
- 114 Ibid. “how to fool his wife and for her to consider him a valiant knight.”
- 115 For the concepts “wild space” and “aventure” cf e.g K. Boklund, “On the Spatial and Cultural Characteristics of Courtly Romance,” *Semiotica* 1977, pp. 1–37.
- 116 *FE* 1992, p. 248: “beating his shield like a madman, more than a hundred ones, in my estimation”.
- 117 Ibid., “Step back immediately, because, and you should know it, it is not right that you should touch such an excellent knight such as I, and so famous. There no such knight of merit and courage in your family line: at least, I have not been beaten or defeated, on the contrary, I possess all the glory of chivalry!”
- 118 Ibid. p. 252: “This time the lady does not believe our knight. [...] The lady understands full well that he is about to fool her with his bragging”.
- 119 Ibid., p. 254: “Now the lady went to find some armor, equipped herself like a dubbed knight and mounted her horse.”
- 120 Cf. E. g. Lacy, 1985.
- 121 *FE* 1992, pp. 254–258: “[...] when she has heard enough she spurs her horse on toward her husband, crying to him: “Vassal, vassal, you must be mad to chop down wood like that! I am worth nothing, if you escape me without being chopped to pieces! Why do you treat your shield like that? It has done you no harm? Today you have ventured a mad project: damned be the man praising you for having sought battle with this shield because you are a notorious coward! Hearing these words and quite dismayed and shaken, the knight looked around him without recognizing the lady. The naked sword falls out of his hand, and he loses completely his spirits. “Mercy, sir, for the love of God, he says, if I have done you

wrong, I will repair it without argument; I would be most willing to offer you money and goods in accordance with your wishes. The lady answers: “May God protect me, then, you will speak about another Bernart, and offer you an alternative: I demand that you joust with me before leaving this site; and I guarantee and promise you that, if you fall, you will not get away: then you will lose your head, because I will grant you no mercy. Or I will step down to the ground and bend over and you will come up to me to kiss my “ass”, right in the middle or on the side. Chose what you think is best; you have to! And the other one who is afraid and a perfect coward says that he will not joust: “Sir, I have pledged, he says never to joust with a mortal; but dismount, if you don’t mind, and I will do what pleases you.” And the lady who admits of no delay immediately steps down on the ground and starts to lift her robe, squatting down in front of him: “Sir, put your face here!” And the other one contemplating the crack formed by the “arse” and the “cunt” believes them to be one and the same. He reflects, saying to himself that he has never seen such a long “arse”. Then, he kissed it as a sign of base reconciliation in the manner of a coward worth nothing, quite close to the hole, that was the very spot. She had her way, just the way she wanted. Then she returned.

122 Gaunt 1995, p. 254.

123 Cf. e. g. Muscatine 1986, p. 133, Philippe Ménard, *Le rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Âge*, Geneva 1969, pp. 691–694. However, there is a special case here, the “Byzantine” romance, *Ipomédon*, by Hue de Rotelande which is fairly rich in obscenity (cf. Gravdal 1991, pp. 121–129).

124 *FE* 1992, p. 258: “My name is Berangier of the long “arse” who brings all cowards into shame

125 *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 260: Perfectly at ease, she brings him into her chamber, embraces and kisses him”.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 260: “she who neither a fool, nor a *vilaine*”.

127 Gaunt 1995, pp. 256–259.

128 H.R. Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, Chicago and London 1986.

129 Melhado White 1982, pp. 192–193.

130 *Ibid.*, p.193.

131 The text discussed here is taken from *Fabliaux. Textes traduits et présentés par R. Brusegan*, Paris 1994, pp. 144–155.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 144: “*Vilain*, he said, you love me much: you would not any time venture anything without invoking me first before you start. I shall give you your reward. Leave your labor and your herd, be happy and rejoice. I will grant you four wishes. No more will you have to work, nor will you have to rise in the morning or stay up at night. Then, be happy to return: I truly tell you that what you four times wish you shall have. Be very careful when you pronounce your wish, you will not have another opportunity.”

133 *Ibid.*, p. 146: “His wife, who was the one wearing the pants, said to him: “Peasant, be most unwelcome!”

134 *Ibid.*: “He granted me four wishes. I have not decided on one before talking to you. In accordance with what you have recommended me, I will promptly present my wish, land, fortune, gold and silver.”

- 135 Ibid, p. 148: "Shut up, he says, fair sister, in no way will I do that! Women have foolish thoughts. You would at once demand distaffs, hemp, wool or linen. [...] I would like to have all the wishes, as I would fear, and you should know it, that if I would grant you the opportunity to be able to wish for a certain thing that you would get rid of me. I don't know what you have in mind: if you would demand that I at once transform into a goat or a mare, I would immediately become one."
- 136 Ibid.: "For God's sake, wish for such a thing that will be profitable for both you and me."
- 137 Ibid., pp. 148, 150: "By God, she says, I demand that you will be fully covered with "pricks". I wish that your eyes, nostrils, head, arms, and sides will not be without pricks planted all over them. [And I also wish] that each "prick" should have its "balls" and that they should be neither soft nor pliable but also stiff for you to look like a horned peasant. As soon as the woman had made her wish, "pricks" started growing on the peasant. The "pricks" sprung forth through the nose, and the mouth, on both sides. Listen, then, to these marvellous things: the "pricks" spring forth through his ears, from behind, on top, down below, and in the middle of his fore-head. From head to toes the peasant was entirely covered with "pricks". He was "horned" with "pricks", he was equipped with "pricks" all over; he had on him several thick, big, long and circumcised "pricks", several [of them] black, or white, or vermilion. If you were to throw a bean right through its eye, it would fly directly into the pouch hanging below! This was a very beautiful wish, indeed. There was many a long and thick "prick". The peasant did not have any bone hard enough for marvellous "pricks" not to spring forth. "Pricks" sprang forth even through his knees!
- 138 Melhado White 1982, p. 194.
- 139 *Fabliaux* (Brusegan) 1994, p. 150: "Sir, she answers him, I do assure you that just one "prick" would be of no use to me: it was always soft like a hose, but now I have a good number of merry "pricks"!"
- 140 Burns, p. 65.
- 141 *NRCF* IV, 25, pp. 44–55; Gaunt 1995, pp. 269–270: "Why did you sneak into my chamber when I was asleep in my bed? Did you believe that you had worn me out with your big "prick"? I am still fresh and more vigorous than you, as far as I can judge! If I cannot make you perform better, then I am really not worth much; you are going to get a good hiding! Now quickly lie down because I want to be on top; in my opinion, it is no shame, if a woman mounts when a man fails.
- 142 Burns 1994, p. 34; Gaunt 1995, pp. 270, 332–333; Muscatine 1986, pp. 124–125.
- 143 Gaunt 1995, p. 333.
- 144 Burns 1994, p. 34. Cf. also e. g. P. Payer, *Sex in the Penitentials: The Development of a Sexual Code 550–1150*, Toronto 1984, pp. 29 f., 118, and J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, Chicago 1987, pp. 161, 286, 367, 452.
- 145 *MR* I, p. 324: "He got ready and mounted [her], up and down, high and low; this is what he did without much rest from bedtime until dawn." Cf. also Muscatine, p. 120.
- 146 *Nar*, p. 92, Muscatine 1986, p. 120.
- 147 *MR* IV, pp. 209–210, Muscatine 1986, p. 120.
- 148 *MR* II, pp. 195–196: "He lifted up the back of her gown, then thought of something good

