

Saints, Sex, and Species: Ecology and Sexuality in French Hagiography from the Late  
Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in  
Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of French

University of Virginia  
April, 2014

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### Abstract

This dissertation examines the intersection of ecology and sexuality in French saints' Lives about hermits from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, showing how individuals can transform their identities by changing the way they live within their environments. Each chapter centers on a different saint's Life (Gilles, Marie l'Égyptienne, Benoît) and takes as its focus different ecological categories (human, animal, vegetal, and mineral) and sexual topoi (marriage, procreation, prostitution, objectification of the female body, and homosociality). I reread these texts using gender, ecocritical, animal, and posthuman theory to devise my own theoretical concepts ('the *homo sapiens* matrix', 'ecomystical union', and 'ecohomosocial triangles'). These hermit-saints, in their eremitism and monasticism, espouse humble environmental ethics based on non-violent and sustainable living practices. They learn how to have better relationships with God and the surrounding communities by realizing their own animality. They protest the dominant practices of their era, encourage others to have more respect for the natural world, and inspire others to change their ways. Rather than simply pointing to the inequality inherent in society, my dissertation goes the next step in showing how ecology can help individuals to change the status quo. Because they lived in close proximity to the natural world, medieval thinkers were cognizant of the role played by ecology in shaping human identity, and in this way, their writings can help us to better nuance contemporary theory by showing how the environment affects human beings and not just the other way around. In addition to my analyses of these saints' Lives, I also provide in the appendix a critical edition of Wauchier de Denain's *La Vie de saint Benoît*, a previously unedited text.

Signature Page

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## Acknowledgements

This dissertation represents several years of research, scholarly dialogue, and collaboration with various people and organizations. First, I would like to thank my parents, Richard and Doris Sokol, for ingraining in me a hard work ethic, for the decades of support they have given me, and for encouraging my love of books. I would like to thank my husband and son, Ian and Rider Ehrlich, for their undying love and encouragement and for traveling with me around the world to go to conferences and to conduct archival research. I would like to thank Amy Ogden for introducing me to the ever-fascinating genre of saints' Lives, for her incessant patience with me as we discussed my research, and for continually giving me clear and helpful advice. I would like to thank Deborah McGrady for her invaluable wisdom about how to productively read critical theory alongside medieval literature. I would also like to thank Lori Walters for inspiring a love of all things medieval within me and for encouraging my aspirations. Parts of these chapters were presented for the Environmental History Network for the Middle Ages at the International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI; May, 2012) and at the International Medieval Congress (Leeds, UK; July, 2013). I would like to thank all those present who gave me helpful feedback. I would like to thank the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes and the Bibliothèque nationale de France for their assistance as I completed archival research for this dissertation.

## Introduction: Ecosexuality in Medieval French Hagiography

The hermit-saints of medieval French hagiography are dynamic, liminal figures who straddle boundaries between places and identity categories. They transform themselves and the societies around them by having intimate relationships with their environments. They question social norms, dare to be different, and influence others to reflect on their abuse of humans, animals, plants, organic matter, water and other resources necessary for survival. The stories of these contrarians help us to better understand what ecology means and how it shapes individuals' sexual identities in various medieval contexts and environments—in royal courts, at church, in the wilderness, and in monasteries. Various questions impel me in my study of hermit-saints. How does the conflict between an individual's religious, sexual, and environmental ethics and societal norms manifest itself in hagiographical narratives from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries? How does the eremitic experience allow the hermit-saints to transform themselves and their societies by changing their relationship to their environment? How do these texts negotiate between eremitic ideals and societal practices? What role do monasteries play in shaping environmental ethics? How do hagiographers dialogue with the larger literary and biblical traditions to contest anthropocentric practices and to espouse a model of humility that teaches human beings to have more respect for their environments? To what extent can we see hagiographical narratives as contributing to a proto-environmentalism?

It may seem anachronous to speak of ecology and environmentalism in medieval contexts, but in my study of hermit-saints, it becomes apparent why such a discussion would be beneficial to understanding the history of environmentalism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the etymology of ‘ecology’ to the late-nineteenth century German word ‘oecologie’ which was in turn devised from the Greek *οἶκος* (house, dwelling). Etymologically, the term refers to one’s living situation. In contemporary usage, this term has been used to describe the science “that deals with relationships between living organisms and their environment.” In the sociological context, this meaning has been extended to be focused more on the (inter)relationships “between people, social groups, and their environments.” Since the 1960’s, this term has come to imply a concern for the welfare of the environment bordering on political activism (“ecology” *OED Online*). The term ‘environment’ is likewise multi-valent, and perhaps more appropriate than ‘ecology’ in the medieval context. This term, borrowed from the Anglo-Norman ‘avironnement’ (surroundings, periphery) in the early twelfth-century, has come to refer to “the physical surroundings or conditions in which a person lives” with which he or she interacts, and “the natural world or physical surroundings in general” (“environment” *OED Online*). In my study, I use the term ‘environment’ in various contexts. At times, we see hermits in the forest in the company of animals. At other times, we are dealing with the built environments of the royal courts, churches, cities, or monasteries. I use ‘ecology’ generally in the sociological sense, paying particular attention to relationships between people, their society, and their environments, both natural and modified by men. At times, however, the hermit-saints’ concerns border on political activism in that the saints wish to influence others to change, though, as we shall

see, their reasons for doing so are religious and spiritual. Ecology in the eremitic and monastic communities means cultivating a better love of God by learning to be humble *vis-à-vis* one's environment.

In analyzing the relationships between hermit-saints and their environments, it has been nearly impossible to ignore their relationships to their fellow human beings. Ecological norms are so ingrained in societal structures like the family, the church, and the monastery in hagiographical narratives that it has been fruitful to examine how these societal structures and sexual norms are interconnected with ecological practices. In this dissertation, I have sketched out some of the many ways in which we can examine 'ecosexuality' in saints' Lives. I have devised the term 'ecosexuality' to refer to the ways in which social norms dictate at the same time correlated sexual and ecological practices. In feudal systems of land ownership, nobles maintain their possession of familial lands from generation to generation through marriage and procreation. Other ecological norms like hunting and agriculture also coincide with practices connected to one's gender or social status. In studying 'ecosexuality' in saints' Lives, I show how ecology and sexuality become intertwined in practice and how hermit-saints can transform their sexual identities by changing their relationships to their environments.

The figure of the hermit is an archetypal character that features prominently in numerous genres within twelfth-century French literature. Paul Bretel traces the history of hermits and monks as literary characters in *Les ermites et les moines dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge (1150-1250)*. In his bibliography, he lists forty-eight *chansons de geste*, sixty-nine romances and epic adventures, twenty-three collections of miracles, short narratives ("contes"), and pious tales, thirty-seven saints' Lives, twenty enjoyable



(“plaisant”), satirical, didactic, and moral texts, seven texts about the Desert Fathers, and sixteen monastic rules and conduct books that treat the figure of the hermit or monk. Bretel initially describes hermits as men and women devoted to religious life who live in poverty, austerity, isolation and outside of any community (Bretel 75). As my dissertation shows, however, saints’ Lives about hermits challenge us to reconsider nature as an alternative familial model or societal structure. The tradition of eremitism in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France goes back to Jesus and John the Baptist. Early Christians imitated these men and fled persecution by living austere and alone in the desert (Cazelles and Johnson 59). This tradition continued for the first three centuries of Christianity, spread to Egypt and then Gaul in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries (Bretel 59). The return to eremitism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in France “attests to a growing discomfort aroused by the deterioration of monastic ideals” (Cazelles and Johnson 60). Bretel demonstrates the tensions and connections between eremitism and monasticism both in history and in the literary imagination throughout his book. Some hermits begin as monks and vice-versa seeing the various benefits of the two ways of life and/or considering one way of life as a preparation for the other. Other hermits function as itinerant preachers of sorts teaching monks how to be more holy (75). Bretel demonstrates, as well, the amount of diversity and heterogeneity in depictions of hermits who differ in their canonical positions, their ways of life, and their religious ideals (75).

Hermit-saints provide rich material for a study of ecology because they live between various worlds and in various environments. The hermit-saints I study are born into aristocratic families, flee to the wilderness where they live in forests and grottos near

mountains, rivers and streams. They travel around the world by sailing on the sea. They interact with nobles, townspeople, monks, priests, abbots, and popes in the built environments of cities and monasteries. They have a privileged relationship with animals who provide them nourishment and help them become closer to God. They forage for food and practice agriculture.

Hermit-saints confront the sexual norms of their societies in ways that demonstrate the interconnection of ecological and sexual norms. They reject feudal systems of land ownership by refusing marriage and procreation. They abandon their families to found alternative families in nature and in the monastery based upon respect for the environment and one another, humility toward God and his creation, and non-violent and sustainable living practices.

Three saints' Lives form the basis of my study: Guillaume de Berneville's *La Vie de saint Gilles* (ca. 1170), the anonymous *T* version of the *La Vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne* (end of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century), and Wauchier de Denain's *La Vie de saint Benoît* (beginning of the thirteenth century).<sup>1</sup> Each of these texts treats different ecological and sexual paradigms that typify medieval attitudes regarding ecology and sexuality, shows the intermediary role that hermitage plays in self-transformation, and presents varying perspectives of the roles of the eremitic and monastic lifestyles. Gilles, Marie l'Égyptienne, and Benoît practice varying degrees of eremitism, espouse different religious ideals, and become hermits for different reasons. Gilles flees his noble family and terrestrial inheritance, fearful that expectations for his

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, I will abbreviate the titles of these texts as *Gilles*, *Marie*, and *Benoît*.

management of land and wealth will conflict with his ideals of charity and self-abnegation. Marie is a penitent who escapes her position as a courtesan to have a better relationship with God. She never lives as a nun, but does have encounters with pilgrims and monks. Beneoit only lives as a hermit for a short time where he depends upon the help of a friend to survive and spends the majority of his time founding monasteries. These three Lives provide varying viewpoints of the collaboration between hermits and monks, just as much as they do different ecological and sexual topoi. All three texts present various environments both natural and built. As we follow the peregrinations of the saints, we see how ecological norms differ in various environments and contexts. Finally, these three saints' Lives present different issues relating to gender and sexual identity: marriage, procreation, prostitution, objectification of the female body, chastity in male-female relations, and masculinity. Bringing together this particular sampling of texts has allowed me to examine the connection between eremitic and monastic ideals, various medieval attitudes toward the environment, and how the interconnection of ecology and sexuality shapes identity.

To those who are unfamiliar with medieval saints' Lives, it may seem counter-intuitive to talk about hermit-saints and sexuality together, given the complete sexual abstinence for which such saints are commonly known. Nonetheless, there has been much criticism in the past twenty years that demonstrates just how central the theme of sexuality is in medieval French hagiography. This criticism deals with many issues of relevance for my discussion: defining gender, liminality, and the position of saintly bodies within space. In *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Simon Gaunt devotes an entire chapter to the genre of hagiography, likening it to pornography in its

voyeuristic descriptions of violence enacted upon saints' bodies. William Burgwinkle and Cary Howie push this idea further in *Sanctity and Pornography*. In "The Centrality of Margins," Amy Ogden rightly corrects the generalizations of Gaunt's argument by showing the extent to which hagiography allows for more fluid gender categories because of the liminality of saints. Emma Campbell builds upon Gaunt's and Ogden's work in "Epistemology of the Cloister" where she describes the cloister as a *non-lieu* and a threshold between the sacred and the worldly. In her book, *Medieval Saints' Lives*, she addresses the limits of "human" sexual values and social systems for saints and shows how considering queer concepts of community and kinship can contribute to our understanding of familial structures in medieval contexts. Cary Howie treats the relationship between the penitent body and erotic enclosures in his book *Claustrophilia*. All of these critics deal with the relationship between the saint and the natural world mostly tangentially. But what happens when we cease to see the environment as a passive background and begin to see it as an active agent of change that shapes social and sexual norms?

Seeing the environment as something more than an inert setting or an object to be possessed has been one of the broad goals of various veins of critical theory: ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and posthumanism, to name a few. Furthermore, environmental critics have been some of the first scholars to best articulate the interconnection of ecology and sexuality. In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, the first scholarly attempt to put forth a unified statement on ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty describes the steps toward defining the new mode of criticism by invoking Elaine Showalter's three stages of feminist criticism since she sees these phases as

analogous to those of ecocriticism. The first of these stages concerns representations and the stereotypes used to define both women and nature in literature. The second stage serves to raise consciousness by rediscovering the genre of nature writing, which often draws on feminist critical theories. Like feminist scholars who seek to recover the details of the lives of women writers, Glotfelty and other ecocritics study “the environmental conditions of an author’s life” and “the influence of place on the imagination.” The third stage, the theoretical phase, “[draws] on a wide range of theories to raise fundamental questions about the symbolic construction...of species” forcing us to read against “dualisms that separate meaning from matter, sever mind from body, divide men from women, and wrench humanity from nature” (Glotfelty xxii-xxiv). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari invite us to conceive of the relationship between different species and forms of matter in terms of sexuality. They show how the material world, by penetrating bodies and layers of earth, contributes to the process of becoming just as much as sexual reproduction (Deleuze and Guattari 21).

Donna Haraway, who is considered one of the foremothers of ecofeminism, describes human-animal and human-cyborg relations as domestic partnerships. She shows how discourse ends up depicting even innocent or nurturing human-animal relationships in terms akin to bestiality because human language and social norms have not yet adapted to accept these relations as normal. Rather, they are hampered by taboos and a philosophical tradition that seeks to depict humans as superior to animals (Haraway “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” 10). Haraway has also discussed how the binaries that allow

for man's dominance of women are the same binaries that are used to justify man's dominance of the natural world (35).

In more recent years, Timothy Morton has sketched out the many ways in which ecology—as a relation between an individual and his or her environment—is 'queer'. Building upon Eve Sedgwick's and Judith Butler's work on queer theory, he describes the human body as open, porous, and enmeshed within an environment that continually shapes it. He argues against concepts like inside/outside which have been used to explain away sexual difference and ecological interconnectedness alike.

Medievalist critics, likewise, have been examining the intersection of ecology and sexuality in the past decade. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen was one of the first scholars to initiate a posthuman turn in medieval studies. His earlier work (*Medieval Identity Machines and Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity*) examines liminality and the role played by environment in shaping identity. In his chapter on *chevalerie* in *Medieval Identity Machines*, he demonstrates just how dependent the medieval knight is upon his horse and equipment in his quests in terms that echo the work of Haraway, Deleuze, and Guattari. In his more recent work, he reads against anthropocentric conceptions of time to demonstrate the agency of stone ("Stories of Stone" and "Time out of Memory"). Peggy McCracken deals with issues related to human-animal and human-plant embodiment, showing the interconnection of human and animal in scenes of cross-species nursing ("Nursing Animals") and human-plant hybridity ("The Floral and the Human"). While both of these critics deal deeply with matters relating to ecology and sexuality, neither examines the genre of hagiography in detail. By extending these approaches to hagiography, we can understand how medieval thinkers considered the

interconnection of ecology and sexuality in its relation to biblical discourse, monastic formation, and ecclesiastical history. While many see man atop a food chain as the steward of God's creation, medieval French hagiography reconceives of man's relationship to his environment horizontally by showing his interdependence with his environment and the interconnectedness, through man's ecology, of the human and the divine.

Each of the three chapters of my dissertation deals with different sexual and ecological paradigms. In Chapter 1, I study Guillaume de Berneville's *La Vie de saint Gilles*, an Anglo-Norman translation of the tenth-century *Vita sancti Aegidii*. The Anglo-Norman translation was written in either southern England or northern France around 1170 (*Gilles* XI-XVII). This text survives in one manuscript from the first half of the thirteenth century (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Conventi soppressi, ms. 99, ff. 111va-145rb) and one fragment (London, British Library, ms. Harley 912, ff. 183va-184ra) from the fourteenth or fifteenth century which only contains ll. 2975-3057. Neither text is illustrated. We do not know of a patron, but the Florentine manuscript contains an inscription on the first folio tracing it back to sixteenth- or seventeenth-century England. We are not sure how it made its way to the Italian convent. The differences between the Florentine manuscript and British fragment suggest that the text could have been copied many times between its inception and the fifteenth-century fragment (Laurent, *Gilles* LII-LIV). The scholarship on *Gilles* generally treats its relationship to the larger hagiographical corpus and to the genre of romance, discussing such aspects as the portrayal of kinship relations in the text, the sailing scene, Gilles's

hermitage, and the hunting scene.<sup>2</sup> Though many of these scholars refer to the doe, none analyze fully how Gilles's relationship with her both is sexualized and prepares him for his future role as abbot. *Gilles* tells the story of a prince who abandons his terrestrial inheritance to pursue a life of asceticism in the forests of Provence. While there, he befriends a deer who provides him with milk. Through a land grant from king Flovent, Gilles founds a monastic community based upon non-violent and sustainable eating practices, leaving a legacy on the land for future generations.

Gilles' hermitage and monastic foundation are presented as a negotiation between feudal and saintly ideals. Hermitage is an intermediary process that allows the saint to transition from a noble prince, to a monastery founder, and then to a saint. As the saint transforms himself through his hermitage, the sexual ideals of his former feudal society still shape his ecological interactions. Though he refuses marriage and his terrestrial inheritance, he still ends up in a domestic partnership and in a position of dominance over the land. The persistence of feudal sexual and ecological norms demonstrates why self-transformation is difficult, since it must go against discourse. In this way, *Gilles*

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<sup>2</sup> In her doctoral thesis, *Plaire et édifier: les récits hagiographiques composés en Angleterre au XIIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Françoise Laurent discusses various thematic aspects of *Gilles*, from the special and temporal frames of the text, to the narrative coherence, to the religious coherence. In the introduction to her edition and translation of *La Vie de saint Gilles*, she discusses the manuscript tradition of *Gilles*, the differences between the Anglo-Norman translation and the Latin *vita*, and the figure of Gilles as a literary charter. In "Du locus amoenus au locus sanctus : la 'fosse bien cavee' dans la *Vie de saint Gilles* de Guillaume de Berneville", she analyzes the significance of Gilles' grotto as a maternal symbol in the text. Chapter two of Phyllis Johnson's and Brigitte Cazelle's *Le vain siècle guerpier: a literary approach to sainthood through Old French hagiography* treats the figure of the hermit-saint in various texts including *Gilles*, showing how the literary texts expressed a growing interest in eremitism due to the deterioration of monastic ideals (60, 75-82). Emma Campbell discusses Gilles's abandonment of his terrestrial inheritance in favor of a life devoted to God in *Medieval Saints' Lives* (31-52, 76-7, and 87). Ülle Lewes discusses the connection between *Gilles* and *Le Roman de Trisan* in *The Life in the Forest*. In "Hunting the Deer", Elizabeth William connects *Gilles* to the *topos* of hunting as seen in courtly romance. William Sayers treats the depiction of sailing in *Gilles* as it relates to courtly romance in "A critical appraisal of sailing scenes."



illustrates the role that ecology plays in an expansion of Judith Butler's concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' that I term the '*homo sapiens* matrix.' Gilles' partnership with the hind resembles a mother-son or husband-wife relationship much akin to Donna Haraway's conception of companion species. His hermitage, however, allows him to seek a more humble position in his environment. After all, he is dependent upon the deer for sustenance, and it is by protecting her that he obtains a Christ-like wound that allows him to achieve sanctity. When Gilles expresses his desire to secure the monastery's lands with the Pope in Rome, his description of the monks' use of the land resembles feudal ecology, as well. The similarities between the feudal and eremitic/monastic relationships to the land illustrate the formative role that language plays in shaping human ecology, and the differences highlight the limitations of feudal systems.

Chapter 2, on the *T* version of *La Vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne*, also calls feudal practices of marriage and land ownership into question while addressing other issues in sexuality, namely prostitution and objectification of the female body. *Marie* is an anonymous, late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman<sup>3</sup> translation of the *Vita Maria Aegyptiaca*. Among the various French translations of her Life, the *T* poem, as some scholars call it, is the most significant because it is the earliest and longest of the late twelfth-century redactions, comprising 1532 rhyming octosyllabic lines, and because most of the other versions stem either directly or indirectly from *T* (Dembowski 16-24).

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<sup>3</sup> Baker affirms that this version is Anglo-Norman, but Dembowski is not convinced by his argument (Dembowski 29).

The *T* version is extant in six manuscripts<sup>4</sup> and two fragments.<sup>5</sup> Five of the manuscripts date from the thirteenth century (A, B, D, E, and L), one dates from the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth centuries (F<sup>1</sup>), another dates from the fourteenth century (C), and we do not have a date for the second fragment (F<sup>2</sup>). Of the manuscripts for which microfilms or digitized images are available online (A, D, and E), two have only decorated initials (A and D) and the other appears to have had its illuminations cut out (C). This version is anonymous, and there is no mention of a patron in the text. It appears to have been widely circulated in France and England and inspired many other versions including that of Rutebeuf. Criticism of the *T* version treats Marie's relationship to her community, her transformation, and the erotic undertones of her encounter with Zosimas.<sup>6</sup> The *T* version follows the action of Marie, a courtesan who decides to pursue the ascetic lifestyle when she is forbidden access to a church while on pilgrimage in Jerusalem. She lives as a hermit in a forest alongside the Jordan River for many years eating only three loaves of bread and the food she finds while foraging in the woods. During her hermitage, her body withers and she eventually meets the monk

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<sup>4</sup> Dembowski presents detailed information about all of these manuscripts: Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 23112, f. 334c-344a (A); Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Misc. 74, f. 109r-120r (B); Oxford, Corpus Christi 232, f. 35r-64v (C); Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 19525, f. 15b-26b (D); Paris, Arsenal 3516 f. 113vc-117vb (E); and London, British Library, Addit. 36614, f. 271c-284c (L) (Dembowski *Marie* 25-7).

<sup>5</sup> (F<sup>1</sup>) Manchester, John Rylands, French 6, f. 8b-8d is an Anglo-Norman fragment of 162 verses corresponding to the first 168 verses of Dembowski's edition (Dembowski 27). (F<sup>2</sup>) is also an Anglo-Norman fragment but of only 38 verses (ll. 967-1004 of Dembowski's edition), has no manuscript number and can be found at Damascus, Qubbat Al-Hazna (Dembowski *Marie* 27)

<sup>6</sup> See Campbell for a discussion of Marie's relationship to her community (9-10, 14, 148-77, 200-18, 233-6, and 240-51). Duncan Robertson has also discussed Marie's relationship to her community in "Cum lur cumpaine et lur vesine." He has written three articles about Marie's transformation—"Poem and Spirit", "Twelfth-Century Literary Experience", and "The Anglo-Norman Verse Life"—likening it to a photographic negative in discussing the chiasmic structures of the text and descriptions of her body parts using black and white objects. Cary Howie has discussed the eroticism of Marie's enclosure in *Claustrophilia* and in a chapter entitled "Saints, sex, and surfaces" in a book he co-wrote with William Burgwinkle entitled *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge* (110-34).

Zosimas who buries her after she dies. The *T* poem is the most appropriate treatment of Marie for a discussion of ecology and sexuality because it contains the most dramatic and poetic description of the saint's physical transformation.

Marie's transformation reveals the extent to which sexuality and carnality persist during the process of penitential mortification. Natural metaphors used to describe the repentant sinner both before and after her transformation reveal the clash between and overlap of beauty ideals as presented in courtly literature and biblical exegesis. Bringing together exegesis on the *Song of Songs*, mystic theology, and posthuman theory *à la* Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that the penitent saint becomes one with God by becoming one with earth in a process I describe as 'ecomystical union.' The author uses several of the same symbols like the ermine and hawthorn flower to describe both Marie's courtly and eremitic selves, demonstrating how both women and nature are objectified by the male gaze and how the saint uses objectification to transform herself. Marie's transformation is a slow process whereby she sublimates her lust in an eroticized relationship to her environment. Even after her transformation from a courtly beauty into a beastly penitent, the text expresses a constant anxiety regarding her eroticized nude body. When Marie first encounters Zosimas, she asks the monk to throw her a cloak. When he finds her corpse, he describes her hair and the dirt as clothes covering her nude body. At the end of the text, her body remains intact for Zosimas to find her and bury her. The sexuality of the nude eremitic body and the incorruptibility of the saint's flesh metaphorically represent the persistence of human carnality, demonstrating yet another reason why self-transformation is difficult to achieve during one's time on earth.

Language in the text also reveals questions of subjectivity and objectivity, as they relate to sexuality and sanctity. Some scholars may see Marie as the object of the men she sleeps with during her promiscuous days and her eremitic self as a subject,<sup>7</sup> but this is not entirely accurate. Indeed, the symbols used to describe Marie's body do fetishize her as an object the men wish to possess, but Marie defies all attempts by males to be her sole possessor. When Marie goes on the pilgrimage, for example, she willingly sleeps with the men on the ship and rather enjoys it. She is no rape victim or porn star as Gaunt would have her.<sup>8</sup> She, grammatically speaking, is the subject of the sentence. She performs the actions, no matter how promiscuous they may be. When she becomes a hermit, Marie is ironically objectified, becoming the object of Zosimas's (and the reader's) gaze. She is only objectified when she puts herself in the humble, beastly position of the repentant hermit, and subjects herself to God's desire. The grammar of subjectivity and objectivity here is a key to understanding the role that hermitage plays in penitence. The saints must remove their own desire to fulfill God's. They must live in a position of reverence of their environment and not dominance over it. The collaboration between humans and their environment in this text reveals the role played by the non-human world in achieving sainthood, addressing modern theoretical debates regarding non-human agency.<sup>9</sup> Following her death, Marie becomes incorporated into the earth in a

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<sup>7</sup> Gaunt has argued that female monasticism in the Middle Ages allows women to avoid becoming subjected to men's sexual demands and has said that clerical writers see women as "sexual objects with uncontrollable libidos which make them unworthy and dangerous subjects" (195-6). Duncan Robertson has discussed the ways in which the male gaze of the narrator, Zosimas, and the reader objectify Marie's body (Robertson "Poem and Spirit" 316).

<sup>8</sup> Gaunt argues that a universal subtext of saints' Lives involves voyeuristic scenes of forced sex (197).

<sup>9</sup> Uncovering the agency of the non-human world is central in Deleuze's and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and in much of Donna Haraway's work. Her most recent book, *When Species Meet*, provides the most thorough articulation of her theories regarding non-human agency to date. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen is

process involving the cooperation of human, animal and mineral. Zosimas buries her with the help of the earth which presents him with an inscription revealing her name and of a friendly lion who helps dig the grave.

As it had with Gilles, Marie's hermitage presents itself as a negotiation between human ideals, linguistic approximations, and defiance of societal norms. Even during hermitage, Marie cannot entirely escape her humanity. Marie's hermitage is an asymptotic process, corresponding roughly with Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of 'becoming' as presented in *A Thousand Plateaus*. She is neither completely whole nor completely saint. She is neither all human nor all animal. She is constantly approaching a saintly ideal, but never fully divests herself of her humanity. Even in her death, her sexual carnality persists until her body returns to the earth, thus realizing God's prophetic affirmations to Adam and Eve following banishment from Eden (Genesis 3:19). Marie's hermitage and her interactions with Zosimas and her environment show us how one can sublimate carnal pleasure into spiritual pleasure through ecomystical union.

The subject of Chapter 3, Wauchier de Denain's *La Vie de saint Benoît*, also confronts society's sexual and ecological ideals. *Benoît* is an early-thirteenth century translation of Book II of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*. Wauchier de Denain's translation of the Life of Benedict is previously unedited, though several scholars discuss it in their work on Wauchier de Denain and his various vernacular translations of saints'

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the most prominent medievalist who treats non-human agency. He discusses animal agency in his chapter entitled "Chevalerie" in *Medieval Identity Machines* and the agency of stone in "Time out of Memory" and "Stories of Stone".

Lives.<sup>10</sup> In the appendix of this dissertation, I have provided the first complete edition of Wauchier's *La Vie de saint Benoît* along with some introductory material about the author, his patron, and the manuscript tradition of the text. This text is preserved in sixteen manuscripts in France, England, and Belgium.<sup>11</sup> Six of these date from the thirteenth century, eight date from the fourteenth century, and two date from the fifteenth century. Four of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts have been traced back to noble patrons. Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine 1716 was dedicated to Isabelle de France, queen of England from 1292-1358. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 13496 contains the arms of Burgundy and of Philippe le Bon, duke of Burgundy, the *blazon* of the Saint Esprit de Dijon Hospital, and a note regarding the founding of this hospital by Philippe (ff. 213-214). Chantilly, Musée Condé 734 (456) contains the arms of the Bourbon-Condé family. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 183 was executed for Charles IV. Given the text's noble patronage and later transmission in numerous manuscripts, it is safe to say that this was a significant and popular text. The illustrations of these manuscripts also depict various episodes and key ideas pertinent to

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Meyer was the first to discover Wauchier de Denain's hagiographical corpus in the early twentieth century. He writes about it in three pieces: "Légendes hagiographiques", "Versions en vers et en prose", and "Wauchier de Denain." Few scholars discuss Wauchier until the end of the twentieth century. Michelle Szkilnik edited his translations of the *Vie des Pères* and wrote about his use of prose in "Ecrire en vers, écrire en prose." John Jay Thompson edited Wauchier's Life of St. Nicholas and analyzed Wauchier's work as a translator in his dissertation: *From the Translator's Worktable*. He also discusses the manuscript tradition of Wauchier's saints' Lives in his two articles: "Finding a Literary Commonplace" and "The Recent Discovery of a Collection of Early French Prose". Molly Lynde-Recchia has edited Wauchier's Life of St. Marcel of Limoges which she connects to his unfinished *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* in two articles: "The *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*" and "Wauchier de Denain's *Vie de seint Marciau*."

<sup>11</sup> See the introduction to my edition in the appendix for a list of these manuscripts. Dates and provenance can be found both in the Jonas database on the website for the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes (<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/>) and in the digital manuscript notices on the websites of the various repositories. Links to these sites are also provided in the appendix.

my study. One shows Beneoit interacting with other men (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. fr. 23686, fol. 115vb). Two show Benedict repairing his nurse's broken vessel (C<sup>1</sup> and C<sup>3</sup>). Another shows the envious devil destroying the monastery (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 13496, fol. 277r.). The manuscript executed for Charles IV depicts Beneoit rolling in thorns (157v). Yet another, shows a bird carrying away poisoned food (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 185, fol. 157r).

*Benoît* recounts the Life of a young aristocrat who flees Rome to escape from the temptation of vice. He lives as a hermit for some time in a grotto before becoming a monk, then an abbot, then a monastery founder, building some twelve monasteries in the mountains of Italy. Throughout his monastic exploits, his use of natural resources enables him to assert his masculinity and to improve his relationships with his fellow human beings.

In my chapter on Beneoit, I build upon René Girard's and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on triangles of desire and homosocial relations to devise my own theoretical concept, the 'ecohomosocial cone', that takes into account the role played by natural resources, agriculture, and food in defining masculine identity. *Benoît* shows how the environment, in addition to women, can be included in the erotic triangles that define relations between men. Sedgwick uses the term 'homosociality' to describe "social bonds between persons of the same sex" and also uses this term to suggest the continuum between 'homosocial' and 'homosexual' desire (Sedgwick 1-2). When applied to the discussion of ecology and sexuality, however, the 'homo' in 'homosociality' stands for both man and human, showing the extent to which medieval ideals of masculinity are defined by men's ability to control nature. Sedgwick uses the image of a triangle to

describe “the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love’” between two men competing for the same woman, but what happens when the men are competing for the same resources? In what ways is this struggle defined by gender norms and ideals? Is Beneoit’s quest for monastic foundation a sublimation of human erotic desire? Analysis of Beneoit’s relationship with his fellow monks and of his management of resources provides some answers to these questions. This chapter focuses on the in-betweenness of the environment, caught between the desires of various men, and shows how harnessing the power of resources—natural and man-made alike—can bring men together and tear them apart through bonding and rivalries. Beneoit’s water miracles stand as a metaphor for the fluidity of his identity. He changes himself and his perception by others through monastic foundation and his dominance over the landscape.

*Benoît* provides an alternative model of patriarchy—based on communal values, hierarchies of power, and the sharing of resources—that provides the necessary conditions to create stability during times of chaos. Set during the period of the fall of the Roman Empire—characterized by famines, plagues, and barbarian invasions—*Benoît* shows how harnessing the power of resources, self-discipline, and generosity can help individuals to centralize power. In his lifetime, he manages to build a veritable monastic empire and attracts converts to the Church all while strengthening his and his monks’ faith in God. This text proves to be just as much a treatise on the values of the eremitic and monastic lifestyles and male homosocial bonding as it does one on the relationships between monasteries and the surrounding community. Though Beneoit’s journey begins within himself in the solitude of his hermitage, it ends within the larger Christian



community. Beneoit learns how to use his relationships with men, women, and the environment to achieve his ultimate desire: God.

In each of the three chapters I address all manner of relationships: that between human and community, man and man, man and woman, human and animal, human and environment, and human and God. In this way, I examine human-environmental relations in the same terms used to describe human-human relations, which often boil down to larger issues of the mechanics of identity formation and change. Hermit-saints transform their identities by rejecting social norms with which they do not agree, by having intimate relationships with their environments, and by encouraging their societies to see the violence of their norms. Hagiographers present alternative viewpoints on the relationship between human beings, their environments, their societies, and God. They translate complex theological ideals about the role of human beings in relation to their environments and suggest pathways to change in their stories about humans who straddle divides between man/woman, human/animal, human/environment, and human/God. The three saints' Lives I study present different perspectives of sexual and environmental ethics and how they relate to one's spiritual values, and these perspectives better inform our understanding of portrayals of eremitism and monasticism in twelfth- and thirteenth-century French hagiography. They advocate respect for women, the poor, animals and the environment. They present sustainable and non-violent living practices and encourage the communal sharing of resources. Medieval French hagiography thus contextualizes moral and theological lessons about ecology and sexuality in stories about humans who transcend their humanity. In this way, they offer their readers alternative perspectives of the position of humans within God's creation.