- to do. He then pulled out a good staff and gave it to her right in the “cunt”, a big “prick”, long and thick, yes, in the “cunt” he gave it to her, and he held her so tight in his arms that she could not squirm this way or that.” Cf. also Muscatine 1986, p. 191, n. 39.
- 149 Muscatine 1986, p. 120.
- 150 Ibid., pp. 191–192.
- 151 “Richeut”, ed I. C. Lecompte, *Romanic Review* 1913, pp. 261–305, Muscatine 1986, pp. 161, 198. Here I can do no better than borrow Muscatine’s translation: “Samson fucks them lying right down with their knees at their chests. He fucks them sideways and down on them (?) and over them (?); ...dog-fashion (?) and with a leg up. Samson knows even more, for he screws them bent over forwards... With many he gets on their backs and makes their bones crack”.
- 152 The reason is simple enough: stupidity invariably leads to ridicule, shame, dishonor, and even catastrophe.
- 153 Cf. e. g. G. Duby, *Le Chevalier, la femme et le prêtre*, Paris 1981, esp. chapters I, II, and VI.
- 154 *NRCF*, IV, 29, pp. 131–150; Gaunt 1995, pp. 271–272, vv. 51–53: “Before a half year had passed, he was so tired and worn out, his cheeks were so thin that he looks like two old pieces of wood, more yellow than a the foot of a kite; his body is not worth an old mitten as his eyes are sunken in so deep in his face that he looks like having been struck by illness.”
- 155 *NRCF*, III, 20, pp. 375–403.
- 156 Ibid., vv. 99–105; Gaunt 1995, p. 273: “Then into her “cunt” he thrusts his “prick” in such manner that his master got a good view; he almost faints from laughing! “How do you mean to kill me, with what, the lady says, fucking me like that that? I suppose you will die before you kill me straining yourself like that!”
- 157 Gaunt 1995, pp. 273–274.
- 158 Ibid., p. 274.
- 159 MR V, p. 102: “which these men carry hanging”.
- 160 Ibid., p. 103: “Truly, I tell you that it is called “prick”.
- 161 Ibid.: “When the young girl heard this, she laughed, quite pleased. “Prick”, she said, “Thank God, “prick”. I am going to say “prick”, no matter who is displeased. “Prick”! poor me! my father says “prick”, my sister says “prick”, my brother says “prick”, and our maid says “prick”. “Prick” here and “prick” there; everybody says it as they please. Really, even you, mother, say “prick”; and I, wretched me, what have I done wrong not to say “prick”? God give me one that I fail not!”. Cf also Muscatine, pp. 144–146.
- 162 *Fabliaux* (Brusegan) 1994, p. 140: “I wish in return, the good man says, that you will have as many “cunts” as I have “pricks” on me. Then, have as many “cunts” on you! Then the woman was “wellcunted”: She had a “cunt” on her eyes, four “cunts” in a row on her forehead, and “cunts” behind and “cunts” on the side, and “cunts” both on her frontside and on her backside. She had several kinds of “cunts”: a straight “cunt”, and a warped one, a “cunt” with white hair, a bald “cunt” and a hairy one, a young “cunt” and a well-made one, a virgin “cunt” and a used one, a deep “cunt” and a curved one, a gaping “cunt” and one without a mouth, she had a “cunt” on her head and one on her feet.”
- 163 Ibid., p. 154. “Then the fair lady blushed with anger not finding a trace of her “cunt”, and

- the good man, seeing for himself that he had no “prick” left, trembled with rage, too. “Sir, she says, still we have the fourth wish, pray, wish that you will have a “prick” and I a “con”, then we will be like before, having lost nothing.”
- 164 Ibid.: “He neither lost, nor gained anything, because he had his “prick” back, but he lost his wishes. He regretted bitterly that he had believed his wife. He who believes more in his wife than in himself often suffers bitter disappointment.”
- 165 Melhado White 1982, p. 195.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Ibid., p. 196.
- 168 Burns 1994, p. 50.
- 169 Gaunt 1995, p. 262.
- 170 *MR* III, p. 49.
- 171 *NRCF*, VI, pp. 301–311.
- 172 Ibid., IV, pp. 151–187.
- 173 *MR* I, p. 221: “[He] did not know what a “cunt” was, or why it was praised.”
- 174 Ibid.: “The damsel was much troubled by this as she wanted to have her pleasure. But this man was too ignorant to know how to approach her cunt.”
- 175 Burger 1973, p. 167.
- 176 *MR* I, p. 223: “Then after having bared her thighs and opened her legs she showed Sir Connebert (a pun on *con*, “cunt”) to him and said to him. “Sir Robert, do you not see anything in this valley? Yes lady, he says, two holes. My friend, what is it like the upper one? It is longer than it is wide? And what is the lower one like? It is shorter, that is my opinion. See to it that you won’t put your “prick” there, it was not made for that hole. He who puts his “prick” there commits a great sin. One should put it in the long one and move one’s ass and keep it tight [in order not to allow penetration in the lower one]. Lady, he says, do you wish me to to put my “prick” in the long one? Oh no, my friend, now you are mistaken. My daughter’s “cunt” is softer and younger and twice as beautiful, “fuck” the long one each night, you will learn how tonight. Lady, he says, it will please me much. I will fill the entire hole. And what should I do with my “balls”? Just thump the short one with it while with the longer you contend.”
- 177 *Fabliaux* (ed. Brusegan) 1994 pp. 290–303.
- 178 Ibid., p. 290: “Now I will tell you about a stupid peasant who took a wife but who was unaware of all the pleasures that he would have been able to experience with his wife, if he had possessed her, but he had never tried.”
- 179 Ibid.: “However, his wife had learned well what men can do, because, to tell you the truth, the priest had his way with her whenever he felt like it.”
- 180 Ibid., “Then the priest said: “Sweet friend, don’t be displeased with it, I will make love to you, if it is possible for you, before the peasant touches you.” She said: Sir, I will be glad to, because I don’t want to send you away. Then, come as soon as possible and without delay, when you see that the time is right; I don’t want to lose your good graces before my husband becomes a real man.”
- 181 Ibid., pp. 290, 292: “Shortly afterwards the peasant went to bed. She neither liked it [or,