Chapter 1—Interspecies Domesticity and the ‘*Homo Sapiens* Matrix’ in Guillaume de Berneville’s *La Vie de saint Gilles*

Introduction

Guillaume de Berneville’s *Vie de saint Gilles*<sup>12</sup> (ca. 1170) tells the story of a man at odds with the world. Gilles finds himself torn between two poles of existence—one noble and worldly, granted to him at birth and the other saintly and not of this world, a nearly impossible and unachievable ideal. The once noble prince refuses marriage, flees his compatriots, and abandons his inherited lands in Athens to seek a more humble life of asceticism in the forests of southern France. In rejecting the patriarchal roles of husband, king, and feudal lord, Gilles rejects the predominant sexual and ecological ideals of his society. The slippage from prince to hermit, however, is not entirely clear cut, for Gilles ends up sublimating his society’s ideals first by partnering with a doe and then by ruling monastic lands. In Gilles’s hermitage, he finds companionship and sustenance when he lives with a breastfeeding deer. In the intimate, domestic space of his hut, Gilles learns about humility and mercy when he realizes the extent of his animality. In this way, he hovers in the ambiguous, liminal space between human and animal. Ultimately, he is unable to entirely escape the human world. Rather, his fellow humans keep seeking him out for his guidance and healing. In the end, he returns to the world, though with a much more humble attitude toward his environment, agreeing to share his gifts with others by

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<sup>12</sup> Henceforth *Gilles*. All citations will come from Françoise Laurent’s edition. I will also use her modern French translations for all character names except when I am quoting others’ criticism of the text. The accepted English spelling of Gilles is ‘Giles’. Guillaume de Berneville’s translation of the tenth-century *Vita sancti Aegidii* is preserved in one manuscript from the beginning of the thirteenth century, Florence Laurentinian Library 99, as well as in a fragment. See Laurent’s introduction to her translation of *Gilles* for further background information on Guillaume de Berneville, his translation, and further bibliographic references (Laurent XI-LXIV).

becoming an abbot and founding a monastery on the site of his hermitage. Through his hermitage and monastic foundation, Gilles creates an in-between space where he can redefine his identity by changing his relationship to his environment.

Before I can begin to flesh out my argument and its theoretical underpinnings, I must first define two major key terms of my study: ‘identity’ and ‘environment.’ Identity is no doubt a broad term that can have many meanings. The *Oxford English Dictionary* entries for ‘identity’ fall into two main categories, defining the term either as a state of being the same as others or that of being unique.<sup>13</sup> Upon first glance, these definitions may seem contradictory, but this reflects the inherent paradox involved in identity. In contemporary critical theory, identity scholars discuss various identity categories like gender, race, ethnicity, etc. When one self-identifies using one of these categories, s/he pronouncing his/her ‘sameness’, the way in which s/he resembles others. At the same time, people can possess a unique combination of these categories of sameness that makes them individuals. This tension between sameness and uniqueness, between belonging and difference recurs frequently in *Gilles*. At times Gilles distances himself from his peers because of his desire to be different. Other times, he concedes to sameness in order to live within his society. In this chapter, I will focus on three main identity categories: sexuality, social status, and species. I must also explain that these categories serve as umbrella terms, representing a complicated assemblage of traits, attributes, and behavior. By ‘sexuality’, I mean the composite of biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation. By ‘social status’, I mean class and profession. By ‘species’, I

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<sup>13</sup> See "identity, n.". OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. 11 October 2012 <<http://oed.com/view/Entry/91004?redirectedFrom=identity>>.

mean the way that an individual defines him- or herself in relation to other entities and beings within his or her environment. These may seem like diverse personality characteristics, but they are all connected in that they are defined and constructed relationally in opposition to various ‘others’ based upon linguistic binaries that imply hierarchies of power. Moreover, the social norms of ideal comportment that establish these binaries and hierarchies of power, are interconnected and self-reinforcing. That is to say that the same sorts of ideals that define one’s class also define one’s gender roles and the expectations of one’s species. These identity categories are thus all interconnected and must be treated together in order to fully articulate the mechanics of identity politics. *Gilles* provides an excellent case study for the interconnection of these various identity categories. In his various roles as (hu)man, prince, and son, Gilles is expected to dominate other humans, animals, and his environment throughout his life through social norms that create, reinforce, and maintain supposed relations of opposition that grant him power over other humans and the natural world. Gilles is the king or prince in opposition to the barons, to the peasants, and to the clergy over whom he maintains political power. His nobility connotes ideals of comportment that prescribe the relations that he is expected to maintain with the people of his court and country, with his wife and children, and with the lands and animals of his realm. He is expected to govern his lands by keeping order. To keep order, he must protect his people from invaders and wild animals. In order to accomplish this task, he must enlist the help of other men, namely his barons whom he must provide with protection and lands. As a noble son, Gilles is expected to marry and procreate in order to perpetuate this system of protecting his people and their ownership of the lands. The gender category ‘male’ is defined in

opposition to that of ‘female,’ and also connotes a set of behavioral ideals. As a ‘male,’ Gilles is expected to marry and produce heirs and serve as the patriarch of his family by establishing and reinforcing norms for his wife and children. Since Gilles never has children, the barons’ expectations of him provide our only example of what was expected of an ideal patriarch in medieval society. Finally, the identity category of ‘human,’ is defined in opposition to those of animal, vegetable, and mineral. As a human, Gilles is expected to maintain a relationship of dominance over these environmental ‘others.’ Donna Haraway has eloquently pointed out the way that human beings invoke binaries to assert their dominance over ‘others’:

To recapitulate, certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals—in short, domination of all constituted as *others*, whose task is to mirror the self. Chief among these troubling dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man. (Haraway “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” 35)

Haraway’s discussion of these ‘others’ demonstrates just how human language sets up supposed categories of difference that imply hierarchies allowing for dominance, showing at least one way that men’s domination of women resembles their domination of the natural world.

This brings me to the second key term of my discussion, ‘environment.’

Borrowed into English from the Middle French ‘environnement’, meaning “action of surrounding something”, this term actually has its origins in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman ‘avirounement’ (“proximity”) and in the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman

‘envirunement’ (“surroundings, periphery”).<sup>14</sup> Following the most literal and Anglo-Norman sense, I see ‘environment’ first and foremost as that which surrounds someone or something. While this term in the Anglo-Norman context did not necessarily have ecological connotations as it does in its modern English usage, one need look no further than the world of *Gilles* to see that one’s surroundings were often natural in medieval literature. In a text set in the mountains, forests, deserts, rivers, courts, and churches of Athens, Provence, and Rome, Gilles is continually described in relation to his natural and social milieus. Though the environment is privileged in the text and criticism about it,<sup>15</sup> no critics discuss the role that environment plays in shaping Gilles’s identity. In this chapter, I examine the way that Gilles redefines his identity by changing his relationship to his environment. This brief discussion of the terms ‘identity’ and ‘environment’, demonstrate the extent to which identity is defined in terms of relations (of sameness and difference, of belonging and not belonging, of dominance and submission, etc.) between various ‘others’ (human, animal, vegetable, or mineral), but what remains to be explained is the extent to which these identity-defining relationships can be seen spatially.<sup>16</sup>

In thinking of gender as a social construct defined by language and relations between others, I am indebted to Judith Butler. In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), she coins the term ‘heterosexual matrix’ “to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized” (Butler 208

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<sup>14</sup> For the full dictionary entry and etymology of the English word ‘environment’, see “environment, n.”. OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. 9 October 2012 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63089?redirectedFrom=environment>>.

<sup>15</sup> See Alexander, Laurent, Lewes, and Remensnyder.

<sup>16</sup> Saunders discusses the way that changing ‘feudal’ practices of land ownership create and maintain aristocratic domination of land and peasants during the Middle Ages.

note 6). She continues, explaining how she borrows from Monique Wittig's concept of the 'heterosexual contract' and Adrienne Rich's notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' "to characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender... that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (208 note 6). Butler chooses the image of a matrix to describe societal gender prescriptions because it takes into account three axes of human sexuality: sex (genitalia and other bodily features that can be gendered), gender (the way an individual acts and dresses), and desire (sexual orientation). Butler calls into question the assumption that a human's sex, i.e. the bodies and genitalia they are born with, are a natural, biological given which prescribes their ideal comportment. She shows how those who do not fit neatly into these binary axes are seen as unnatural and are 'policed'<sup>17</sup> into intelligibility by their peers. *Gender Trouble* makes the argument that 'sex' is just as much a social construct as is 'gender.' Butler also chooses the image of a matrix, because it invokes that of a Cartesian plane, reflecting the binary nature of language which imposes an either/or, all or nothing view of sexuality upon human beings. Because of language, humans are forced to identify as male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, etc. These linguistic binaries enforce a rigid system which does not easily allow for non-conformity. Butler thus demonstrates why, in spite of our knowledge of the inaccuracies and inequalities created and maintained by our linguistic system and human society, people become cemented into these roles from century to

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<sup>17</sup> Butler first uses this term in her later work *Bodies that Matter* to define how the borders of cultural intelligibility are maintained (204).



century and face difficulty in trying to change themselves and society's perceptions. The way in which norms are created and maintained within lived space through language and social practices is one Butler's most important contributions to identity studies. In the concept of the 'heterosexual matrix', Butler proposes, albeit somewhat abstractly, a way to see Rich's and Wittig's theories spatially. By invoking the image of a grid and of a social means of enforcing its borders, Butler paves the way toward thinking of gender in terms of space and relations. By describing this three-dimensional linguistic grid as a means of 'naturalizing' gender ideals, Butler invites us to think about the relationship between language and gender as a lived experience and hence within space, however theoretical and abstract that space may be. For Butler, the 'heterosexual matrix' is a linguistic mapping, existing at the interstice between language and the environment; it is a textual space delimited by language. Humans are forced to render themselves culturally intelligible when faced with the binaries of their language. In a Derridean conception of language, there is no outside of the matrix just as there is no outside of the text.<sup>18</sup> We are born into language and cannot escape its grasp. Anomalous figures who do not fit neatly within the prescriptive binaries call attention to the inadequacies of human language and highlight areas in need of reform and change. When these individuals do not fit into the center of the matrix, they are 'policed' into submission by their peers or are forced out into the margins of society. This is what happens to Gilles continually throughout the text, but his anomalous behavior calls into question not only the language we use to describe sex and gender, but that of species and social status, as well.

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<sup>18</sup> In his 1968 work *De la grammatologie*, Derrida famously quipped "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte."

In my reading of *Gilles*, I would like to propose a new conception of Judith Butler's existential matrix that takes into account the relationship between all identity categories within their spatial and social environment that I am terming the '*homo sapiens* matrix.' I would like to demonstrate that species, like sex, is more a social construct than a biological given. In the words of Giorgio Agamben, "*Homo sapiens*, then, is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human" (Agamben 26). Like the 'heterosexual matrix', the '*homo sapiens* matrix' describes a grid of intelligibility that enforces societal norms. However, to isolate gender and sexuality from the composite of human identity does not take into account the relationship between various identity categories like gender, species, and social status. Nor does it recognize the way that societal norms shape human ecological interactions. As the quote from Donna Haraway above demonstrates, the same binary hierarchies of language that assert masculine domination of women also allow for human domination of the natural world. As we shall see, these various facets of identity and the environment work together as a system, and they can only be accurately understood as an amalgam of parts working together. Whereas the axes of the 'heterosexual matrix' represented sex, gender, and desire, those of the '*homo sapiens* matrix' represent embodiment, species, and comportment. The '*homo sapiens* matrix' takes the more theoretical and abstract concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' and contextualizes it within both lived and textual space. The more socially acceptable figures exist at the center of this matrix, and the anomalous figures like Gilles trouble the center from the peripheries. The '*homo sapiens* matrix' is the human-centric way of perceiving and of describing human beings' relationship to their environment. As it had

with the 'heterosexual matrix', the concept of 'Nature' continues to represent man's dominance of 'others' as a biological given, only now the term 'other' is broadened to mean more than just women and gender-benders. The 'homo' in '*homo sapiens*' is both the 'male' and the 'human.' The word 'sapiens,' which human beings have used to define themselves in opposition to other organisms and previous hominids like 'homo erectus,' implies a self-perceived superiority. Human beings, following the Aristotelian tradition of the mind/body dualism, believe they are wiser than other organisms because of their language and thinking capacities, and that this justifies their dominance over nature. The '*homo sapiens* matrix' is the linguistic and spatial environment into which Gilles and all other human beings are born and, and which they can only transcend through death. It is a system of binaristic language and 'policed' social norms that seems rigid and unchangeable. Although it seems impossible to subvert these traditional hierarchies of power and dominance, Gilles teaches us that one can change the system from within by negotiating between socially acceptable behavior and one's own ideals and thus finding a happy medium. Early in his life, Gilles flees the greedy, violent, and wasteful lifestyle of the nobles in order to become a humble hermit. He is born into a position at the center of the '*homo sapiens* matrix', the human-centric way of perceiving humanity in that he is born in a socially acceptable position of dominance over women, over his people, and over that his environment. By becoming a hermit, he both flees towards and is 'policed' out of the center into the periphery. As a hermit, he lives in an alternative relationship to his environment that is undoubtedly influenced by the social mores of his people and the language into which he was born. This alternative lifestyle is short-lived, however, since his fellow human beings cannot understand it; he thus ceases to be culturally intelligible

to his peers. Ultimately, he is hunted out by his fellow humans and ‘policed’ back into the center of this matrix in the more socially acceptable position of abbot. As abbot, he is able to negotiate between his own ideals (which were once seen as the culturally unintelligible periphery of the matrix) and society’s expectations (the culturally intelligible center of the matrix) from within the center of the matrix. Put another way, Gilles realizes that he can only effect change for humanity by living with and among other humans. He must re-center himself and his humble environmental and sexual ethics within the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ in order to achieve the exemplary deeds that allow him to influence others and to become a saint. He changes the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ from within by transforming his relationship to the environment that surrounds him, and this act ultimately enables him to transcend his humanity on the road to becoming a saint, a point which will be taken up in the conclusion and is a major overarching theme of my dissertation as a whole.

*Gilles* dramatizes the process of self-transformation, showing how he can change his identity (a composite of traits including but not limited to sexuality, species, and social status) by changing his relationship to his environment. In this chapter, I trace Gilles’s personal evolution from a noble prince, to a humble hermit, to an abbot, and finally to a saint, showing throughout the interconnection between sexual and ecological ideals inherent in human language. Gilles’s early life illustrates how various identity categories become enmeshed and intertwined through language and social norming, creating a self-perpetuating cycle from which it is hard to escape. As a prince, Gilles is born into the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’, a position of dominance over his environment (the whole of his surroundings—human, animal, vegetable, and mineral) that is prescribed by

his language, reinforced through social norms, and ‘policed’ by his peers. Gilles must reject this position of dominance in order to pursue the humble lifestyle necessary to become a saint. During his hermitage, Gilles’s habitation with a doe, who feeds him her milk and for whom he takes a hunter’s arrow, teaches him an important lesson in humility that shapes the rest of his earthly existence. Gilles attempts to flee human society by becoming a hermit, but the fact that he is continually hunted out by his fellow human beings shows us the extent to which it is impossible to escape the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’, at least during life. Gilles’s hermitage appears as an intermediary state of being at the periphery of the matrix that allows him to problematize and call into question the various binaries that define his position of power—noble/peasant, male/female, human/animal, civilized/wild, etc. Gilles’s rejection of the noble lifestyle functions as an implicit critique of medieval practices of land use and ownership, but he ultimately realizes that it is idealistic to think that he can escape his humanity during his time on Earth. In the end, Gilles returns to the world, agreeing to become the abbot of a monastery. Gilles’s return to a place of cultural intelligibility in the center of the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ represents a negotiation of and an intermediary space between his earthly status and his saintly ideals. His re-centering within this matrix is what allows him to transform the status quo even if only slightly, by making his sexual and environmental ethics socially acceptable. Gilles’s monastic foundation is posited as a humane alternative relationship to his environment that is neither as violent as the socially acceptable position of prince into which he was born, nor as culturally unintelligible as was his hermitage. Gilles’s renegotiation of his identity teaches us that we can only change ourselves by changing the way we live in our

world. Gilles is only able to transcend the '*homo sapiens* matrix' when he transcends his humanity through death and sainthood.

### 'Feudal' Obligations

During his early life, Gilles's peers often make clear the ideal behavior expected of him because of his gender and his worldly status, his position within the '*homo sapiens* matrix'. Throughout, I will refer to these worldly and political expectations as 'feudal.' Following Saunders, I use the term 'feudal' with inverted commas here since it can be overly simplistic and problematic. With all due respect to the various specialized systems of political relations in medieval England and France, I, like Saunders, use the term 'feudal' to refer to the "exploitative relationship between landowners and subverted peasants" (212-3). Going a step further than Saunders, I use 'feudal' to refer to all manner of exploitative hierarchies that resulted from medieval practices of land ownership and inheritance. As we shall see, these medieval practices of landownership exploit not only peasants, but women, animals, and all beings involved in that they create a system of hierarchies of power, of dominance and submission. Gilles is just as much a victim of this imposing set of practices as are the peasants, women, and animals. Gilles is not only expected to control these beings, but he is also controlled both dominating forces. Gilles is both a prisoner of his language and a victim of his society's 'policing' and social norming practices. As we shall soon see, the moment Gilles tries to set himself apart from others and differ from the linguistic and social norms of his society, he is verbally and physically abused by his fellow human beings.