- him] nor the pleasure that he gave her at all. He took her into his arms and squeezed her hard because he did not know what else to do and held her stretched out beneath him.”
- 182 Ibid., p.292. “She defends herself well and says to him: “What do you want to do? He says: “I want to get my “prick” ready, and then I will “fuck” you, if I can, and if I find your free “cunt”. – “My “cunt””, she immediately says, “you will not find it!” – “Where is it then? Don’t keep it from me?” – “Sir, since you want to know, by my soul, I will tell you where it is. It is hidden at the foot-end of my mother’s bed where I left it this morning.” – “By saint Martin, I will go there rather than lose it”, he says.”
- 183 Ibid.: “My dear lady, your daughter sends me here to fetch her “cunt” which she has hidden, according to what she says, at the foot-end of your bed.”
- 184 Ibid., p. 294: “I don’t know, he says, if it is asleep or awake, by saint Paul, my wife’s “cunt”, but if I had my way, I would gladly “fuck” it before getting home, if I were not afraid that it would escape from me on the way. However, I will “fuck” it to find out if it is true or false what they say, that in the “cunt” there is a very sweet and soft little animal.”
- 185 Ibid., pp. 294, 296: “And he says. “God, what a beautiful animal! I am certain that she still suckles the breast, she must be recently born. I see well that she is quite small. I commend her to God, to the Holy Ghost, and to the Saviour!”
- 186 Ibid., p.296: “Truly, I believe that she is afraid of my “prick”. Yes, of course, by the eyes of God, because she sees it black and with the snout quite red. Alas! Now, I do understand quite well that she is afraid. Alas! Holy Mary, what a loss I will suffer, if she dies! She will drown and perish in the ditch, if she runs there. Her belly, back and sides will be all wet! Stop! Good Lord, stop! What shall I do if she dies?” The peasant wrings his hands because of the mouse shrieking in its weak voice.”
- 187 Ibid.: “Sweet “cunt”, fair “cunt”, please come back at once! I give you my word that I won’t touch you before I get home to give you back to my wife and have you saved from the dew. They will all mock me, if they were to know that you have run away from me. Alas, you will drown in all that dew! Come, get into my glove and I will put you on my chest!”
- 188 Ibid., p. 298: “You should know; he was not at all happy!”
- 189 Ibid., pp. 298, 300: “Sir, then you don’t have my “cunt” – No lady, to speak the truth, I don’t. It is because of my bad luck that it fell out and on the ground to drown in these meadows. – Oh! she says, you are making fun of me! – Certainly not, lady, I don’t.” Then she takes him into her arms: “Sir, she says, don’t bother. It was no doubt afraid of you since it did not know you and feared that you would do something to it which had displeased it, I guess. And if you were to have it now, tell me, what would you do with it? – My faith, I would “fuck” it, truly, I would hit it in the eye to make it crack for the nuisance it has caused me.” Then she immediately said to him: “Sir, it is there, between my legs, but, by Etampes, I would not, that it were to be mistreated because it is back in your hands in quite a sweet and noble manner.” The peasant stretches out his hand, touches it and exclaims: “I have caught it!” – Then caress it with your hands, she says, so that it won’t slip away from you and don’t be afraid that it will bite you, hold it well so that it won’t escape from you. – Yes, certainly, he says, because of our cat, since, if it were to run into it, the peasant says, it would eat it, I believe, and I pray God to protect me from that!” Then he starts to caress

- it and feels quite well that it is wet. "Alas, he says it is still wet from the dew into which it fell. "Alas, alas, exclaims the peasant. How you have vexed me today! However, I will never chide it for having gotten wet like this [or, having behaved like this]. Now, get some sleep and rest, today I won't wear you out anymore. You will be tired from running and walking".
- 190 For the Indo-European tradition of the *vagina dentata*, among other things, so important for the medieval context (Burns 1994, pp. 57–58), cf. eg. W. O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts*, Chicago 1980, pp. 53–57, 81, 90; W. Lederer, *Fear of Women*, New York 1968, chapter 1; K. Horney, "The Dread of Woman", and "The Denial of the Vagina", in her *Feminine Psychology*, New York 1967.
- 191 *Ibid.*, pp. 300. 302: "By means of this *fable* I mean to teach that woman knows more than the devil, this you should know for sure. Tear out my eyes, if I have not spoken the truth! When she wants to fool a man, she cheats on him and makes him lose his head by means of her very words more than any man would be able to achieve by means of trickery. This is the end I give to my tale: may everybody see to it that his lady friend won't give him a similar life."
- 192 Muscatine 1986, p. 131.
- 193 *MR*, II, p. 18.
- 194 *Ibid.*, VI, p. 149.
- 195 *MR*, I, p. 257: "But one ought to breakfast on a herb that I know quite well; the root is short and thick, but it is marvellous medicine; none is better for the body of woman".
- 196 *Ibid.*: "understands nothing of it".
- 197 *MR*, III.
- 198 Cf. Melhado White 1982, p. 204.
- 199 "Le Moigne" ("The Monk"), ed. A. Långfors, *Romania*, 1915–17, pp. 559–574, here: p. 563.
- 200 *MR*, VI, p. 269: "By the tongue with which God spoke, friends, it is our visitor! From now on we can take a good lesson from our superiors. May the fire of hell burn the loins of all who don't play around, and God damn those who speak ill of it!"
- 201 *MR*, V. Cf. Melhado White 1982, pp. 198–200, for a good summary.
- 202 *MR*, II, p. 21.
- 203 "Le prestre et le chevalier", *MR* II, p. 81: "[...] that I will "fuck" him three or four times. – God save me, *filium patre*, sign the cross, do it, Sir, How dare you speak like that? Why, dare? – Only sodomites do such vile things. [...] Sir, it is entirely against nature", says the squire; Pray that the Holy Ghost will save you; you have lost your mind."
- 204 *Ibid.*, p. 84. "I won't go, please God, nor will I ever be in the position of a woman beneath a man."
- 205 E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. by W.R. Trask, Princeton 1990, p. 115. "This is their reproach: that, wantoning in youth, I wrote to maids, and I wrote to lads no less. Some things I wrote 'tis true, which treat of love; And songs of mine have pleased both he's and she's." (Baudri of Meung-sur-Loire (1046–1130), abbot of the monastery of Bourgueil, later archbishop of Dol (Brittany)).
- 206 *Ibid.*, pp. 115–116. My mind did stray, loving with hot desire...Was not he or she dearer

to me than sight? But now, O winged boy, love's sire, I lock thee out! Nor in my house is room for thee, O Cytherea! Distasteful to me now the embrace of either sex.” (Marbod (ca 1035–1123), head of the cathedral school at Angers, later bishop of Rennes, and [later in life] a fervent misogynist.

207 Ibid., p. 116: “Hair of gold and face all beauty, neck of slender white, Speech to ear and mind delightful – why, though, praise for thee? For in every part's perfection, not a fault hast thou, Save – protesting chastity jars with forms so fair!... // Ah, believe, were the Golden Age to come again, Ganymede should be no longer slave to highest Jove, Thou, to heaven ravished, shouldst by day his cup refill, Thou by night shouldst give him kisses, nectar far more sweet.” (The wandering scholar Hilary, who attended Abelard's lectures around 1125, in *Hilarii versus et ludi*, ed. L.B. Fuller, New York 1929, p.70.) Also worth mentioning in this context is a poem from the ninth century and, in the great German scholar's opinion, one belonging to “the pearls of medieval poetry” (p 114) written by a Veronese *clericus*:

O admirabile Veneris ydolum,  
Cuius materiae nichil est frivolum:  
Archos te protegat, qui stellas et polum  
Fecit et maria condidit et solum.  
Fuiris ingenio non sentias dolum  
Cloto te diligit, quae baiulat colum.

Saluto puerum non per ypothesim,  
Sed firmo pectore deprecor Lachesim,  
Sororem Atropos, ne curet heresim.  
Neptunum comitem habeas et Thetim,  
Cum vectus fueris per fluvium Athesim.  
Quo fugis amabo, cum te dilexerim?  
Miser quid faciam, cum te non viderim?

Dura materies ex matris ossibus  
Creavit homines iactis lapidibus.  
Ex quibus unus est iste puerulus,  
Qui lacrimabiles non curat gemitus.  
Cum tristis fuero, gaudebit emulus  
Ut cerva rugio, cum fugit hinnulus.

“O thou Eidolon of Venus adorable, Perfect thy body and nowhere deplorable! The sun and the stars and the sea and the firmament, These are like thee, and the Lord made them permanent. Treacherous death shall not injure one hair of thee, Clotho the thread-spinner, she shall take care of thee. // Heartily, lad, I implore her and prayerfully Ask that Lachesis shall trasure thee carefully, Sister of Atropos – let her love cover thee, Neptune

companion, and Thetis watch over thee, When on the river thou sailest forgetting me! How canst thou fly without ever regretting me, Me that for sight of my lover am fretting me? // Stones from the substance of hard earth maternal, he Threw o'er his shoulder who made men supernally; One of these stones is that boy who disdainfully Scorns the entreaties I utter, ah, painfully! Joy that was mine is my rival's tomorrow, While I for my fawn like a stricken deer tomorrow."

208 *FE* 1992, pp. 156–163.

209 *Ibid.*, p. 157: "intelligent, courtly, and well brought up."

210 *Ibid.*: "but she was actually in love with the parish priest."

211 *Ibid.*, p. 158: "What are you doing there, good people?"

212 *Ibid.*: "You are eating? You are lying: "to me it looks like you are "fucking"!"

213 *Ibid.*: "Be silent, sir, we are doing nothing of the kind: we are eating, you can well see that!"

214 *Ibid.*: "The priest said: "I am quite sure: you are making love; I can well see that! You pretend that I am blind. Join me here outside, and I will sit down inside; then you might well see if I told the truth or lied to you."

215 *Ibid.*, p. 160: "then he immediately grabs her by the head, spins her around beneath him. He lifted her robe and did to her what women like more than anything else: he shoved his member into her "cunt", thrusting so much that he was completely satisfied."

216 *Ibid.*, p. 162. "God keeps many a fool alive"

217 *Ibid.*, pp. 156–157.

218 *Fabliaux* (Brusegan) 1994, pp. 304–309.

219 *Ibid.*, p. 304: "Now, I wish to start on an *exemplum* that I learned from master Rogier, a master artisan, skilled in his profession, and who knew well how to sculpt statues and carve out crucifixes. He was no apprentice; on the contrary, he made them with much skill. However, his wife was madly taken in by a priest."

220 *Ibid.*: Her husband made her believe that he was going to the market with one of his statues, for which, he said, he would be payed quite well. The lady gladly approved and rejoiced at this. When he saw her face all smiling, he could well understand that she was but waiting to betray him, which was her habit."

221 *Ibid.*: "In his heart he is trembling with rage."

222 *Ibid.*, p. 306: "The priest had no way out: "God, he cried out, what am I to do? – I will tell you what to do, said the lady: get undressed, go down there and lie down with the rest of the crucifixes. [...] He undresses on the spot, I tell you, and lies down among the statues, as if he were made of wood."

223 *Ibid.*: "And the husband at once caught sight of the priest stretching out: he recognized him well from his "balls" and "prick" hanging down."

224 *Ibid.*, pp. 306, 308: "Lady, I have committed a bad thing doing this image injustice: I was drunk, it seems to me, when I left these members there. Light up, I am going to remedy this. The priest dared not budge and I assure you that he cut off his "prick" and "balls" without leaving anything behind: he cut it all off!"

225 *Ibid.*: "Gentlemen, catch my crucifix, it just ran away from me."

226 *Ibid.*: "This *essample* shows us full well that no priest, for anything in this world, should

love another man’s wife, nor approach her, without the risk of leaving his balls there as a pledge, just like the priest Constant who left his three breloques there.”

227 *Fabliaux érotiques* 1992, p. 266.

228 Ibid., pp.268–269: “Now I shall tell you this adventure which took place this year well before “Saint-Jean” (June 24th, *Fabliaux érotiques*, p. 268). It took place in the city of Orleans, at the house of a burgher who bestowed plenty of favors on his neighbor, a priest. The burgher never had good wine or good food on his table without sending some of it to the priest. However, the priest did not appreciate much all the things that the burgher did for him, rather, he wanted to make love to his wife, a lady who was very courteous, fresh, attractive and beautiful. Each and everyday the priest implores her to grant him her love. The good lady answers that she will never wrong her husband, nor commit a base or shameful thing, even if this would mean her death. In her heart, she is very furious with the priest for having addressed her in this way.

229 Ibid., p. 272: “when he saw lady Hersent, the nun guarding the sacristy and very much an expert in this matter. In this world, there was no priest, nun, good hermit or good canon whose torment she was unable to alleviate, if only they came to talk to her.”

230 Ibid., p.274: “On the spot, the priest takes out ten sous which he keeps in the chest of alms and gives them to her. Then the intermediary, her hand filled with coins, and says to him: “It is when your friend is in need that you have to help him. Without delay, she leaves bidding farewell, and he recommends her to God.”

231 Ibid., p. 288: “As for the priest, he did not delay: he took off his shoes and undressed: all naked and in front of the lady, he jumped into the bath which was ready for him. [...] Meanwhile, the priest jumps out of the bath and jumps into another vat filled with bresil tincture and red dye to which the lady directs him. He will be very well painted before getting out of the vat. Now the priest is to be found in the drying-stove, covered full well by the lady.

232 Ibid., p. 290: “Now let us see where the paint is; I want to know if my crucifix is painted all right, because it is wanted today. For God’s sake, let us have a look. Servantwoman, stir the fire and let’s lift it up! When the priest hears these words, he lowers his head into the paint in order not to be recognized. Now Picon gets up. He moves toward the lye, followed by his wife and servants who lift the lid into the air. There they find the priest extended and looking that he had been sculptured in stone or in wood. They seize him by the feet, thighs, and by the legs from all sides and lift him more than six feet into the air. “God, says sir Picon, it is really heavy! I have never seen so heavy a crucifix.”

233 Ibid., p. 294: “the priest grabs his “balls” and runs out into the street.”

234 Ibid., p. 292: “The sparkling fire heating his back makes his instrument stiffen: now the the priest is most furious. The lady looks at him through the corner of her eye and sir Picon notices it. He wants to make his servants laugh and says to his wife: “Lady, he says, I have never seen a crucifix with “balls” and beak, nobody has seen anything like it, nobody.”

235 Burns 1994, p. 54.

236 *MR V*, p. 165; Burns 1994, p. 54: “When the storm had subsided and Connebert was sated.”