In introducing the saint, Guillaume emphasizes his gender and class: “Gentilz hom fu de grant parage/ riche de terre e d’eritage” (ll. 7-8) [Gilles was a noble man of high lineage/ rich with land and inheritance]. As this quote shows, Gilles is in a position of dominance over land because of his gender and his class. Furthermore, his noble status is the product of an ancestral heritage that goes back at least a couple of generations: “Ne fud pas nez de basse main,/ de vavassur ne de vilain:/ nez fud de princes e de reis” (ll. 19-21) [He was not born of low extraction, son of a vavasour or of a peasant: he was born of princes and of kings]. Guillaume further emphasizes Gilles’s noble status when he introduces his parents:

Ses peres out nun Theodorus,  
riches de terre e d’aver plus;  
sa mere out nun Pelagia.  
En tute Grece ne de ça  
n’aveit femme de sa manere,  
si chaste ne si almonere.  
En els dous out bon’ assemblee:  
a la parfin fud ben loee. (ll. 25-32)

[His father, who was named Théodore, was rich with land and even more with his wealth; his mother was named Pélagie. In all of Greece, as over here, there was no woman of her condition who was as chaste and as charitable as she was. As for those two, they formed a good couple: they were well praised until their death.]

Just like Gilles, then, Théodore was wealthy with land. It is interesting to notice the role that gender plays in this description. Unlike Théodore, Pélagie is not praised for her wealth. Rather, she is praised for her chastity and generosity. Already, the text sets up different expectations for men and women in terms of their relationships to their worldly wealth and environment.

As a child, Gilles already has trouble fitting in within the ‘heterosexual matrix’ of his time. Gilles is remarkable both because of his beauty and his charity:

Li emfes Gires fud mult bels,  
 la flur des autres damoisels  
 de cele terre u il fud nez.  
 Bloi out le chef, recercelez,  
 La charn out blanche cume leit,  
 Les olz rianz, le nés ben feit,  
 cleres les denz, la buche bele.  
 N’out pouint de barbe en sa mazole;  
 beles mains out e les deiz blans,  
 lungs les costez, grelles les flancs;  
 mult out large la furcheüre:  
 plus bele ren ne fist Nature.  
 Sur tute ren l’amat li pere,  
 en grant cherté le tint sa mere.  
 Mult le vesteient richement,  
 meis il dunë a povre gent  
 tut le melz de sa vesteüre. (ll. 55-73).

[Gilles was a very beautiful child. He was the flower of all the other young men in the land where he was born. He had blond, curly hair. His skin was white like milk. His eyes were smiling. His nose was well-made. He had white teeth and a beautiful mouth. He did not have any whiskers on his cheeks. He had beautiful hands and white fingers. He had a long torso, thin sides and large hips. Nature never made a creature more beautiful than he. He loves his father more than everything in the world and cherished his mother greatly. They dressed him very richly, but he gave the best of his clothes to the poor.]

In this passage, we see that Gilles stands out from the other men in his land. He is an anomaly; he does not fit in the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ Amy V. Ogden has shown how most of the description of Gilles’s beauty (ll. 55-73) “challenge[s] the most prevalent modern ideas, at least in French literary studies, about the genre’s treatments of gender” since the passage “Stripped of the nouns and pronouns that would definitively identify the sex of the protagonists” are typical of descriptions of both male and female saints



(Ogden 1). While it is true that much of Gilles's physical description could be applied to a female saint, Ogden does leave out one line that gives away his gender—the mention of his non-whiskered cheeks. Though men and women can both have bare cheeks, it would make more sense to include this in a description of a male than that of a female.

Guillaume emphasizes Gilles's youth and his effeminacy when he mentions the saint's lack of a masculine trait. In a footnote, Françoise Laurent identifies large hips as a *topos* in descriptions of good knights in the twelfth century (5 note 6). Gilles's body is androgynous, then, since it is composed of a mix of traits that are neither completely masculine nor completely feminine. When Guillaume invokes 'Nature', however, he shows that this androgynous body is natural and exceptional at the same time. Positing the allegorical figure of 'Nature' as the creator of human bodies is rather typical in medieval literature,<sup>19</sup> yet it still demonstrates how intertwined sexuality and ecology were in medieval discussions of creation. Gilles's anomalous beauty provides us with an initial indication of the fact that the '*homo sapiens* matrix' is merely a social construct and that it does not reflect biological givens. Gilles is also anomalous in his relationship to his worldly wealth and thus to his environment. By mentioning Gilles's charitable donations of clothing, the author connects Gilles with his mother whose charity he just praised (l. 30) and distinguishes him from his masculine ancestors who owed their noble status to their possession of land and other worldly objects.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Gilles's effeminacy is both the result of 'Nature' and nurture. This demonstrates the extent to which the

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<sup>19</sup> See for example Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*, Heldris de Cornuälle's *Silence* and other medieval romances like Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* and *Perceval*.

<sup>20</sup> Bynum (1982) connects the increased discussion of the influence of mothers on children in saints' lives with the use of maternal imagery as a metaphor of "God's activity" (142) in medieval theology.

medieval ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ takes both into account. Despite the seeming naturalness of Gilles’s body, he is still seen as different from his peers both because of his beauty (“plus bele ren ne fist Nature”) and his behavior.

The author paints the portrait of a social wallflower who does not fit into his society:

Li vatletun de sun hée,  
fiz as baruns de la cité,  
le veneient sovent blamer,  
k’il ne voleit o els juer. (ll. 83-86)

[The young men of his age, the sons of the barons of the city, used to come to reproach him for not wanting to play with them.]

In this passage, it appears that Gilles exiles himself, not content to participate in the typical activities of his peers. Their reproaching of his difference corresponds to what Judith Butler describes as the ‘policing’ of identity. Guillaume’s portrait of Gilles, here, expands upon Butler’s ‘heterosexual matrix’ showing how all aspects of one’s identity can make one unintelligible to others and are subject to being ‘policed.’ Gilles is not only different because of his sexuality, but because of his morality and his use of his free time. He must undergo chastisement just for being different. This brief discussion of Gilles’s childhood shows the extent to which he is androgynously between genders, how his identity is seen as a product of both ‘Nature’ and his upbringing, and how his identity is ‘policed’ by society.

Gilles’s peers continue to ‘police’ his identity for the rest of his life. When Gilles’s parents die, he is expected to take over his ancestral lands. His new position as king and ruler of the land also comes with other expectations that dictate his sexual and ecological interactions. Gilles’s inheritance puts him in a position of dominance over

land, animals, and people, demonstrating that patriarchy is not just a hierarchy of genders, but of species and class, as well. The multiple levels of Gilles's dominance are evidenced both by the description of his inheritance in the text and by the various translations of the word 'honor.' As Guillaume affirms: "a lui est l'onur repeiré,/ les chevaliers e la meisnee" (ll. 257-8) [it is to him that came the fief with its knights and servants]. So, Gilles's inherited position of dominance over the land gives him power over various people. His terrestrial inheritance also includes a wealth of land, animals, objects, and natural products:

Mult lui remeint grant heritez:  
 chastels e burs, vinnes e prez,  
 or e argent, pailles, cendals,  
 palfreiz, mulz e bels chevals,  
 e veissele d'or e d'argent. (ll. 265-269)

[The riches which he inherited were great: castles, burgs, vineyards and meadows, gold and silver, silks and brocades, palfreys, mules and beautiful horses, and dishes made of gold and silver.]

In the description of Gilles's inheritance, human beings, animals, and lands alike are objectified and listed alongside vehicles, dishes, and fabrics as part of his inheritance. Not only does Gilles exist in a position of power over these people, animals, and things, but his social status is defined by his possession of them. In the passage cited above (l. 257) and elsewhere, the word 'honor' is used to describe Gilles's status in various ways. Under the entry for 'honneur', Godefroy provides the following translations: "estime glorieuse qui est accordée à la vertu, au courage, aux talents" [glorious esteem which is accorded to virtue, courage, and talent] and "dignités, charges" [dignities, burdens]. In her edition of *Gilles*, Françoise Laurent translates '(h)onor' as both 'fief' (ll. 257 and 261) and 'son bien' (l. 262) [his wealth]. These various translations show the extent to

which worldly status and class resulted from one's relationship to the land in medieval society. They also demonstrate another key issue in this text—the conflict between terrestrial 'honor' and spiritual glory.

Seeing his worldly honor as inimical to his heavenly aspirations, Gilles deviates from the norm in his redistribution of his wealth. In sharing his wealth, Gilles aspires to a more humble relationship to the land, thus subverting the political system of dominance over nature. As Guillaume writes:

Gires reçut sun heritage,  
meis Deus set assez sun curage:  
poi preise terre ne honur,  
vers Deu turna tute s'onur.  
Si cum jo qui e je l'espeir,  
de lui vodrat feire sun heir. (ll. 259-264)

[Gilles received his inheritance, but God knew well his intentions: he valued so little land and honor that he turned all of his wealth over to God. As I believe and hope, it is He whom he will take as his heir.]

Gilles thus tries to turn his worldly 'honor' into spiritual 'honor' by giving up his inheritance to God. Guillaume continues, explaining how Gilles shares with others:

Meis il le depart largement:  
nel donout mie as lecheürs,  
ne as puteins n'as juggleürs,  
ainz fist as povres abbeïes,  
as nunpoanz maladeries,  
as malades e as contreiz  
e as leprus e as defeiz;  
a cels departi sa richaise. (ll. 270-277)

[But he distributed [his inheritance] without counting. He did not give it to the debauched, to the whores, to the jugglers, but he made abbeys for the poor, hospitals for the paralyzed, the sick, the infirm, the lepers and the ill: it is to them that he distributed his wealth.]

In a pattern that reappears throughout the text, Gilles tries to reverse his position of worldly superiority by redistributing his wealth to the poor. Gilles thus subverts the typical power relations, bypassing his barons in his redistribution of wealth. Gilles gives wealth and power to the “povres” and “nonpuanz.” The narrator emphasizes how atypical his behavior is for a noble by listing the people he does not patronize: the “lecheürs”, “puteins”, and “juleürs.” By mentioning these stock characters who serve to represent the worldly people who frequent the courtly milieus alongside the truly needy people, Guillaume criticizes the courtly culture of patronage and affirms the superiority of Gilles’s charity.

The humility topos that pervades the text is very closely tied to Gilles’s environmental ethics and has its roots in biblical discourse. The best articulation of this ethics of power reversal can be found in the book of *Matthew*. Jesus exalts all that is meek and lowly in a passage of his famous Sermon on the Mount called “the Beatitudes”:

(3) Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum. (5) beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram. (4) beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur. (6) beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam, quoniam ipsi saturabuntur. (7) beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur. (8) beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi deum videbunt. (9) beati pacifici, quoniam filii dei vocabuntur. (10) beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum. (11) beati estis cum male dixerint vobis et persecute fuerint et dixerint omne malum adversum vos mentientes propter me. (12) gaudete et exultate, quoniam merces (-cis) vestra copiosa est in caelis : sic enim persecuti sunt prophetas qui fuerunt ante vos.<sup>21</sup>

(3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
 (4) Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.  
 (5) Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.  
 (6) Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

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<sup>21</sup> See the *Novum testamentum Graece et Latine*, *Matthew* 5:3-5:12 (pp. 18-19).

- (7) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- (8) Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.
- (9) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- (10) Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (11) Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:
- (12) Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.<sup>22</sup>

The Beatitudes set forth many ascetic ideals that will guide Gilles throughout his life—poverty, abstinence, mercy, peace, and suffering for justice. They also explain his motivations—giving land to the poor and turning worldly wealth into celestial gains. Needless to say, the subversion of power inherent in Gilles's humble environmental ethics does not sit well with the barons of his kingdom, but the Beatitudes teach him to suffer the persecution of their 'policing' in the name of justice.

In the passage immediately following Gilles's redistribution of wealth, the barons chastise and "police" ("I l'encusent e sil chastient" (l. 279) [They blame and reprimand him]) Gilles's management of the land in a sixty-line speech (ll. 281-340). In this speech, the barons appeal to Gilles's sense of duty as a feudal lord. First, they describe his charity as a waste of land that goes against the traditions of his people and the legacy of his forbears: "ne deguaster issi t'onur,/ ne doner pas si largement;/ lai en ta terre estorement" (ll. 282-284) [do not squander thus your inheritance, do not give so

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<sup>22</sup> See *The Holy Bible Translated From the Latin Vulgate: Diligently Compared With the Hebrew, Greek, And Other Editions In Divers Languages : the Old Testament First Published by the English College At Douay, A. D. 1609, And the New Testament First Published by the English College At Rheims, A. D. 1582.* Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1914. *Matthew* 5:3-5:12 (pp. 6-7).

generously; leave your lineage in your land]. Concerned that he will have no money left to pay them, the barons remind him of their faithful service and of his ‘feudal’ duties:

Mult as tes genz desheritez  
 e tes baruns desconseilez.  
 Si ne te contens autrement,  
 tut s’en irrunt de tai ta gent. (ll. 291-294)

[You have greatly disinherited your people and turned against the advice of your barons. If you do not conduct yourself differently, all of your people will leave you.]

The use of the prefix ‘des’ on the two verbs here (“desheritez” and “desconseilez”) shows that the barons are well aware of the power reversal at play, and they threaten Gilles with retreat, a fair counter-manoeuver in that he is not holding up his end of the bargain in their ‘feudal’ system of reciprocal duty. This passage also illustrates the mechanics of identity ‘policing’ in Gilles’s society. The barons further criticize Gilles’s generosity by calling into question the gratitude of the recipients of his wealth: “U est tun or e tun argent?/ Emplee l’as malveisement;/ tel l’unt ki te ne sevent gré.” (ll. 303-305) [Where are your gold and silver? You used them badly; those who have them are not appreciative]. The barons not only ‘police’ Gilles through criticism, but they also suggest ways that he can maintain the status quo.

The barons’ advice demonstrates how sexual ideals dictate human dominance over the land, and how this system is self-replicating. The barons try to convince Gilles that the best solution to maintain his position of dominance over the land is marriage to a high-born woman:

Meis crei conseil, si feras bien,  
 e cume sages te conten:  
 faites ço ke nus te lorum,  
 si pren fillë a un barun,

u fille a rei u fille a cunte.  
 Tu poez aver de tei grant hunte,  
 ke si te mesz a nunchaleir! (ll. 295-301)

[But believe our advice and you will do well and conduct yourself like a wise man: trust our advice, take for a wife a daughter of a baron, of a king, or of a count. You shame yourself through your nonchalance.]

So, the barons' 'policing' of Gilles appears as an effort to shape both his sexual and ecological interactions. They want to maintain their own class, which is the result of their relationship to the land, through (af)iliation, that is through their relationship to Gilles and his offspring. They not only appeal to his sense of reason in proffering their advice, but shame him to achieve their goals ("Tu poez aver de tei grant hunte"). Their use of the word "nunchaleir" shows that they are most offended by his lack of regard for their concerns. As they explain, it is part of Gilles's 'feudal' obligations to produce an heir:

Refreigne, sire, tun curage:  
 prene une femme de parage  
 dunt tu puissez enfant aver  
 ki après tei seient ti heir; (ll. 309-312)

[Get a hold of yourself, Lord: take a wife of high birth with whom you could have children who after you will be your heirs.]

In this passage, the barons continue to question Gilles's attitude and assert their authority over him through their use of the imperative. Gilles does not have a choice; he is expected to obey the orders of his men. Contrary to appearances, however, the barons are not overstepping their bounds. Within 'feudal' systems, there is an expectation of reciprocal duty.<sup>23</sup> Since Gilles is not fulfilling his duties—which are distributing his

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<sup>23</sup> White succinctly summarizes the various systems and expectations inherent in medieval conceptions of land inheritance in *Raoul de Cambrai*. As in that text, *Gilles* also seems to present a combination of



wealth to his barons, marrying, and producing an heir—the barons feel it is their duty to steer him in the right direction, back into the center of the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’.

The barons soon explain why it is so important to them that Gilles produce an heir. The heir, like Gilles, will be expected to protect his people from the destruction of war: “kar si sanz heir remeint la terre,/ nus serum tut destruit de guerre.” [For if the land remains without an heir, we will all be destroyed by war] (ll. 311-312). This passage further shows how the barons’ status is tied to their relationship to the land and its ruler. If Gilles is unable to defend his ownership of the land, the men risk losing their status and their lives through war. When the barons’ chastising, orders, and advice are not enough, they continue entreating, by appealing to his sense of moral obligation: “Si le païs est eisseillé,/ tu en averas grant peché,/ kar tu le poz ben guarrant estre” (ll. 315-317) [If the land is devastated, you will have great sin because of it, because it is your duty to protect it]. Next, the barons compare Gilles to his ancestors:

Prudume furent ti ancestre  
 ki devant tei tindrent l’onor;  
 garde ne seies le peiur,  
 garde, sire, ke hom ne die:  
 “a mult feble heir est revertie.” (ll. 318-322)

[Your ancestors who ruled before you were wise men. Watch that you do not become the worst. Watch, Lord, that one does not say about you “the land fell into the hands of a weak heir.”]

This passage emphasizes yet again that ‘feudal’ systems of inheritance maintain the nobles’ status and ownership of the land from generation to generation through marriage

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inheritance models. While it is unclear how Gilles’s father obtained his land, what is clear in the text is that Gilles does not fulfill his duties to his barons. By giving away his land to people other than his vassals, he is inviting war (197).

and childbirth. The family and class structures of ‘feudal’ society allow the nobles to maintain their position of dominance over the environment. By comparing him to his wise ancestors, the barons make Gilles’s prescription to marry and procreate seem like his inevitable destiny. Thus, the ‘policing’ of gender in this text is a sort of self-replicating system, a cyclical pattern and chain of events, from which it is nearly impossible to escape. Each generation is expected to imitate the prior generation, and there is little room for change.