237 Muscatine 1986, p. 126: “Sweet love, to whom do you completely belong?” She replied:

- “As God may see me, my heart is yours, and my body, inside and out; but my ass is my husband’s”. [...] Let your ass be his; I guarantee you I’ll beat on it for him often”. (Transl. Muscatine)
- 238 Nykrog 1957, p.80: “Impossible de ne pas voir dans cette réponse une allusion grotesque au problème courtois de Coeur et du Corps, conflit qui marque si profondément les vies de Tristan et de Cligès.”
- 239 Cf. Muscatine 1986, p. 127: “your balls, that spite me so much by beating on my ass”. (Transl. Muscatine)
- 240 Ibid.: “Then he grabbed the balls (the priest) had hanging by his ass, laid them on the anvil-block, and drove five nails through, four around them and one in between.” (Transl. Muscatine)
- 241 Ibid.
- 242 *NCRF*, VI, pp. 1–23
- 243 Gaunt 1995, p. 242.
- 244 Ibid.
- 245 Ibid, pp. 242–243: “The habit does not make the monk: if a man lives in a hermitage and is dressed in poor clothes, I do not care two figs about his habit or his clothes if he does not live as pure a life as his clothes suggest to us that he should. But many people put on a fine display and extravagant show of being worthy; they are like trees which bear no fruit after abundant flowering: such people should die ignominiously and in great shame! A proverb tells us and relates that all that glitters is not gold.”
- 246 Gaunt 1995, p. 243. Cf. Also R. J. Pearcy, “The source of Rutebeuf’s Frere Denise”, *Neu-philologische Mitteilungen* 1982, pp. 118–126.
- 247 Gaunt 1995, p. 244: “For this reason it is fitting that before I die I compose a fabliau about what happened to the fairest creature one could find or seek out from Paris to England. [...] All the mendicant friars who passed by there hung around inside. It came to pass that one came by who enchanted the girl and I will tell you how. The maiden begged him to ask her mother to put her in a convent.” (Transl. Gaunt)
- 248 Ibid. p. 243. Cf. also R.H. Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, Chicago and London, 1986, p. 44; Thomas D. Cooke, *The Old French and Chaucerian Fabliaux: A Study of the Comic Climax*, Columbia & London 1978, p. 88, A. Limentani, “I fabliaux di Rutebeuf”, in *Prospective sui fabliaux: contesto, sistema, realizzazioni*, ed. A. Limentani, Padua 1976, pp. 83–98, pp. 91–92.
- 249 Gaunt 1995, p. 244.
- 250 Ibid., p. 245: “Brother Denise deceived all his brothers by his countenance. And his was courtly and very obliging. All the brothers who were there loved brother Denise, but brother Simon loved him the most! He often put himself in harness’ like one who is not a real monk and he liked it better here than at his praying book; he was really a good cart-horse. He lived a rascal’s life and had abandoned his vocation. And she learnt her *pater noster* and received it willingly.”
- 251 Ibid., pp. 244–245.
- 252 Ibid. p. 245. As regards the pun on “traiz”, and like Gaunt, I refer to *NRCF*, VI, p. 315, note

- to line.
- 253 Ibid. pp. 247–248: To me it is rather a text about morals and manners than a text of cross-dressing and gender ambiguity as such; to me they are just means not goals and to me the question posed by Gaunt (p. 248), "what exactly is 'a woman'" is a marginal one in this context, at best.
- 254 Ibid., p. 246.
- 255 Ibid., p. 246: "She begged her gently to be entirely certain that never by any creature would her secret be known, nor that she had lain with a man, rather she will make a good marriage: let her choose from the whole county the man she prefers, provided he is of the same rank as her. The lady behaves thus towards Denise until she has picked her spirits up. These were not empty promises; she brought one of her finest dresses to her bed; she comforted her as best she could with a good deal of sincerity and said to her: 'my sweet friend, tomorrow you will wear this.'"
- 256 In *MR* I. Cf. e. g. Muscatine 1986, pp. 54, 139.
- 257 Ibid., p. 184.
- 258 Ibid.
- 259 Cf. e. g. Lazar 1966, p. 25.
- 260 *MR*, I, pp. 291–292: "He made three attempts at me, and every time he put two of his lancets on my thigh and struck me very hard; I gave in completely to being tormented, and yet I could not even a single time let blood. He struck me fiercely and often: I would have died, I think, had it not been for a most excellent ointment. [...] The ointment came from a pipe and ran down from a satchel with a very black and ugly skin, but it was extraordinarily delicious."
- 261 Melhado White 1982, p. 205.
- 262 *MR*, V, p.109: "Uncle, she says, I won't hesitate to tell you and anyone who would so I would consider stupid: my "cunt" is younger than I and I will explain to you the reason; from the breast I am weaned but my "cunt" has a gaping mouth: it is young and wants to suckle. Now I am proud that I have found the right answer. May the soul of the one judging these words right be honored."
- 263 Melhado White 1982, p. 205.
- 264 Cf. also Burns 1994, pp. 57–58.
- 265 Melhado White 1982, p. 203.
- 266 Cf. Långfors 1915, p.562, Muscatine 1986, p.118: "The opening was as sweet as honey, and it was so fresh that its pubescence was just growing out, and it had a large barrier and was placed on a mound." Interestingly, Muscatine translates "li paus volages li point" using "down", an image which point out the animal imagery so frequent in medieval erotic context. No more than elsewhere do I see any need to quarrel with Muscatine; our respective translations merely give further proof of the rich meaning of *fabliau* expression.
- 267 Cf. Långfors 1915, p.562; Melhado White 1982, p.203; Burns 1994, p.54: "Both its lips were thin and more black than iron."
- 268 *MR*, IV, p. 146; Burns 1994, p. 54: "the more her cunts eats, the hungrier it gets."
- 269 *MR*, II, p.134; Burns 1994, p. 54: "Last night you ate a sausage".

270 Cf. Ibid.

271 “La Veuve”, ed. Livingston, V., p. 382.

272 *MR*, II, p.135; Burns 1992, pp. 56–57: “He who put you so near to me did a bad job [...] If you were a little further away everyone would incline toward me. But in you I have such a disgusting neighbor, something you don’t even realize or know. To all those who love you may God give bad luck, because they do so against Nature.”

273 Burns 1992, p. 56.

274 *MR*, VI, p. 24; Muscatine 1986, p. 121.

275 *MR*, III, p. 69; Muscatine 1986, p. 121: “For a well brought up young woman would like to be laid often.”

276 Muscatine 1986, p. 193, n. 51: [...] “the devil, who is entrusted with completing the creation of woman made a fart on her tongue, and that’s why she has so much chatter.”

277 *MR*, I, p. 183; Muscatine 1986, pp. 123–124: “You can hardly find a woman who could depend entirely on her husband, no matter how fine and handsome a one she has. For women have a nature that makes them have certain desires, if you know what I mean; and husbands are so crude and full of hostility that we don’t dare be open with them or tell them our needs. Why, if they heard us as for what we needed they’d think of us as whores. So it’s impossible for us to get along without help from outside.”

278 *MR*, III, p. 74; Muscatine 1986, p. 116: Master has got his “prick” back; it is the work of Our Lord”.

279 Ibid.: “This story recounts and tells us that it is only because of his “balls” and “prick” that woman cherishes man; by saint Richard, this is the truth.”

280 Cf. e. g. Muscatine 1986, pp. 73–104, 152–170.

281 Cf. e. g. Melhado White 1982, pp. 207–210 for a short but rewarding comment on this *fabliau*.

282 *MR*, VI, p. 92: “For five years he fooled me, sirs; I never knew. Last night for the first time I understood the reason for his abstinence.”

283 Ibid., p. 93; Muscatine 1986, p. 129: “I am making a complaint to you, sir, against my wife, who has ruined all my hay by making wipes to wipe her ass and her cunt and the parting of her rump”.

284 Ibid, pp. 93–94; Muscatine, p. 130: “‘You’re lying in your whiskers, you crude peasant; in five years my ass hasn’t been wiped with hay or with anything else.’ ‘No’, he said, ‘I knew it; that’s why my balls are so black.’”

285 In *MR*, VI. For excellent observations on this remarkable text see e. g. Melhado White 1982, pp. 200–202 and Gaunt 1995, pp. 251–253, 275.

286 *MR*, VI, p. 112, Gaunt 1995, p. 252: “You have our pride. You have balls like us.”

287 Ibid.

288 Melhado White 1982, p. 201.

289 Ibid., pp. 201–202. To speak with Duby, God [and man (!)] wanted her “*inermis*”, and “*dans la discipline requise*”, [...] *sujette, obéissante, en service, [...] en crainte, [...] sujette au mari*” (Duby 1996, pp. 36–38).