The barons suggest only one possible alternative to marriage, but it requires Gilles to give up his terrestrial inheritance, further demonstrating the difficulty of changing the system from within it. The barons, unable to comprehend Gilles’s lack of interest in the sexual and ecological norms of his class, affirm:

Mar fud tis cors e ta beuté  
 quant il nen ad en tei bunté.  
 Si tu n’oses terre tenir,  
 va tei en un buissun tapir  
 e deven moigne en un muster,  
 kar tu nen as de el mestier. (ll. 325-330)

[Your body and your beauty are nothing if you do not have other qualities. If you do not dare to hold land, go hide yourself in a thicket and become a monk in a monastery because for that profession you will need nothing else.]

According to the barons, Gilles has the right combination of good looks and status to be a ruler, but he does not have the right personality traits. His lack of interest in worldly wealth, status, marriage, and sex make him an unsuitable ruler. Thus, his lack of daring and lack of sexual interest make him better suited for the coenobitic lifestyle in a different sort of environment, the thickets of the wilderness. Gilles is literally sent to the margins of the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ because of his cultural unintelligibility.

### Saintly Aspirations

Gilles ultimately flees his worldly obligations so that he can aspire to a more saintly lifestyle in accordance with his personal ideals. In order to transform himself and his identity, however, Gilles must also change his environment and his relationship to it. Gilles's actions both as a child and as an heir demonstrate his lack of interest in worldly wealth, his desire to invert the 'feudal' politics of land ownership, and his humility. Gilles's precocious generosity prefigures the culmination of his environmental ethics that he continues to refine through hermitage and which eventually leads to a sort of environmental activism *avant la lettre*. Hermitage allows Gilles to transform his identity (i.e. his gender, sexuality, social class, and species). During his hermitage, Gilles is able to reject the position of hierarchical dominance into which he was born and to adopt a more humble relationship to the world. Since various identity categories are so enmeshed with one another, and since they are based on one's relationship to his or her environment, Gilles must change the way he lives within his world in order to transform himself. Furthermore, in order to do this, he must work against the currents and strictures imposed by the '*homo sapiens* matrix.' Changing himself and the way human beings perceive of their relationship to their environment is no easy task for Gilles. As it had been during his childhood, Gilles's identity continues to be 'policed' by his peers. Ultimately, he is pulled away from his Edenic hermitage when he is literally hunted out by a group of noblemen. Alexander argues that many of the hagiographical hermit stories are about the civilizing and taming of the Wildman, bringing him back under

societal control (119). This is part of the ‘policing’ that Gilles undergoes throughout his life. Because of societal ‘policing’, Gilles’s flight from the world is and can only be a temporary and idealistic state. Despite this, his humility is what enables him to reject the status quo and to find a happy medium between society’s norms and his saintly ideals.

In addition to the Beatitudes discussed above, Guillaume de Berneville also seems to draw inspiration from *The Rule of Saint Benedict* in his description of Gilles’s humility.<sup>24</sup> In his *Rule*, Saint Benedict not only devotes an entire chapter to humility (VII “De Humilitate”), but refers to the virtue throughout his monastic conduct manual. Benedict uses various metaphors to illustrate the concept of humility, but the most pertinent metaphors for our discussion are those of heavenly ascent, of breastfeeding, and of animals. Benedict, following the Beatitudes, paradoxically describes the lowly and humble life as the key to ascending to the heavenly summit (“summae humilitatis”; Benedict 44): “We understand without a doubt that this descent and ascent can be nothing other than to descend by exaltation and ascend by humility” (45). Citing Psalm 131:2<sup>25</sup>, he likens the humble man to a breastfeeding child: “But what if I did not understand humbly, if I exalted my soul, would you refuse me in my soul like a weaned child on his mother’s lap?” (45). In this text, Benedict proposes twelve steps to help his followers achieve humility, many of which correspond to Gilles’s lifestyle during his hermitage. Benedict tells his readers to take no pleasure in fulfilling their personal desires, to endure physical suffering, to live a life of poverty, and to believe in their lowliness (44-55). To

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<sup>24</sup> Françoise Laurent talks about Guillaume’s familiarity with Benedict’s *Rule* in the introduction to her translation of *Gilles* (XVI). See Johnson for a discussion of the role of ecology in the *Rule*.

<sup>25</sup> This is quoted directly from the *Rule of St. Benedict* and all editorial choices are Venarde’s.

illustrate the importance of poverty, Benedict cites Psalm 73:22-23, likening the humble monk to a “beast of burden” (53).<sup>26</sup> In elaborating upon the personal belief in lowliness, Benedict cites Psalm 22:7: “I am a worm, not a man, a disgrace to men and despicable to the people” (53). Benedict’s description of humility, then, is that of a person of lowly sub-human status who is treated like a beast, but will ascend to the summits of heaven and will be rewarded with mother’s milk. Benedict, who elsewhere in his rule advises against eating meat (XXXVI, XXXIX), uses natural metaphors to help his readers understand the position of lowly submission as a means of achieving humility. As we shall see, this is one of the major concepts shaping Gilles’s hermitage and his relationship to his environment.

As a first step in his pursuit of saintly humility, Gilles reverses his relationship of dominance over the environment and adopts a more humble life of poverty, following many of the precepts laid forth by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and by Benedict in his *Rule*. Guillaume describes Gilles’s departure from his ancestral lands by mentioning all of the worldly wealth he leaves behind:

Gires est en la veie mis,  
 gerpist sa tere e ses amis:  
 il nen ad n’or n’argent od sai,  
 cheval ne mul ne palefrei;  
 il n’en porte ne veir ne gris,  
 meis povres dras de petit pris; (ll. 641-646).

[Gilles set out on the road. He leaves his land and his friends: he takes with him neither gold, nor silver, nor horse, nor mule, nor palfrey; he wears neither squirrel fur, nor other fur, but poor clothes of little value.]

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<sup>26</sup> See Kiser for a discussion of late-medieval descriptions comparing Christ to a suffering draft animal (302).

Gilles's high status is contingent upon his ownership of land and possession of natural products, thus, he must give them all up to be more humble. He reverses his position of dominance and power when he gives up his land and his gold and silver, rocks seen as valuable by humans. He also refuses to use animals as means of transportation. He does not dress himself in valuable animal skins, but rather wears poor fabrics. This description thus shows the extent to which human wealth is really possession of, and dominance over, the natural world.

Having been raised with many possessions and in a position of dominance, Gilles must learn to live more humbly. One of the first people he encounters on his journey away from home is a nameless hermit on a desert island. The humble holy man piques Gilles's curiosity, so he begins to question him about his austere lifestyle:

Gires le prent a esgarder,  
 a une part tut suls le meine,  
 de sa vie enquire se paine.  
 Fait Gires: "Di mei verité:  
 cumben as tu ici esté?  
 De quei sustens tu ci ta vie,  
 quant il n'i ad ici guarie?  
 Coment poz tu vivre sanz pain?  
 Ja n'i vei jo de blé un grein  
 dunt tu puisses ici guarrir  
 par laborer ne par foïr." (ll. 974-984)

[Gilles, who observes him attentively, takes him aside to inquire about his life. Gilles says, "Tell me the truth: how long have you been here? How do you sustain your life here when there is nothing to eat? How can you live without bread? I do not see a single grain of wheat from which you could nourish yourself by working or by foraging.]

Gilles's line of thinking demonstrates just how stuck he is in his anthropocentrism. He is unable to conceive of a life without cultivated crops and processed foods. The hermit's response is one that will guide Gilles's future eremitic endeavors:

Frere, fait il, je guaris ben,  
 si ai assez, ne me faut ren.  
 Dous anz ad ben ke vinc ici;  
 unkes fors vus home ne vi,  
 e faz ici ma penitence  
 en jeunes e en abstinence.  
 Jo ne manjuz mie de pain,  
 nepurquant sui haité e sain;  
 a la fiee truis peissun  
 entre le roche et le sablun. (ll. 985-994)

[Brother, he says, I live well, because I have enough and lack nothing. It has been twelve years since I came here, and aside from you I have not seen a single man. I do my penitence here through fasting and abstinence. I do not eat any bread, nevertheless I am in good health. Sometimes I find fish between the rocks and sand.]

The hermit has completely divorced himself from the typical human existence. He lives apart from other men in the wilderness and avoids human-produced foods like bread. He only eats what he finds, what is provided to him by God. His austere life serves as a penitence intended to put him in a position of humility in relation to the world.

Following the ideals set forth in Benedict's description of humility, this pescatarian hermit lives like an animal. He teaches Gilles to trust in God and to flee other humans. This contrasts sharply with the lifestyles adopted by the noblemen depicted in the text.

Gilles's eremitic education continues as he encounters a second hermit by the name of Vérédème who lives atop a mountain. In this encounter, he demonstrates how much he has changed. In order to find this hermit, Gilles must set out alone in the wilderness, but his faith gives him confidence in facing the ferocious fauna:

assez i out bestes sauvages,  
 urs e liuns e cers e deims,  
 senglers, lehes e forz farrins,  
 olifans e bestes cornues,  
 vivres e tygres e tortues,  
 sagittaires e locerveres

e serpenz de mutes maneres.  
 Gires n'en prent nule poür,  
 einz se fie en sun bon seignur (ll. 1232-1241)

[There were many wild beasts: bears, lions, deer, bucks, male and female boars, game, elephants and horned beasts, vipers, tigers, and turtles, fantastic monsters and lynxes, serpents of many kinds. Gilles did not have any fear of them, but trusted in his good lord.]

In this passage, Gilles still seems to distinguish himself from the other animals, but his lack of fear shows that he learned from the first hermit's faith.<sup>27</sup> He further demonstrates this when he does not bring any human-prepared foods with him: "Se il n'en prent de lui conrei,/ ne mangera, car il n'at quei:/ ne porte od sei ne pain ne vin" (ll. 1245-1247) [If God does not provide for him, he will not eat, because he has nothing. He takes with him neither bread nor wine]. When Gilles reaches the summit, the narrator emphasizes the lack of human cultivation:

Li bons hom ki en sun maneit  
 ne laburout ne ne fuieit,  
 kar ço esteit roche naïve:  
 il n'i creisseit poret ne chive,  
 ne eschaluine ne oignun,  
 cerfoill, laitue ne kersun,  
 ne ren k'ume en pussed user  
 tant dunt il eit un sul digner.  
 Nepurquant n'aveit faim ne sei:  
 Deu li trovot assez conrei. (ll. 1261-1270)

[The good man who lived at the summit neither dug nor cultivated the land, because it was only rock. Nothing grew there; neither leek, nor chive, nor shallot, nor onion, nor chervil, nor lettuce, nor watercress, nor anything that a man could use in the preparation of the slightest meal. However, the man knew neither hunger nor thirst because God provided a lot for him.]

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<sup>27</sup> Alexander argues that the saintly control of nature in hagiography represents the power of Christianity and the commitment of Christians (34).



Here, as with the encounter with the first hermit, the emphasis is placed on the lack of humans and human culture (in the sense of agricultural products). The hermit, as part of his penitence, puts his faith in God to provide him with plenty (“assez”) to survive. As opposed to the episode of the nameless hermit, this hermit’s mountain retreat is even more austere, as the rocky terrain is not conducive to plant growth. Finally, the ascent to the summit, as we saw in Benedict’s *Rule*, is a sign of one’s humility:

Gires e Veredemiüs  
 sunt en cele roche la sus;  
 entr’els n’out orguill ne buffei :  
 l’un aime l’autre si cum sei ;  
 ben entraîment lur compaignie,  
 kar il demeinent sainte vie. (ll. 1293-1298)

[Gilles and Vérédème are on top of this rock; between them there is neither pride nor vanity: one loves the other as he loves himself, and this companionship pleased them both because they both lead a holy life.]

Here, Guillaume seems to contribute a new valence to the concept of humility, describing it as a sort of friendship between similar partners who love one another as equals. These various lessons in human humility will have an impact on Gilles’s creation of his own hermitage.

When Gilles sets out to find his own hermitage, he puts his lessons into action.

He seeks a solitary place apart from other men:

Sa voie acoilt par le boscage  
 e veit querant un hermitage  
 u il eüst tel eisement  
 ke il ne fust hansté de gent. (ll. 1457-1460)

[He cleared a path through the forest in search of hermitage where he could have such ease that he would not be frequented by people.]

Gilles also seeks out a place that will provide him with the necessary resources for survival and to perform his penitence:

Tant est alez par la gastine  
 k'il vint a une desertine:  
 trove une fosse ben cavee;  
 de sus esteit large l'entrée,  
 bel converser i fust jadis,  
 meis buissuns unt le liu purpris,  
 e englents e arbreissals.  
 Devant l'entree out un duitals  
 d'une funtaine ki la surst:  
 belz est li duiz ki aval curt:  
 sur la gravele del duitel  
 est li kersun coluré bel. (ll. 1461-1472)

[He walked for a long time through the forest before arriving at a secluded place where he found a well-dug pit of which the entry was large. Long ago it was a nice place to stay, but bushes, briars, and shrubs had overtaken the place. In front of the entrance there was a stream which flowed from a fountain: the water which flowed from it was fresh, and on the gravel in this stream grew beautifully colored watercress.]

This hermitage resembles the nameless hermit's hermitage in its combination of water and stone. It resembles Vérédème's hermitage in its uninhabitability. The pit provides Gilles with shelter, water, and the possibility of food. The thorny bushes overtaking it make it just uninhabitable enough that living there is penitential. One is reminded of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus during his crucifixion. These thorns, then, which would scratch the hermit's skin upon entry, make his hermitage an ecological *imitatio Christi*. The uninhabitability contrasts with the luxuriousness of his ancestral kingdom. His hermitage is thus the reversal of his past glory.

Gilles recognizes the providential aspect of his hermitage, and is humbly appreciative for that which God has provided him. When he thanks God, he acknowledges his shift in environment:

Gires veit le liu aeisé,  
 Nostre Sire en ad gracié:  
 mut se fait lez k'i l'ad trové;  
 il n'en changast pur nul cunté. (ll. 1473-1476)

[Gilles found the place comfortable, and thanked Our Lord for it: he rejoiced at having found it and would not have exchanged it for any county.]

Just like the two hermits he met, Gilles knows that he counts on God for food, water, and shelter. When he affirms the superiority of his hermitage over a “cunté” he demonstrates his realization that this is the land he obtained in exchange for his abandoned terrestrial inheritance. For the first time in the text, Gilles seems to be truly happy (“lez”). He is being rewarded for his humility, but he does not let his happiness get in the way of his penitence. The first night, he fasts: “Tute noit ad iloc jeü/ k'il nen ad mangé ne beü” (ll. 1477-1478) [He spent the night there without eating or drinking]. It appears that Gilles does this by choice, since the narrator mentions the beautiful watercress growing in the stream. Later on, Gilles lives by gathering plants he finds on the land:

De ces treis anz ke il i fud  
 ne ne ad hume oï ne veud,  
 ne ne mangat mie de pain,  
 ne nule ren ki fust de grein,  
 ne il ne vit char ne peissun;  
 de raciness e de kerssun  
 enz el desert vesqui meint jur (ll. 1489-1495)

[During these three years that he was there, he neither heard nor saw another man, nor did he eat any bread, nor anything else that was from grain, nor did he live off of meat or fish; he lived in the desert on roots and watercress for many days].

The repetition of negative expressions in this passage emphasizes the lack of variety in and the extreme poverty of Gilles's diet. Gilles lives as a vegan during these first three

years. He does not eat fish like the unnamed hermit. Rather, he eats only vegetables which he finds.

One day, Gilles's food miraculously finds him. Guillaume affirms:

Seigneurs, oez un bel miracle:  
 iloc u ert en s'abitacle,  
 en sa logë u il urout  
 e Nostre Seigneur depreiout,  
 si vit une bisse sauvage  
 tut dreit errante a l'hermitage. (ll. 1503-1508)

[Lords, listen to this beautiful miracle: When he was in his home, in his hut where he was worshiping and praying to Our Lord, there he saw a wild doe walking right up to his hermitage.]

Not only does the narrator signal this as a “bel miracle”, but it is as if the doe appears in answer to Gilles's prayer. Gilles also comments upon the fact that this doe is a gift from God: “mult se feit lez, kar ben suschad/ ke Dampnedeus lui enveiad” (ll. 1519-1520) [he was very happy because he well suspected that God sent her to him]. In the context of the providential procurement of food by hermits, it appears that God provides the doe to Gilles for sustenance.<sup>28</sup> The text confirms this, by demonstrating the doe's devotion to feeding him: “Gros out le piz e plein de leit:/ as pez Gire se veit gesir,/ presente sei de lui servir” (ll. 1514-1516) [She had udders fat and full of milk: she lies down at Gilles's feet and presents herself to serve him]. The juxtaposition between ‘piz’ and ‘pez’ (udders and feet), highlight the corporality of their relationship while also calling to mind humble biblical characters like Mary Magdalene who prostrate themselves at their lord's feet. Here, then, the doe sets an example of humility for Gilles which he will reciprocate. The

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<sup>28</sup> See Alexander (25-27, 55) for a discussion of animals that bring food to saints, a phenomenon that he terms ‘the Elijah topos.’

narrator then emphasizes the importance of the doe's servitude which allows Gilles to live in the hostile conditions of the wilderness: "Tant cum iloc el desert fud,/ del leit de la bisse ad vescu" (ll. 1521-1522) [During the time when he was in the desert,/ he lived on the milk of the doe]. Then, he describes the doe's punctuality:

Or escutez cum el le sert:  
 le jor veit peistre enz el desert;  
 quant vent a l'ure de disgner,  
 ne l'estot pas pur lui aler:  
 ele set ben le terme e l'ure,  
 si sachez bien plus ne demure  
 k'el n'en venge dreit a la fosse. (ll. 1523-1528)

[Now hear how she served him. During the day, she went out to pasture in the desert; when it was dinner time, she did not stop on her way to get to him: she knows well the day and the hour, and know that she hurries to go right to his pit.]

Not only does the deer miraculously appear to provide Gilles with food, but her routine obedience and servitude further prove the domesticity of their relationship. In many ways, the doe functions like a wife for the celibate hermit when she greets him at the door of their home with dinner. Guillaume de Berneville conflates here the categories of animal and woman in the figure of the doe who is like a pet, a wife, and a mother. The doe becomes a maternal figure for Gilles (Guillaume even refers to her as his 'nurice' in line 1614) when she shares her mother's milk with all of its nutritional and immunological qualities:

De tel conrei cum jo vus di  
 s'est li sers Deu vescu meint di:  
 quant il ad pris tant cum li haite,  
 nen ad messaise ne suffreite (ll. 1537-1540)

[It is this food, as I am telling you, which allowed the servant of God to live for so many days: when he had taken what he desired, he suffered from neither illness nor hunger.]

The doe thus becomes a maternal figure to Gilles by nursing him.

While Gilles's relationship with the deer begins as a one-sided offer of food, Gilles's treatment of the deer shows that he is different from other humans. Unlike the barons who exploit their natural resources in order to maintain their wealth and status, Gilles has a more humble relationship with his environment. Like his friendship with Vérédème, Gilles's companionship with the deer is not founded on pride and vanity, but on mutual concern for one another.<sup>29</sup> It initially appears that the doe serves Gilles in an idealized and Edenic conception of the human domination of nature, but Gilles humbles himself during his encounter with the deer.<sup>30</sup> First, he shows his gratitude for her by building her a hut: "Gires li fait a une part/ une logette en sun essart/ u gist la nuit pur la froidure;" (ll. 1533-1535) [Gilles made for her a little hut where she lay at night to protect herself from cold]. Gilles's cohabitation with the deer puts him in an alternative relationship that teaches him humility. During the course of their relationship, Gilles goes above and beyond to care for his domestic partner. This contrasts sharply with the typical 'feudal' attitudes regarding the treatment of animals.<sup>31</sup>

Gilles's care for the hind is juxtaposed with a lengthy and violent hunting scene which presents the typical uses of animals and animal products in medieval aristocratic

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander argues that the 'companionship of animals' topos contrasts the compliance of animals with the disobedience of men (44). He also discusses the theme of the exchange of favors between saints and animals (117).

<sup>30</sup> Alexander affirms: "As the monks construct their Eden in the wilderness, so animals naturally come to serve, as they did before the Fall" (34). He explains that the Edenic conception of monks and animals peaks in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries due to Cistercian influences (51). For a discussion of the environmental attitudes portrayed in *Genesis*, see Norman.

<sup>31</sup> See Steel for an in-depth discussion of how humans defined themselves in opposition to animals through violence and subjugation in medieval literature.

households.<sup>32</sup> When Guillaume first introduces the king behind the hunt, his appreciation of animals is a defining characteristic of his noble status:

Icist Flovenz ert mult curteis,  
de la franceise nurreture:  
en bels dedoiz out mis sa cure,  
il amat mut chens e oisels  
e il en out assez des bels:  
osturs, girfaus e espervers,  
seüs e veautres e levrers; (ll. 1548-1554)

[This Flovent was a very courtly man who had received a French education: he spent his time participating in fine amusements. He really loved dogs and birds and he had many beautiful ones: goshawks, gyrfalcons, and falcons, bloodhounds, dogs for hunting bears and boars, and greyhounds]

This list of hunting birds and dogs demonstrates Flovent's wealth, just as the land, gold, furs, and horses included in Gilles's inheritance had symbolized his. The king's French education, which undoubtedly included hunting, contributes to his courtliness. Noble status is yet again presented as the result of the possession and domination of nature. The author then emphasizes variety of game captured by the king during his hunts:

mut fu ben garni sa meison  
suventes feiz de veneisun:  
assez perneit e cers e deins,  
cheverols, bisses e farreins; (ll. 1555-1558)

[his house was well provided for, often with products from his hunts: he took a good amount of deer, fallow deer, roe deer, does, and prey of all sorts]

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<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of medieval forests and parks, see Grant, Mileson, and Young. For a discussion of hunting in history and literature, see Smets and Williams.

The dead deer eaten by this king contrast with the live deer who nurses and lives with Gilles, emphasizing the unnecessary violence of the king's hunting. Elsewhere, the author shows how the noblemen objectify animals by wearing furs:

Grant est la curt e li barné:  
li vaslez ki servent el deis  
n'unt pas vestu burels engleis,  
meis peliçuns veirs e hermins  
e ciclatuns e osterins (ll. 1646-1650)

[The court and barons are great: the valets who served at table were not dressed in English wool, but tunics lined with the fur of squirrels and ermines and coats of silk and crimson].

Yet again, the possession of animal products is a sign of nobility and high class and contrasts with Gilles's "povres dras de petit pris" (l. 646). Rather than wearing sustainable products like wool which allow animals to live, these servants wear furs which can only come from dead animals. Following this brief introduction of Flovent's 'love' of animals, the author details the lengthy and ceremonious hunting process. He reveals that it is Advent and thus doe-hunting season (ll. 1565-1567). He explains that the king convenes his vassals "kar il voldrad feste tenir/ haute e bele..." (l. 1572) [because he wanted to have a big and beautiful party]. Flovent sends out his master huntsman first to find the best deer. When he sees Gilles's companion, she flees back to the hut for protection. When the huntsman returns to the king late, the king jokes, "Vus eissilez tut cest païs:/ n'i remeint ren ke n'eez pris:" (ll. 1657-1658) [You ravage the whole land, and there is not a single {deer} that you have not taken]. He adds, "Alcune en deviez leisser,/ pur la forest fructifier" (ll. 1663-1664) [You should leave a few to repopulate the forest]. The king only cares about saving animals so that he can protect his future hunting interests. Elsewhere, the author highlights the violence done unto



other animals during the hunting process. The hunters beat the dogs to get them to chase the fleeing deer: “es meistes n’out ke curecer:/ mut halloent, crient e huent,/ lur chens debatent e deruent” (ll. 1740-1742) [Their masters had no other option than to get angry, to blow their horns, to call their dogs, to arouse them, to beat them and to rain blows on them]. As the chase becomes more dramatic, the nobles take pleasure in watching the violence ensue. When the king announces “Demein verrum le plus ignel” (l. 1801) [Tomorrow we will see who is the most agile], the narrator describes the happiness of the noble spectators: “As damosels en fud mut bel:/ lez sunt de la surmunse al rei” (ll 1802-1803) [This was very pleasing to the young men: they are happy to obey the king’s summons]. During the hunt, the doe must contend with a pack of one-hundred and forty crazed dogs (l. 1846), archers (l. 1845), and other men on horseback. It is no surprise that these hunters who kill deer and beat dogs use force to dominate their horses, as well: “n’esparniat pas l’espuruner” (l. 1857) [the king} did not wait to spur his horse]. Their violence against animals culminates in the bloody wounding of Gilles. Ultimately, the interposition of this hunting scene between Gilles’s construction of a home for his companion and his ultimate self-sacrifice for the doe further contrasts Gilles’s humble environmental ethics with the nobles’ use of animals, highlighting Gilles’s transformation.

During the various scenes of chasing and retreat, Gilles continually cares for the deer, setting himself apart from his former peers. When the doe first returns from being hunted, her distress causes him to feel compassion:

La bisse est en la fosse entrée,  
tute anguisuse e tressuee;  
Gires la veit, mut fu dolent,

des oilz plure mut tendrement  
 deprie Deu pur sa nurice,  
 k'il defende de malice (ll. 1609-1614)

[The doe came back to the pit all tormented and sweaty. Gilles sees her and was very sad. He cries very tenderly and he prays to God that He defend his nurse from evil.]

This passage is significant in that it de-objectifies the animal. In the other depictions of aristocratic exploitation of nature, the animals are objectified as decorations, clothing, tools, food, possessions, and vehicles. Gilles's doe is described as a sentient being who willingly partakes in this give-and-take relationship. When Gilles perceives the doe's pain, he prays for her (l. 1613) and takes care of her:

d'ewe freide l'ad arusee,  
 tant ke s'aleine ad recovree;  
 en sa loge la fait entrer,  
 si la comande a reposer (ll. 1615-1618)

[He sprinkled her with cold water until she caught her breath. He made her go to her hut and ordered her to rest.]

Gilles thus nurses his nurse back to health. Later on, his concern for the deer takes on a paternal tone:

puis est venue a sun succurs,  
 a sun meistre ki l'atendit;  
 il fud mut lé quant il la vit:  
 ben sout ke ele esteit chascee;  
 il l'ad chosee e chastiee,  
 dit ke veit trop luinz el desert:  
 mal est bailli si il la pert! (ll. 1728-1734)

[The {the doe} came for help to her master who was waiting for her. He was very happy when he saw her because he knew well that she had been chased. He scolded her and punished her, telling her that she went too far in the desert. He would be very upset if he lost her.]

Here, the doe seeks out Gilles for help and is rewarded for her kindness to him. At the same time, however, his patronizing of her foreshadows his future relationship to nature, as the steward and caretaker of his monastery.

This dramatic hunting scene culminates in Gilles's wounding, which allows him to become the animal in the ultimate act of humility that pits him against the violent practices he is trying to protest in his hermitage. As he is trying to protect the doe, he ends up taking a hunter's arrow. Gilles is literally hunted out by his fellow human beings who will eventually drag him back to the very society he was trying to flee. Guillaume describes Gilles's wound in great detail:

Grant fu le cop k'out recue:  
 mut se doute de la grant plaie,  
 tresk'a l'ortil le sanc lui raie.  
 Nostre Seignur ad mercié:  
 arere veit tut de bon gré;  
 ne s'entremet de l'estancher,  
 einz leist le sanc del cors aler. (ll. 1886-1892)

[The blow he received was great. It resulted in a large wound that made him suffer a lot. Blood flowed all the way to his feet. He thanked Our Lord. Rather than worrying and stopping the bleeding, he let it flow from his body].

The hermit, discovered by his own kind whom he abandoned, becomes the hunted animal. His wound, which teaches him about the humility and compassion of self-sacrifice, ultimately allows him to experience his *imitatio Christii*. By becoming animal-like, Gilles accomplishes an important step on his way to sainthood. He suffers the very sort of persecution advocated by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as a means toward celestial paradise.

Gilles's relationship with the deer teaches him a new, humble environmental ethics through its intimacy. Many deer flee in fear at the sight of humans as does Gilles's doe when she is chased by the hunters. In *The Animal Side*, Jean-Christophe Bailly uses the metaphor of touching a deer to describe the threshold-crossing moment when human beings begin to understand the animals' world: "The deer was in its night and I in mine, each of us alone. Still, in the interval of the chase, I am quite sure of what I touched: it was that other night, the deer's night coming to me, not given over but granted for an instant, that instant opening onto another world" (Bailly 2-3). Gilles thus crosses the boundary between human and animal, even if only for a moment, when he has physical contact with the doe both through her nursing of him and his nursing of her. Guillaume de Berneville is ambiguous when it comes to describing just how Gilles procures the milk from the deer, and perhaps this ambiguity is telling of the human discomfort when faced with this interspecies relationship. Guillaume never says if Gilles actually suckles from her teat or if he milks her, but he does go into detail describing her body: "Gros out le piz e plein de leit:/ as pez Gire se veit gesir,/ presente sei de lui servir" (ll. 1514-1516) [She has large teats full of milk. She lies down at Gilles's feet and presents herself to serve him]. It is interesting to note that the author juxtaposes the doe's teats with Gilles's feet. The consonance of 'p' and 'z' sounds in these three lines connect the two body parts ('piz' and 'pez') with the doe's act of subservience ("gesire", "presente"). Both the doe and the hermit humble themselves through their bodily actions. First, the doe humbles herself by serving Gilles with her milk. Later, Gilles humbles himself by nursing from the doe. This harkens to Benedict's discussion of humility wherein he claims that those who are not humble will be rejected from their mother's breast. The connection between

“piz” and “pez” during this act of subservience further demonstrates the intimacy of the scene by establishing the pair’s close physical proximity and the suggested physical contact implied by the doe’s breastfeeding. Later, the narrator describes the doe’s body as beautifully fat: “Ele fud bele e grasse e grosse:/ n’i out si bele en la contree,/ ne ne serad ja meis trovee” (ll. 1530-1532) [She was beautiful, large, and fat. There never was nor will there ever be a more beautiful doe in the country]. These various mentions of her beauty and her beautiful body when coupled with the repetition of the verb ‘to see’ (ll. 1507, 1517, 1673-1674) make the deer scenes quite voyeuristic<sup>33</sup>, yet Gilles crosses the threshold through physical contact. The author mentions that Gilles knows that this milk is a gift from God, but doesn’t explain how he obtains it (ll. 1519-1522). At the very least, it is implied that the two make physical contact during these nursing scenes. The fact that they live alongside one another in huts further increases the level of intimacy of Gilles’s encounter with the doe. Their relationship becomes so intimate that Gilles begins to experience feelings of affection for her. When Gilles first meets the deer he is described as “lez” (l. 1519) [happy]. When she is chased by hunters, he becomes “dolent” (l. 1611) [sad] and cries tenderly for her (l. 1612). When he chastises her for wandering so far from their home, he says that he would be “mal...bailli” (l. 1734) [tormented] if he lost her. Gilles’s ultimate gesture of love is his self-sacrifice for the doe. As Elizabeth Williams describes it: “The climax of the episode is reached when St Giles is wounded in place of the deer, emphasizing the essential companionship of hermit

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<sup>33</sup> See Bailly for a further discussion of the role played by sight in human and animal interactions: “Animals are spectators in the world. We are spectators in the world alongside them and simultaneously. This community of the sense of sight makes us alike and relates us; it posits between us the possibility of a threshold, the threshold-experience of which Rilke speaks” (16).

and hind, who are thus seen to live together in a spirit of symbiotic self-sacrifice in which both parties give equally” (197). By reversing the dynamic of power and becoming the servant instead of the master, Gilles humbles himself for his companion.

Gilles’s relationship with the doe has many implications for our understanding of the relationship between ecology and sexuality in what I am terming the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ Donna Haraway’s recent work on dogs as “companion species” has many parallels with Gilles’s partnership with the doe, showing the extent to which they become intimate partners and family members. Citing evidence that human beings and dogs coevolved, Haraway describes them as “companion species” since they provide mutual benefits for one another that increase their chances of survival. Haraway defines “companion animal” thus: “Companion animals can be horses, dogs, cats, or a range of other beings willing to make the leap from pet or lab beast to the biosociality of service dogs, family members, or team members in cross-species sports” (Haraway “Cyborgs to Companion Species” 301). Gilles’s doe goes beyond being just a simple pet when she nurses him and lives alongside him. She becomes a domestic partner and family member. She replaces the family and friends he left behind in Athens. She becomes the wife the barons counseled him to marry.

In monastic literature, it is fairly common to describe the monks’ relationships to one another and to God, Jesus, and Mary in familial terms. The abbot is the spiritual father of a monastery (Benedict 20-21). The monks are frequently described as brothers. In his sermons on the *Song of Songs*, Bernard compares the human soul to a bride and

Jesus to a bridegroom.<sup>34</sup> In the bestiary and hagiographic tradition, deer are often seen as symbols of Christ because of their cruciferous horns (Remensnyder 61). Yet, as we have seen, this doe's body is clearly gendered female. Does this mean that we are to interpret her as the Marian paramour Gilles describes to the barons earlier in the text when they were pressuring him to marry?<sup>35</sup> Is she the “dameisele,/ si est uncor virgine e pucele,/ curteise e bele durement” (ll. 351-353) [courtly and very beautiful young woman who is still a virgin] with whom Gilles proclaims to be in love in order to get the barons off of his back? If the doe is both Gilles's domestic partner and nursing mother figure, then does this make their relationship incestuous? The seeming perversity of their relationship signals the point at which human language fails to accurately depict their lived reality, the point at which Gilles becomes anomalous in the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ The absurdity and perversity of their relationship, when reduced to human terms, helps to undo the human/animal binary by showing the overlap between these supposedly distinct categories that are foundational to the way human language defines identity. Gilles and his doe, by becoming partners, cease to exist in the center of the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ and begin to trouble the binaries from the periphery.