290 In *MR*, VI.

- 291 In *MR*, I.
- 292 *MR*, VI, pp. 24–25; Muscatine 1986, pp. 139–140: “The knight, who was on top, looked right at her face and saw her swooning with pleasure. Whereupon he couldn’t suppress his foolishness, but said something very vulgar. Right then he asked her, ‘My lady would you like to crack some nuts?’”
- 293 *MR*, I, p. 319: “Tristan, when he lived in this world, did not love Isolde the fair as much as these two lovers loved one another in faith and in honor. In great pleasure they savored the secret delights of love day and night, and, when that blissful time arrived for them to lie in their bed, wrapped in each other’s arms and very close together, then they feasted at love’s banquet”. (The translation is mine but I have admittedly drawn quite a deal on Percy’s spirited one (p. 189)).
- 294 *MR* I, pp. 320–321: “All the times when you are with me, whether it is in bed or somewhere else, and you wish for me to do some of that pleasant love business with you, I would like you to say to me ‘Fair and sweet brother, feed Blackie some oats.’ Being perfectly courtly, she answered: ‘Fair sweet brother, drop the subject...I would rather have my throat cut than commit such an outrage.’”
- 295 *Ibid.*, p. 328: “He pretended that he was sick; he put his “ass” in her lap and shitted all over her, bran, shit or whatever. And then, finally, he said to her: ‘Sister, from now on you will have to make do with bran and you are free to enjoy it as much as you wish; rest reassured that the oats are finished. I have wasted too much of them. The granary from which Blackie was provisioned has been completely emptied.’”
- 296 In *FE* 1992, pp. 348–527.
- 297 Cf. Olsen 1982, pp. 96–97, 137–138.
- 298 *FE* 1992, p. 348: “In the fabliaux there should be stories, and there are, this you should truly know: this is the very reason why it is called fabliau, because it consists of stories. Douin who put rhymes to this fabliau bears witness to the fact that there was once a woman who lived in the wood of Pontarlie. She was a widow, without a husband, and she did not wear herself out much.”
- 299 *Ibid.*
- 300 Cf. e. g. Boklund, 1977, pp. 1–37, here: pp. 2–5.
- 301 Cf. e. g. Kathryn Gravdal’s seminal chapter on Trubert in her excellent study *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in Old French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Lincoln 1989, pp. 113–140.
- 302 *FE* 1992, p. 350: “Mother, he says, you know, let us sell our heifer; thus my sister can have a fur, you can see for yourself that she is badly dressed [the original has “trop nue”, “too naked”]. As long as she is as badly dressed as this, we will not find anybody who will ask for her in marriage”. – My dear son, she says, May God help you, thinking like that! You have spoken very well, I will always love you much for it; take it with you and sell it, if you wish.”
- 303 *Ibid.* p.55.
- 304 *Ibid.*
- 305 *Ibid.*, p. 358: “Lady, he says, may God save me, I will be happy to sell it to you; I will do it for a “fuck” and five farthings. That is what I want, or I won’t sell it for several months. – My

- friend, as far as the “lay” is concerned, shut up, and don’t you dare to speak of it any more. Help yourself to as many of our farthings as you wish and you will make a decent profit. – On my faith, he says, I will set forth. I am surely not to sell it for several months, unless I receive a “fuck” and five farthings for it. I will never accept a reduction of this price.”
- 306 Ibid.: “Don’t worry about that, lady, he is a fool; as soon as he has mounted, he will get off, and then you will have the goat; she is so beautiful.”
- 307 Ibid., p. 360: “He put his arm around her neck, then he pushes her to the middle of a bed and has all his pleasure with her. Aude sits down at the window, she who knows full well what her mistress is up to. She looks [out], then sees the duke returning and rushes into the chamber: “Lady, she says, what have you done? By the death of God, you are delaying too much! Master is already at the door, if he comes here, you are dead! – Then, get up, friend, and leave, the lady says. If they find you here with me you will be beaten to pieces and killed. – Lady, he says, take it easy! It will be a month before I have had my full share of you.”
- 308 Ibid., p. 362: “The lady recommended him to God, and so did her maiden-in-waiting, then he took off.”
- 309 Ibid. “By God’s death. You take too long”.
- 310 Cf. e. g. Duby 1996, pp. 66–98.
- 311 *FE* 1992, p. 362.: “Friend, will you sell the goat? – Yes, sire, if you wish me to. Brother, tell me what price you want and for how much I will obtain it. I will be glad to give it to you for four hairs of your “ass” and five *sous*; this is what you will have to give me, if you desire my goat”.
- 312 Ibid.: “Friend, what you say is not reasonable”.
- 313 Ibid., 364,366: “The duke turns his ass, ready and laid bare, toward him, the entire cranny being visible. ‘Trubert, my brother, pick one to the side, if you wish.’ Now, Trubert has taken out a a very fine awl and sinks it into the duke’s behind full well to the shaft; then he pulls back, very swiftly. He cares but little for the duke screaming and bawling. ‘Friend, take it easy!’ he cries out, this time you have hurt me. Don’t touch me again, I won’t have anything more of it, these hairs are stuck too hard! These hairs would most surely kill me!”
- 314 Ibid., p. 366: “And said Trubert who cheats and tricks at every occasion.”
- 315 Ibid., p. 370: ““Oh God, the lady said, if only I were away from here, I would go to such a place from which I would never return.”“
- 316 Ibid., p. 372: “and I will tell you how that man with the goat has fooled me. He said so many things to me, and he must have put a spell on me – I don’t know how and with what – that he lay down on a bed with me and “had his four wishes with me” [i. e. did what he pleased with me sexually]. This is how he treated me this scoundrel. I know only too well that I will lose my life because of this, I fully deserve death! – Don’t worry about that, my lady, now stand up, because I will never have you suffer because of this. He might be expected to abuse a woman, he who betrays a knight! My lady, in front of all my people he treated me in such a way – and I don’t know how – that I couldn’t stand on my feet. Thus, let us leave this business; if people on the outside were to learn about it, they would all mock us.”
- 317 Ibid., p. 376: “However, he is very well disguised and goes there without hesitating. Boldly,

head up, and courteously, he salutes the duchess first, then the duke and his knights.”

318 Cf e. g. Nykrog 1957, pp. 72–84.

319 *FE* 1992, pp. 378, 380: “The meal was soon prepared and they outdid themselves to please the master carpenter: there were cranes, water fowls, partridges, plovers, wild ducks, divers, and many other dishes; the entire day would not be enough for me to mention them all to you. The was food abundant enough even for God, if this would have been his wish.”

320 *Ibid.*, pp. 380, 382: “And in order to make Trubert even merrier, they allow him to eat with Aude, the duchess’s maid-in-waiting. All the way to Pointoise, there is no one to equal her, neither lady nor damsel. Trubert eats and she cuts the meat for him, making an effort to serve him well. When they were satisfied eating and it was time to remove the tables, Trubert farted loudly for everybody to hear, both men and women. The knights are most outraged but they do not know who has done this. There was nobody who did not feel ashamed, the duke too is furious. Trubert touches the damsel with his feet, saying: ‘Damsel, God help me, you have caused us all great shame!’ She treads him on his foot making a sign to him to shut up. ‘Damsel, by saint Gervais, says Trubert, there can be no question about it. Even if they were to cut off my feet because of it, I would speak the entire truth about it. – ‘Friend, you speak foolishly’, says she who is not to be blamed.’ For, in the name of the one begetting me, I have committed no infamous thing here today.”