In her work on cyborgs, Haraway comments upon the perversity that is inherent in hybridity and boundary crossing. As she explains, “The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. [...] cyborgs

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<sup>34</sup> See Bynum (1977, 263). This marital language pervades Bernard's *Sermon on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>35</sup> For the thirteenth-century Cistercian writer, Adam de Perseigne, “the nurse is usually the Virgin. We, the children, drink Christ, the milk, at the Virgin's breasts and so become the brothers of Christ in a special sense, those who nurse at the breast alongside him” (Bynum, 1982, 124). As Bynum explains, the feminization of God and Christ in medieval theological discourse eliminated the homosexual aspects for monks who perceived of their relationship to God as a martial or sexual union (161). She adds that “male religious more frequently have visions of the Virgin Mary” (162).

signal disturbingly and pleurably tight coupling. Bestiality has a new status in this cycle of marriage exchange” (Haraway “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” 10). Domestic partnership and nursing function as metaphors in *Gilles* signaling the reversal of hierarchical power, of the human domination of nature, by eliminating the false conception of a superior self and an inferior other. Bynum explains that in using maternal imagery medieval monks “saw the bond of child and mother as a symbol of closeness, union, or even the incorporation of one self into another” (167). Gilles thus incorporates the doe into himself when he ingests her milk. He realizes his animality.

Language, as a product of human culture, is inherently anthropocentric.

Guillaume de Berneville and his readers, as human beings, can only conceive of Gilles’s relationship in human terms. Thus it is not that the doe is Gilles’s wife/mother. Rather, this familial language is the best way to describe the intimacy of their relationship so that it will be comprehensible to a human audience. This brings us back to the concept of the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ a grid, and hence binary view of society. While Gilles is stuck in a system of binaries, he problematizes them by existing at their interstice. Gilles undoes the hierarchies by revealing the inaccuracies of their foundational binaries. In his relationship of parity with the doe, he shows in which ways he is like an animal and in which ways the doe is like a human. The human/animal binary that supposes human dominance of animals is thus problematized by this ‘perverse’ coupling. It is much more difficult to oppress someone if you live as his or her equal. It is this logic of equality that guides Gilles’s whole environmental ethics of humility. In his hermitage, Gilles rejects his position of dominance within the system of hierarchical binaries that is the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ In his aspirations toward humility, he tries to adopt the position of the



inferior minorities in various ways. He rejects wealth for poverty. By refusing to marry, he avoids subjugating women. In his hermitage, he lives more like an animal. He leaves his culture and inhabits the supposedly uncivilized domain of nature. By rejecting rich lodging, opulent clothing, and violent hunting practices he undoes the binaries that establish human through the objectification of nature inherent in the court culture of his era. He realizes the extent to which he is equal and not superior to animals, but to little avail. Society ‘polices’ him yet again. Gilles’s relationship with the deer culminates in both his becoming-animal and in his return to human society. The hunters tame the rebellious hermit and try to ‘police’ him back into a more culturally intelligible state, in an effort to reassert the binaries of their ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’.

### Patriarchy Redefined

Alexander reads these scenes of the hermits’ return to ‘civilized’ society as stories of conversion or of taming of the saint (119), but to do so reinforces the very sort of binaries that these stories problematize. To say that Gilles is tamed presupposes that he was ever uncivilized. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb ‘civilize’ thus: “To bring (a person, place, group of people, etc.) to a stage of social development considered to be more advanced, esp. by bringing to conformity with the social norms of a developed society; to enlighten, refine, and educate; to make more cultured and sophisticated.” It also associates the term with animals: “to tame or domesticate (an animal).” Using the term ‘civilize’ in this way suggests that Gilles goes against societal norms by living in the company of animals, yet Gilles never fully divests himself of his humanity. Rather, he

domesticates the doe by building a hut for her alongside his own. In Gilles's hermitage, then, he lives at the space in between the binaries of civilized/uncivilized and human/animal. While it appears that his discovery by the hunters brings him back to human society, the lessons in humility that he learns during his hermitage influence his future ecological interactions when he becomes a monastery founder. In this way, the monastic lifestyle offers a more realistic corrective to the 'feudal' lifestyle he rejected and the hermitage misunderstood by his peers. While Gilles's attempts to live apart from society in his hermitage are futile, the monastic lifestyle affords him a bit of seclusion and separation from society while still being a part of it—a necessary step on his way to sainthood. Gilles's alternative relationship with the doe helps him to renegotiate his identity *from within* the society he abandoned during his hermitage.

While it is tempting to read Gilles's ecological humility as an anti-'feudal' and anti-courtly relationship to the land, the ending of the text shows the extent to which he is similar to the nobles he implicitly criticizes through his eremitic lifestyle. Gilles discovers that he cannot really live away from society, but he finds a way to live more humbly within society. As we have seen, Gilles follows the model of humility as a reversal of worldly wealth set forth in the Beatitudes and in the *Rule of St. Benedict*, when he gives up his inheritance to benefit the poor and pursues the eremitic lifestyle. Gilles is 'policed' by the barons when he is scolded for not completing his 'feudal' duties and is ultimately dragged back into society by some noble huntsmen. As an abbot, Gilles manages to accomplish the abandoned goals and fulfill the shirked responsibilities of his youth thanks to the new ecological attitudes afforded to him by his lessons in humility garnered from his cohabitation with the doe.

Gilles demonstrates his newfound conception of humility when he agrees to become the abbot of a new monastery. After the hunter king wounds Gilles, he feels guilty and wants to offer him gifts. He begs him to take dishes, clothes, gold and silver, saying “Si nel vols a tun os tenir,/ fai as povres tut departir” (ll. 2175-2176) [If you do not want to keep them for yourself, have it all distributed to the poor]. Flovent’s suggestion to Gilles is the exact reversal of the barons’ criticism of Gilles’s distribution of his wealth. By humanizing the hunting scene, Gilles manages to make the king understand the gravity of his extravagant lifestyle. Through his *imitatio Christi*, he puts Flovent in the position of Christ’s persecutor. Fearful of his sinfulness, Flovent tries to right his wrongs by imitating Gilles’s humble ethics. He thus reverses the standard values of his culture by sharing his wealth in the ways that Gilles had wanted to share his parents’ inheritance. Gilles’s abandonment of his inherited lands is also reversed when he receives a land grant from Flovent to found a monastery per Gilles’s order: “pren ta veissele e tun argent,/ e de ta terre une partie,/ si fai ci feire une abbeie” (ll. 2184-2186) [take your dishes, your silver, and a part of your land, and found there an abbey].<sup>36</sup> The king’s generosity appears here as a fulfillment of the promises of the Beatitudes. The poor hermit becomes rich, and the rich king makes himself poor. Not only is Gilles’s relationship to the land reversed when he receives this generous land grant, but his relationship to other nobles is reversed, as well. Just as the barons had ordered Gilles in the imperative tense to not squander his wealth, to take a wife, and to have children,

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<sup>36</sup> According to Alexander, the ‘hermit and the hunter’ topos of hagiography was meant to teach secular lords to endow churches with lands (123). See Golding for further discussion of this topos.

Gilles orders the king to perform his will.<sup>37</sup> By accepting the worldly gift of this monastic land grant, Gilles finds a way to turn worldly wealth to spiritual profit. He also ignores his own desire, further demonstrating his humility to the powers that be within his earthly society. Gilles realizes that he is able to do more service to God by participating in human society rather than trying to avoid it.

By becoming an abbot, Gilles is able to subvert the patriarchal system from within, by finding an acceptable alternative to the ‘feudal’ ideals of filiation and land ownership. The king follows Gilles’s order to found a monastery, but only under one condition, namely that the saint become the abbot: “Si vus volez lur abes estre,/ mainteneür e pere e meistre,/ jo frai feire tost le muster” (ll. 2203-2205) [If you want to be their abbot, protector, father, and master, I will have the monastery built soon]. The use of familial language to describe Gilles’s role as abbot (“pere”) here is the first indication of the paternal role that he will play for the monastery. The use of the word “meistre” here parallels that of ll. 1728-1729 (“puis est venue a sun succurs,/ a sun meistre ki l’atendit”) when the hunted doe seeks out Gilles’s protection. Perhaps Guillaume de Berneville wants to draw a parallel between the saint’s two acts of guidance and protection by using the same word here. In both instances, Gilles takes on a role of paternal leadership, taking care of the needs of others. It appears then, that his encounter with the doe well prepared him for his future abbotship both in terms of his duties and in his humility in ignoring his own desire and will.

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<sup>37</sup> See Remesnyder for a discussion of how the Latin Life of Gilles subverts the power dynamics by making both the King and the Bishop subservient to the humble hermit and the relationship of this power reversal to the monastic history of the Abbey of St. Gilles.

Later in the text, Gilles's sense personal duty reflects his desire to strive for the common good and to help others. Gilles further demonstrates his new paternal role toward the end of the text when he announces his plans to travel to Rome to secure the abbey's lands:

mult avreie ovré malement  
 se si les lessoue eguarrez,  
 ke cest liu ne fust essiurez  
 e confirmé e dedié,  
 e privilege purgascé,  
 e ke il aient ferme pais,  
 quel rei k'avenge mes après,  
 k'il ne lur toille lur dreiture,  
 ne lur guaain, ne lur pasture,  
 lur bois ne lur guaaineries,  
 lur rentes ne lur pescheries,  
 de ço ke li reis i ad mis;  
 kar autrement, ço m'est avis,  
 tute ma paine e mun travail  
 ne vaut une dosse d'ail,  
 si jo a tant le leis ester.  
 Tresk'a Rume m'estot aler,  
 cum einz seit melz de l'espleiter,  
 tant cume jo me puis aider,  
 kar ço n'ert mie lungement (ll. 3310-3329)

[I would have worked badly if I abandoned {the monks} without the monastery being protected, without it benefiting from a confirmation and a consecration and without it having obtained a privilege allowing it to know a lasting peace, and avoiding that a king, whoever he may be, who will come after should take from the monks their privileges, their workable lands, their prairies, their forests, their rents, their right to fish and all that the king Flovent had granted them. Because, in my opinion, if I leave things as they are, all of my efforts and all of my sufferings are worth less than a clove of garlic. I must go to Rome as long as I can still help, because I do not have much time left to live.]

The list of benefits which the monks obtain from their lands differs slightly from the 'feudal' and courtly use of the environment seen elsewhere in the text. The monks use their lands for food and financial gain. Unlike the nobles, however, they do not hunt or

spend their money on entertainment. Rather, like the anonymous hermit Gilles first encountered on his journey, the monks fish. Like the post-lapsarian Adam and Eve, the monks must work the land for their food. With the mention of the “terres labourables”, one imagines that the monks grow grain and make bread. In this way, the monks distinguish themselves from the hermits described earlier in the text who only ate the food they found or that God provided for them. The acts of cultivation and of baking bread demonstrate the extent to which the monastic lifestyle is posited as an intermediary state between the court culture of the nobles and the ascetic hermits. These monks eat cooked food, but they must work for it. Their lifestyle is thus more penitential than that of the nobles, but not quite as ascetic as that of the hermits. The monastic life is thus presented as the best of both worlds. The monks live a reasonably austere lifestyle with minimal contact with the outside world.

Gilles, as the abbot, also manages to find a middle ground, negotiating between his personal ideals and the behavior prescribed to him by his society and the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ In this speech, Gilles demonstrates that he possesses all of the qualities that the barons criticized him for not having when he was the lord of his ancestral lands. He wants to protect his monks from the strife of war and wants to ensure his legacy on the land for future generations. This is emphasized by the repetition of the possessive adjective “lur” in reference to the monks’ ownership of the lands. This passage parallels Flovent’s original land grant: “s’i metterai tost rentes assez/ terres e bois, vignes e prez [...] Si vus volez lur abes estre,/ mainteneür e pere e meistre” (ll. 2195-2204). In the land grant passage, the lack of possessive adjectives symbolizes the lack of an owner. By

using possessive adjectives, in this passage that harkens to the earlier scene, Guillaume reminds his readers that monks, and not nobles, own this land.

Gilles also recognizes the patriarchal role that he possesses in relation to this land. Gilles's use of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (ll. 3305, 3310, 3323-3328), which is striking in contrast with his typically self-debasing humility throughout the text, shows the extent to which he has finally realized the weight of the responsibility of his paternal role in his society. By becoming the spiritual father of the monastery, Gilles ends up in an alternative parenting relationship.<sup>38</sup> He finds a way to live within society in accordance with his humble aspirations, while also fulfilling the duties of managing land and having a family. His domestic experience with the *doe* thus enables him to find a happy medium between the societal norms and his own ascetic ideals. Where Gilles had failed to be an ideal king for his barons early on in his life, he excels at being a humble servant to God, to his environment, and to his monks. He has thus carved out a culturally intelligible place for himself within the center of the '*homo sapiens* matrix.'

Medieval saints are often exceptional in that they reject the norms of their society, and Gilles is a perfect example of this. Early in his life, it is frequently made apparent that Gilles is anomalous in the '*homo sapiens* matrix' of his time in that he refuses to perpetuate the exploitative practices of 'feudal' land ownership. In this way, he rejects the sexual and ecological ideals of comportment necessary to maintain his position of dominance within his society. The displeased barons give him two options: to maintain

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<sup>38</sup> Bynum affirms: "The structure of the medieval family and of inheritance necessitated alternative roles to marriage and procreation for a large portion of the population" (15).

the status quo (by marrying, procreating and doling out land and riches) or to take his culturally unintelligible ideals and live elsewhere in the margins of society (by becoming a monk in a thicket). The barons' 'policing' of Gilles demonstrates how a rigid system of false binaries that confer power through hierarchies maintains itself in spite of the evident anomalies like Gilles. The saint's initial reaction to his unintelligibility is flight from human society and thus to the margins of the '*homo sapiens* matrix'. In many ways, however, Gilles is still a product of his language and his society. Thus he never fully divests himself of his humanity even when he realizes his animality. He and the doe live in an in-between space that questions the binaries of human/animal and civilized/uncivilized. His relationship with the doe thus appears as a sort of perversion when it is translated into human language. The doe functions as a mother, a partner, and a daughter when she nurses him and is nursed by him. He acts like her father, husband, and savior when he builds her a home and protects her from hunters. This episode calls into question the way language describes the relationship between human beings and animals and signals a need for reevaluation and change. Guillaume de Berneville thus invokes intimacy and domesticity here to illustrate for his readers how Gilles stands apart from his peers, on the periphery of the '*homo sapiens* matrix' and how he is able to change it from within. Because of the doe, he performs the ultimate *imitatio Christi* and learns about humility, compassion, and mercy—lessons which finally teach him the importance of living in human society and help him to transcend his humanity, becoming a saint. Guillaume thus invites us to conceive of human beings' relationships with their environment in a new light, and thus to call into question the exploitative system we take for granted. In the end, Gilles is hunted out by humans, and thus comes to realize the



impossibility of his eremitic ideals. He learns that he must live within human society in order to help his fellow humans and earn his sanctity, and that he cannot change human behavior by fleeing from it. He must confront it head on by living among other humans and serving as an example for them. He thus manages to find a way to negotiate his identity, transforming his own saintly ideals within a human system, and translating his beliefs into a lexicon that would be comprehensible to his human peers. He finds a way of existence that is both in accordance with his environmental ethics of humility and that is culturally intelligible to his peers. He thus re-centers himself within the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix.’ He takes a value system that is at times seen as foreign and incomprehensible and gets others to eventually accept it. He makes his previously anomalous behavior normal and gets other powerful figures in his society to go along with him and accept him for who he is. Furthermore, he manages to protect a swathe of land from future ownership by those who would use it towards more violent ends. In this way, there is some concrete evidence that Gilles changes the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ in which he and all other humans live. Gilles proves that the ‘*homo sapiens* matrix’ is not static, but fluid, and that it is worth the persecution to stand for the values in which one believes. Gilles demonstrates that he has learned and grown from his life experiences as a failed prince and a humble hermit in that he has managed to find an intermediate relationship to his environment that is neither as greedy as the ‘feudal’ model or as removed from the human world as the eremitic model. The monastic model appears as a reconciliation between these two modes of existence. Gilles’s repetition of first-person pronouns and adjectives in his speech to his monks, shows that he has a better sense of self, a sign of his confidence as a leader. It proves that he has accepted and come to terms with his

humanity thanks to his discovery of his animality. As an abbot, Gilles finally finds a way to 'police' his society. By appealing to the Pope, Gilles is able to sidestep potential political foes who will take the land back from the monastery. He demonstrates that he is a paternal figure, able to care for others, and he leaves a legacy upon the land that will protect it from future exploiters. The text thus comes full circle when Gilles finally fulfills the sorts of duties the barons had wanted him to fulfill as a king. Only now, he is doing so in a way that is true to his personal values. He finds an effective and peaceful way to defend his environmental ethics that will also benefit his new spiritual family—both human and animal. By adopting a more culturally intelligible lifestyle, Gilles manages to transform his identity and to change the status quo from within the '*homo sapiens* matrix'.

Chapter 2—Becoming-Earth: Alternative Community and ‘Ecomystical Union’ in the *T* Version of *La Vie de sainte Marie l’Égyptienne*

Introduction

The anonymous *T* version of *La Vie de sainte Marie l’Égyptienne*<sup>39</sup> tells the story of a woman who becomes one with God by becoming one with earth. Marie transforms herself both physically and spiritually by changing her relationship to the world around her. Marie’s environmental ethics teach others theological lessons about repentance, penitence, humility, and mercy. Readers follow Marie through the journey of life from her early days as a prostitute through her hairy transformation before witnessing her luminous ascent into heaven. Born into an affluent Christian family in Egypt, Marie leaves home as an adolescent, seeking a life of pleasure as a courtesan in Alexandria. From there, she embarks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, sleeping with numerous pilgrims along the way. Because of her sin, she is barred from entering a church, which prompts her to have an epiphany and an experience of religious conversion. She then prays to the Virgin before setting off into the desert to perform her penance, bringing only three loaves of bread and the clothes on her back. She spends some forty years in the wilderness along the Jordan River as her body transforms and becomes weathered from the elements. She then encounters a monk by the name of Zosimas who hands her a cloak to hide her nudity. The pair forms a platonic friendship which allows her to complete her transformation. When she dies, Zosimas is miraculously sent a lion to help

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<sup>39</sup> Peter F. Dembowski’s edition of *La Vie de sainte Marie l’Égyptienne* in its various versions in Old and Middle French remains the most thorough edition to date. All citations will come from this edition.

him bury her body in the earth so that her soul can go to heaven. Finally, Zosimas returns to the monastery where he shares her story with others.