321 *Ibid.*, p. 382: “and she was much burdoned by” [...].

322 *Ibid.*, p.384: “He tries to sleep but he is unable to, for the exquisite bed makes this completely impossible for him: he is not used to something of this sort.”

323 *Ibid.*, “Oh God, he says, what a bad bed! May cancer burn the mouth of the one who had it made and of the one who made it and who put so many feathers in it! I am sure that it was the duke who had it prepared for me, but I do not consider myself worth even a farthing unless I have my vengeance before daybreak!”

324 *Ibid.*, p. 388: “He goes straight to the lady’s bed, lifts the covers and enters the bed. The lady does not dare to refuse, believing that he is her husband; this is why she dare not resist him. Now, Trubert again takes the lady into his arms; he wishes and looks for nothing else. He satisfies all his desires and has his four wishes with her and then, returning the way he came, he murmurs to the lady: I’ll leave, recommending you to God! – You leave, sire, who is chasing you away from here?’ And the lady, who thinks she is holding her husband, again embraces Trubert. ‘By saint Laurent, the good martyr, you are quite agile this night, sire, and you work very well at your task; it has been a long time since the last time that happened.’ Then, Trubert embraces her again, the game begins again, and the lady is much delighted.”

325 *Ibid.*, pp.390, 392: “The duke goes to sleep with his lady, embraces her and puts his arm around her neck. She, who was well-educated, modest, courteous, and sweet, suffered what he wanted to do with her; she refused him nothing despite that fact that she would well have wished to be without it, for Trubert had taken good care of her – but she didn’t know how much she had been fooled! Finally she said to her master: “By the faith you owe saint Martin, do you know how many times we have done it by now? – Oh yes, the duke

answers her, a dumb man could count them. – I wish that God would allow me to get up, counting this last time, it is fourteen! See to it that the fifteenth won't fail, because you ought to score an uneven number, not an even one. I don't know what you drank yesterday to be so stiff and strong! – Lady, he says, you are wrong to strike up a discussion such as this one. If I might confidently tell you, if it is all right by you, I won't do it more than what I have done before, only once or twice a week. – You have offered me a beautiful gift, the lady says, this Monday; if you do likewise Tuesday and the rest of the days to follow, you will be a true master of this profession! Then the duke is angry; furious, he hurries to say: 'lady, lady, they are too indecent, those bitter words you throw at me to provoke my anger and to ridicule me. I am not as valourous and brave (obvious euphemisms for masculine sexual prowess) as the madman with the goat.'

326 Ibid., p. 392, n. 695: "It so happens to me many a night, that I "fucked" fifteen times, but I still had an erection."

327 Cf. eg. Duby 1996, pp. 11–88.

328 *FE* 1992 p. 466: "Lady, he says, may God protect you; come help me mount my horse. She does not dare to refuse him this, approaches him and Trubert seizes her, throws her to the ground, stretches her out and then he cuts out her "ass" and "cunt" and puts them in his hunter's satchel: he wants to offer them to the duke as a gift."

329 Cf. e. g. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, Philadelphia 1991, pp. 104–121. On this tricky and inflamed subject see also Dietmar Rieger, "Le motif du viol dans la littérature de la France médiévale entre norme courtoise et réalité courtoise", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 1988, pp. 241–267; William D. Paden, "Rape in the Pastourelle", *Romanic Review* 1989, pp. 331–338, and E. Birge Vitz, "Rereading Rape in Medieval Literature: Literary, Historical, and Theoretical Reflections", *Romanic Review* 1997, pp. 1–26.

330 *FE* 1992, pp. 494, 496: "Aude of the attractive body asks Trubert for "her" name: 'What is your name?', she says. – Lady, I am called 'Gayballs'. When she hears this, Aude laughs at it and all the rest with her. What? What? Say again! – On my faith, I won't say it again; I see well that you are making fun of me. – Still, do so, said the governess. I want it and I implore you to do so. – On my faith, my name is 'Gayballs' This has been my name ever since my childhood. – Truly, it is a very beautiful name, says Coutance, the governess. However, it is not at all suitable because of the object hanging down and thus named as well. Call her that among yourselves, but when there are other people present, then she should be called lady Florie."

331 Ibid., p. 496, n. 2420.

332 Ibid., pp. 496, 498: "She said: 'lady Florie, if it so pleases her, will sleep with me. At supper she dined with me; thus it is right that she will lie down at my side! – Let her rather lie down with me says the young lady Felise, it would please me much and I implore you to grant me this! – It is with me that she will sleep tonight says the courteous Bélisent, the daughter of the duchess's sister. She will give me much joy and pleasure! There was also a young one present, the duke's daughter. She is the most candid and the most beautiful one; her eyes are like those of the falcon, her throat and cheek are white and her mouth small

and smiling. No child could be more beautiful. She says to the others: ‘Then, be silent, you won’t have her, neither will you, nor you! It is with me she will spend this night!’ The governess gives in to her as she does not dare to annoy her. The damsels go to bed and undress in front of their beds and Trubert sees them all naked. He sees their fleshy and hairless little cunts.

333 Duby 1996, p. 186.

334 Ibid., p. 26.

335 *Fabliaux érotiques* 1992, p. 498: The damsel embraced her saying: “friend, be most welcome! See to it that you are perfectly comfortable and that nothing embarasses you”.

336 Ibid., p. 500: “As much as she can, she gives her pleasure”.

337 Ibid., pp. 500, 502, 504: “Roseite feels it [Trubert’s stirring “prick”] against her thigh: What is that, then? Tell me? – On my faith, I will be glad to tell it: it is a little rabbit; it is small but it is very beautiful. – What do you do with it? – On my faith, sometimes I make it sleep in my “cunt”; it gives me much pleasure and well-being. – And would it enter mine? – Yes, if you knew it, it would be glad to enter there, but you need to get acquainted with it. She starts caressing it. Roseite takes it into her hands wishing nothing wrong. Carefully she squeezes it and plays with it and the “prick” stretches its neck in her hand. “You have certainly domesticated it well, Roseite says, it already knows me quite well; it does not bite or scratch me! She holds it by the middle of its spine [i. e. shaft]: it raises its head and she laughs at it; she has put it at the opening of her “cunt”, pointing it as straight as she can, and Trubert is not petty about it: he plants his entire “prick” into her “cunt”. ‘God keep me, says Roseite, never has there been an animal such as this one; may God save and protect it for you! If I possessed one like it, I would never give it away for anything in the world! For God’s sake, beautiful and sweet friend, ask it to move forward a bit, because I find it lovely and it gives me much pleasure. – In God’s name, lady, should it please you well, it could advance so much that it would not even be able to turn or find its way back again! – This I would certainly wish, Roseite said, provided that you agree to it; never would I want to separate from it because all it does to me is most agreeable; I have never experienced such sweet joy! – Lady, soon you will see it play, jump, and dance in there. – For God’s sake friend, do so as best you can, as its sport won’t be able to displease me!’ Then Trubert starts “bumping” her so much as to make the entire bed squeak! ‘Oh, friend, now your action is better, I have never felt so good! Keep on, do not stop, because it fills me with pleasure: the faster you move, the better it is! And Trubert makes another effort and so much that he is sweating all over. Both of them have conducted their business well! ‘I won’t let it free yet, Roseite, the docile one, says. By the faith I owe holy Mary, it has to enter again! – Lady, let it rest as it is tired from playing; you should not rush it like that. – There is nothing wrong with it, Roseite says. She lowers her hand and grabs the “prick” by its head: it does not play with her any more or give her delight. ‘This is an annoying situation, Roseite says. I think that we have caused it harm; just a while ago it was much more vigorous; truly, I fear that it is dead. Our effort has not been successful!’ She squeezed and fondled it so much that its vigor returned: it moves a little in her hand. ‘You know, Gayballs, it was exhausted for sure, now it has regained conscience. I think that it will be

wholly recovered. They both had their full share of pleasure; they had absolutely no sleep that night. ‘That gave me much pleasure,’ Roseite says. – See to it that you don’t speak to anybody about it; everybody would like to possess it – Not even for all the gold in this world would I let people know, nor would I allow anybody but me to possess it.’“

338 Cf. e. g. Cooke 1974, p. 146.

339 Cf. Duby 1996, pp. 26 f.

340 Gravdal 1991, p. 131.

341 Ibid.

342 *FE* 1992, pp. 506, 508: “– On my faith, lady, each night there comes a white dove to our bed; in my opinion – and I am sure of it – it is an angel with wings! [...] ‘Gayballs’ swears on her death and on everything she can swear on by God that it is not her intention to jest. ‘Rather, truly know that she is filled [!] with the Holy Spirit, she is full of little angels! [...] She hastily goes to the duke to tell him about what has happened exactly in the same way as the other one told her and the the former proves himself very happy. ‘The Lord be thanked, he says, I am very pleased with this, if it is like you have told me. [...] Now, I would be stupid and you would be stupid, if we let Golias have her for his wife.’”

343 Gravdal 1991, p. 124.

344 Ibid.

345 Ibid. Cf. also S.L. Galpin, *Cortois and Vilain: A Study of the Distinctions Made between Them by the French and Provençal Poets of the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, New Haven 1905, pp. 82–84.

346 *FE* 1992, p. 512: The chaplain stands next to “her”: ‘Lady – he starts trying to comfort her – you should cherish our lord and thank him very much, he who bestows so great honor upon you as to wish you for his wife. You were born under a most happy sign; thus be sure to behave well and readily and completely accept your husband’s authority. Now Trubert took him by the hand and took him aside: ‘Sir, he said, may God keep and protect me, you have given me excellent advice; you will always belong to my company! Then Trubert pulled out his “prick” for the chaplain to see it. ‘Sir priest, Trubert said, have you ever seen such a beak? When the priest saw the big “prick”, he crossed himself a hundred times in a row and hurried to the king crying beside himself: ‘Sire, you know, he says, the duke has tricked us all! However, when hearing the priest, Trubert hurries to the king getting there before the chaplain and speaks out in public: Sires, you should know that this priest is all obsessed, I have never seen such a chaplain, he even touched my “cunt”: I was lucky that he didn’t rape me!’“

347 Ibid., p. 514: “Never has anybody been so ill treated for such an unjust reason. [...] Douin de Lavesne bears witness to this: he who meddles in everything is a fool: if the priest had shut up, he would not have been beaten.”

348 Cf. Duby, p. 206 for the concept.

349 Ibid., pp. 57–88.

350 *FE* 1992, p. 518: “He is completely fooled, he who does not know about his wife’s treachery, she who has no “cunt”.

351 Ibid., pp. 514, 520: “Lady, tonight we shall lay down together and it will give us much joy

and pleasure; as for me, I burn with desire to enjoy you; [...] Then Trubert approaches the bedside, picks up the purse where the servant girl put it and places it between his legs. ‘Sire, he says, since it so pleases you, do with me all that you wish! The king mounts him frontwise, as he wishes nothing else, then he thrusts his entire”prick” into the purse. Trubert pulls the strings tight, the king pulls and the other one furtively squeezes as much as he can. The king pulls again but he is unable to regain it. Trubert energetically holds him tight, holding on to him, moaning just like a woman being violated. ‘Sire, you kill me with your force, then calm down! The king swoons with pain. On my faith, I have never seen a “cunt” such as this one, he says when having regained his conscience, I don’t know where it comes from. Then Trubert, holding him very tight says: ‘Sire, it is a very bad “cunt”, you have never seen a similar one. The first time it seems very tight to you, but you will fare better the second time. Pull it back, you are killing me. Then the king makes an effort; abruptly he violently pulls the prick back and out of the purse.”

352 Gaunt 1995, p. 249.

353 Ibid., p. 250.

354 Ibid., p.251.

355 Ibid.

356 Ibid.

357 Ibid.

358 *FE* 1992, p. 522: “The king started lecturing her. ‘what is it lady, where do you wish to go? What is it all about, what are you thinking of, the king asks, tormented with jealousy, where do you want to go at this hour? – Sire, I need to piss very much, this I feel again. – I will go with you, the king says. – Sire, that would be a must churlish thing to do; if you had faith in me you would not go there. The king takes a string and attaches it well to one of “her” feet. ‘Lady, now you may go, come back when I pull the string. Now Trubert leaves the bed.”

359 Ibid., p. 524: “and immediately and without saying more, Trubert had all his wishes”

360 Ibid., p. 526: “You have taken my maidenhead”

361 Ibid. pp. 526, 528: “When the king pulled the string she got up on the spot, went straight to his bed and laid down with him without discussion. ‘Lady, you cherish me but little, he says. Do you wish to make things difficult for me? Why did you delay so long? What have you done? Where have you been? You don’t like pleasure with me at all! – But I do, said the damsel, more than it might appear. I will tell you why I took so long, it is because I fainted three times. – Why did you faint, lady? In God’s name, sire, only because of you, because you passed out a while ago. I think that you were in danger of dying and it made me all confused! – Lady, don’t worry any more. I want you to know that I cherish you much; you behave in a delicate manner and in you all virtues are to be found. However, yesterday evening I was enchanted, when we lay together, the very moment when I touched you I was on the point of being wounded.– Sire, it was the potion we had so much of last night that made me so! – Lady, you certainly speak the truth. There is no lady like you from here to the sea. Tomorrow I will crown you; you will be the Mistress of my kingdom. Never was there such a lucky spouse as you! – Sire, thank you very much, she

- said. Finally, the king fell asleep and the damsel with him. In each others arms they both slept.”
- 362 Ibid., p. 528: “So much delight did the night offer them that, mouth to mouth and in the arms of another, they slept until the break of day.”
- 363 F. Manoine, “Ist der Trubertroman ein Fragment?,” *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 1930, pp. 740–744; P.-Y. Badel, *Le sauvage et le sot: le fabliau de “Trubert” et la tradition orale*, Paris 1979; A. Duval, “Trubert”, in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, Paris 1838, pp. 734–747; Gravdal 1991, p. 137.
- 364 Ibid., p.138.
- 365 Ibid., p. 131.
- 366 Ibid., Cf. also Cohen 1931, pp 109–51.
- 367 Gravdal 1991, p. 132: “While she abandons herself freely to the voluptuous pleasures of Venus, she wonders, what is this tail, this swelling?”
- 368 Ibid., pp. 127–129: “seeing how all of her body parts are so beautiful, what do you say of that part down below, which we call the pussy? I think that it was quite a tiny little thing. Moving back toward the lips, it took on a slight blush, which rendered it curiously more beautiful. [...] Both of them had carefully saved their virginity for one another. Now they loved one another with such true love that they fuck one another all day.” (Transl. Gravdal)
- 369 Nykrog 1957, p. 122.
- 370 Ibid.
- 371 Ibid.
- 372 Gravdal 1991, p. 126.