Marie's story has been a popular subject for medieval hagiographers and modern scholars alike. The oldest known version of the Life of Saint Mary the Egyptian was written around 638 in Greek by Sophronios (Dembowski 12). The saint's Life has been translated into Latin (14-16), French (16-21), and various other vernacular languages. Dembowski divides the corpus of Old French Lives into ten categories and thirteen redactions: T, X, V, W, N, O, O<sup>1</sup>, Z, U, Y, L<sup>1</sup>, L<sup>2</sup>, and L<sup>3</sup> (16-21). He does not treat Rutebeuf's version (R), the passage from *Renard le Contrefait* (R<sup>1</sup>), and the late versions of the *Légende dorée* (L) (16). I have chosen the *T* poem since it is one of the Lives that features Marie as the main protagonist (21-22), since it has served as a model for other vernacular versions (16), and since "it is the earliest extant vernacular [French] version of the legend" (Robertson "Twelfth-Century Literary Experience"). The anonymous *T* version was written during the last quarter of the twelfth century and is preserved in six manuscripts and two fragments: A Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 23112, f. 334c-344a (this is Dembowski's base manuscript); B, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Cononici. Misc. 74, f. 109r-120r; C, Oxford, Corpus Christi 232, f. 35r-64v; D, Paris, Bibl. nat. fr. 19525, f. 15b-26b; E, Paris, Arsenal 3516, f. 113vc-117vb; L, London, British Museum, Additional 36614, f. 271c-284c; F<sup>1</sup>, Manchester, John Rylands, French 6, f. 8b-8d; and F<sup>2</sup> for which Dembowski does not provide the shelf number (16, 25-32).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dembowski refers to this version as "La Version *T*." Duncan Robertson, who has written extensively on this text, has referred to this version alternately as "the poem (*T*)", "the *T* poem" ("Poem and Spirit" 307, 313), "the twelfth-century verse life of St. Mary the Egyptian", "version *T*", "*T*", and "The Old French poem (*T*)" ("The Anglo-Norman Verse Life" 13, 15). Henceforth, I will refer to the *T* version as the *T* poem,

Criticism of Marie's Life focuses on her gender and sexuality,<sup>41</sup> on her role as an exemplar (whether imitable or not),<sup>42</sup> on her penitence and death,<sup>43</sup> on her transformation,<sup>44</sup> on her liminal status between various worlds and identity categories,<sup>45</sup> and on her relationship to her environment.<sup>46</sup> While these critics have noticed Marie's transformation and her deep connection to her natural milieu, they have not fully articulated the profound role that environment plays in shaping her human and sexual identities. In this chapter, I will analyze the *T* poem through the lenses of Deleuze's and Guattari's posthuman theory and Biblical exegesis in order to ascertain what this text is telling us about the relationship between human beings, sexuality, and the environment. I argue that the *T* poem creates an exegetical program that teaches its readers about humility, mercy, and spiritual perfection through the story of a woman who exchanges her own pleasure for God's through an ecological communion with God and His creation.

The *T* poem invites us to reconceive of community as a complex web of interrelations between all entities (human, non-human, and divine) that exist in this world and beyond. Hermitage is often described as a *contemptus mundi* and as a flight from

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since it refers to the version and the fact that it is in verse. For a discussion of other vernacular versions of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, see the collection of essays edited by Poppe and Ross.

<sup>41</sup> See Dawson, Friesen, Gaunt, Heron, Howie's chapter and article on Marie as well as his collaborative chapter with Burgwinkle, Karras, Miller, Pinto-Mathieu, Robertson, and Scheil.

<sup>42</sup> Cazelles discusses the manner in which Marie distances herself from her readers through her extraordinary asceticism. Duncan Robertson has criticized this in a review of Cazelle's two books on hagiography ("The Inimitable Saints"). He shows how saints like Alexis did indeed serve as role models for readers like Christina of Markyate (437). According to Robertson, "saints model perfect behavior on a heroic scale. But their stature by no means precludes imitation" (445). Other critics like Posa, Heron, and Scheil show the way in which she serves as a model for Zosimas and the readers of her Life through her penitence and asceticism.

<sup>43</sup> See Dawson, Friesen, and Pinto-Mathieu.

<sup>44</sup> See Robertson, Scheil, and Tilliette.

<sup>45</sup> See Campbell, Howie, Miller, and Scheil.

<sup>46</sup> See Heron, Howie, Miller, and Scheil.

society,<sup>47</sup> but the *T* poem shows that hermitage is not so much an escape from society as much as it is the creation of a new society. I should mention here that I use the term hermitage to refer to both its most common definition “the habitation of a hermit” and its less common sense “the condition of a hermit,” or his/her state of being.<sup>48</sup> There is no doubt among critics that Marie’s relationship to her community is foundational in shaping her identity,<sup>49</sup> but past scholarship, in its anthropocentrism, has overlooked the importance of environmental relationships in this text. It is true that Marie’s human relationships (with her parents, with her suitors, with her fellow pilgrims, and with the Church) impact her sexual identity, but this only tells us half the story. Focusing on her human relationships prevents us from seeing the deep connections between ecology and sexuality in this text. Marie is only able to transform her sexual identity when she transcends her humanity through the mortification of her flesh, her death, and her sainthood. In many ways, her ascetic body, which is compared to a tree, to rocks, and to a wild beast, is still eroticized, as constant references to her sexualized body persist. She replaces her sexual bed with an earthly one. She replaces sexual union with spiritual union. Her hermitage thus does not appear in the text as an abrupt shift as much as it does a slow and difficult transformation enacted through various sublimated relationships. By seeing community as a series of shifting relations, we can determine the entangled nature of ecology and sexuality and learn about the mechanics of self-

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<sup>47</sup> For more background on the tradition of hermits in medieval French literature, see Bretel. He addresses various issues from exile (97) to the varied forms of solitude practiced by hermits (185, 197, 400).

<sup>48</sup> See the entry for “hermitage” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>49</sup> See Campbell’s book, *Medieval Saints’ Lives*, and Robertson’s article, “Cume lur cumpaine et lur vesine.”

transformation. Rereading Marie's hermitage as the formation of an alternative community in a new environment shows us how the saint is able to escape the sexual and ecological strictures imposed upon her by her human society.<sup>50</sup> Rather than marrying and having children, rather than selling her body as a prostitute, Marie gives birth to new life through her self-transformation and death. By becoming one with earth, Marie is able to become one with God. As we follow Marie's slow transformation, we learn about the continuum of creation that propels us from birth, to death, and to reincorporation into future life.

The *T* poem presents creation as a cyclical process of transformation and functions as an exegetical reading of *Genesis*. Frequent references to the act of creation signal this Biblical intertext. Not only does the text mention Adam and Eve as the first sinners on two occasions (ll. 489-490 and ll. 1207-1208), but it names God as the 'Creator' nine times (ll. 14, 191, 404, 707, 863, 947, 975, 1027, and 1147), and refers to Marie and animals as God's 'creatures' at least four times (ll. 23, 192, 697, and 870). Furthermore, Marie's entire penance functions as a literalized exegetical reading of *Genesis*, especially verses 3:17-3:19:

[17] Ad Adam vero dixit, 'Quia audisti vocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de lingo ex quo praeceperam tibi ne comederes, maledicta terra in opera tuo; in laboribus comedes ex ea cunctis diebus vitae tua. [18] Spinis et tribulos germinabit tibi, et comedes herbas terrae. [19] In sudore vultus tui vesceris

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<sup>50</sup> Campbell argues that "the renegotiation of the social models that underwrite relationships can produce alternative modes of connection and community" in *Old French saints' Lives* (4). Campbell and I are interested in similar questions of identity formation and transformation, but examining the interconnection of ecology and sexuality has enabled me to expand Campbell's ideas regarding alternative community in ways that have implications for the way we perceive ourselves as human beings.

pane donec rertaris in terram de qua sumptus es, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.’<sup>51</sup>

[17] And to Adam he said, ‘Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with *labour and toil* shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy Life. [18] Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. [19] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken, for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return.’

This speech, uttered by God to Adam following his banishment from Eden, summarizes Marie’s penitential experience. Marie seems to take this advice literally, as she escapes into the desert with three loaves of bread, eats grass, is punctured by thorns, and eventually becomes earth. On a sexual level, it is interesting to note that Marie imitates Adam’s penitential experience more than she does Eve’s. In this way, Marie tries to bypass many of the ideal roles expected of her as a woman through her penitence. Marie’s evasion of traditional female roles provides us with much insight into the various facets of self-transformation made possible by the eremitic penitential experience. Marie transforms herself socially, sexually, morally, physically, and spiritually by changing her relationship to the world around her.

The *T* poem portrays Marie’s transformation as a series of shifting relationships (both physical and spiritual), which reveals the tight interconnection between sexual and ecological ideals and calls into question the way human language describes identity. The *T* poem uses carnal language to translate the experience of union in terms more easily comprehensible to a human audience, and in this way problematizes various binaries used

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<sup>51</sup> See *The Vulgate Bible Volume I: The Pentateuch, Douay-Rheims Translation*. All citations from *Genesis* come from this edition.



to distinguish between supposedly different entities (earthly/spiritual, human/animal, plant/animal, human/divine, civilization/wilderness, etc).<sup>52</sup> For example, the author uses the word ‘plaisir’ to describe both Marie’s sexual pleasure as a prostitute (ll. 67, 196, 300) and to describe God’s desire for Marie’s conversion (l. 1227). Marie’s sexual pleasure is described as “luxure” and youthful folly:

Molt fu esprise de luxure,  
De nule autre rien n’avoit cure.  
Por che qu’ele iert bele et gente,  
Se fioit tant en sa jovente  
Que tout fesoit le sien plaisir. (ll. 63-7)

[She was so inflamed with lust that she cared about nothing else. Because she was beautiful and lovely, she relied so much on her youth that she did all for her pleasure.]

Because she is young and beautiful, Marie does not worry about the potential moment in the future when she will no longer be able to rely on her good looks. In this sense, her sin of *luxuria* is partly the result of her youthful ignorance. Yet, the sin is worsened by the fact that it overtakes her life. This is suggested by the various expressions used to emphasize the totality and extreme nature of her sin (“Molt fu esprise”, “De nule autre rien n’avoit”, “Se fioit tant”, and “tout fesoit”). All of these expressions hyperbolically underscore the way that lust consumes her body and soul. When the author uses the same word, ‘plaisir’, to refer to God’s desire for Marie, s/he undoubtedly harks back to these prior scenes. The mention of God’s pleasure occurs in a second-person prayer addressed

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<sup>52</sup> Robertson notes, using Bernard of Clairvaux’s terms, that vernacular hagiography “has ‘translated’ the saint’s life into the barbarous language of love” (“Poem and Spirit” 327). Elsewhere, he explains, “The commission to translate a saint’s life is thus undertaken by some very talented poets [...] who found ways to adapt these edifying tales to the needs of the new lay audience” (“Twelfth-Century Literary Experience” 72).

by the penitent to God: “Fait de t’ancele a ton plesir (l. 1227) [Do with your servant your pleasure]. In this way, Marie reveals the extent to which her conversion is a sublimation of her carnal pleasure into spiritual pleasure.

Furthermore, many of the same sexual symbols from the saint’s sinful early life (her “lit” and the natural metaphors used to describe her body) are repurposed, so to speak, as she changes environments and transforms herself. Human sexual objects, emotions, and ideals are thus used as metaphors to approximate human beings’ shifting relationships to their environment and to God. The use of sexual metaphors to describe our relationship to the divine goes back at least as far as the *Song of Songs* and commentaries thereof, especially that of Bernard of Clairvaux. This conflation of carnal and spiritual pleasure translates the experience of union with God into human terms, but it also calls into question the binaries between the carnal and the spiritual, by showing the overlap between the two. While following Marie’s transformation, readers learn how to transform their spiritual selves by becoming one with the earth.

Marie’s becoming-earth is a liminal and in-between experience, toeing the line between human and earth and human and divine. I use the word ‘earth’ to refer rather broadly to the materiality of creation. The vagueness of this term is apt for my discussion because it recalls God’s use of earth in His creation of man and woman in *Genesis* and since it also reflects the conglomerate view of matter presented in this text. When God first makes Adam, he does so from earth: “And the Lord God formed man of *the slime of the earth* and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (*Genesis 2:7*) [Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem *de limo terrae* et inspiravit in

faciem eius spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem.]]<sup>53</sup> Swift Edgar, in his bilingual facing-page edition and translation of the Douay-Rheims Pentateuch for Dumbarton Oaks, translates the material used to make Adam ‘limo terrae’ as ‘the slime of the earth.’ *Cassel’s Latin Dictionary* also defines ‘limus, -i’ as “mud, mire, and filth.” This base, generic term emphasizes Adam’s lowly and humble beginnings only to highlight God’s power to animate earth by breathing a soul into it. So according to *Genesis*, man is earth with a soul; in this way, he is made of the same matter as the earth and God’s other creations. The connection between human and earth is evident, as well, in God’s punishment for Adam following his sin and banishment from Eden in the passage of *Genesis* cited above. (3:17-19). God tells Adam that he will have to work the earth through “labor and toil” to “eat the herbs of the earth” before he returns “to the earth out of which [he was] taken” for out of “dust” he was made and “into dust [he shall] return.” Two different words are used here to refer to the matter of creation: ‘terra’ (earth) and ‘pulvis’ (dust). Whereas Adam was created from ‘the slime of the earth’, now he must toil to eat ‘the herbs of the earth’ before someday returning to it as ‘dust.’ Similarly, the author of the *T* poem dramatizes this process of incorporation and reincorporation through this story of a hermit turned saint. Her transformation is presented as a long process of shape-shifting, levitation, walking on water, burial, decay, and luminary radiation. Both before and after her transformation and death, the author uses a series of earthly analogies to describe her material nature and her physical appearance. As a courtesan she is compared to various natural symbols (apples, flowers,

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<sup>53</sup> The italics here are my own.

ermine) to describe her rosy, sexual beauty. After her transformation, the author continues to describe her physical appearance using some of the same metaphors as before (hawthorn flowers and ermine) while adding some new ones (mossy tree bark, carbon, and beasts) to describe her blackened skin and whitened hair. Marie's body is at times described as a hybrid amalgam of materials and in this sense subverts any possible sense of her human autonomy within her natural environment.<sup>54</sup> She is entirely human, yet humanity is only possible through this multi-layered organic composition. Later in the text, however, the author seems to reassert human autonomy within its environment when s/he depicts Marie's various miraculous movements (levitation above the earth and walking on water) that reflect her indissolubility. With these varying depictions of Marie's body as sometimes enmeshed in and at other times distinct from earth, the author seems to reflect a certain level of ambivalence in describing human and saintly corporeality. Is her earthly form a stricture that gets in the way of her saintliness? Or can her earthiness help her transform herself spiritually? In life, her carnality persists despite the slow mutation of her body and her changing relationship to her environment. It is only through her death and burial that her body can achieve union with the earth and her soul can reunite with God.

I have devised the term 'ecomystical union' to describe the phenomenon of a pleasurable union with God by becoming one with earth. Bernard McGinn has succinctly summarized the evolution of mystic theology in Western Christianity from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries. Mystic theology is a response to the inaccessibility and

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<sup>54</sup> See McCracken "The Floral and the Human" for an example of how a plant-animal hybrid troubles the "boundaries between human and nonhuman, nature and culture" (67).

mysteriousness of God; it is an attempt to make the “hidden presence” of God an “immediate experience” for humans. It can take the form of “direct contemplation or vision of God, rapture or ecstasy, deification, living in Christ, the birth of the Word in the soul, radical obedience to the directly present will of God, and especially union with God” (McGinn 7). In the twelfth century, one of the central figures in mystical theology was Bernard of Clairvaux, who used metaphors like “the air transformed into sunshine” to describe ‘mystical union’ as “some form of fusion of substance between human and God” (McGinn 8). In his *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, he describes mystical union as “a union of wills (*unitas spiritus*)” and compares it to a marital union (9). As McGinn explains “Bernard insists that the only power by which humans can deal reciprocally with God is love, and that marital love is the highest form, the love that best expresses union” (9). Marie’s experience corresponds to McGinn’s definitions of mystic theology in many ways. Her life is an *imitatio Christi* and, as we have just seen, a literalization of the Word as found in *Genesis* and the *Song of Songs*.<sup>55</sup> She conforms her own will to that of God’s and unites with Him in her death. The saint even mentions the *Song of Songs* herself when she prays to God in front of Zosimas before taking Holy Communion:

Le canteroie o tes anceles  
 En tes cambres qui tant sont beles  
 Le cant nouvel o le douç son  
 Que canta li rois Salemon. (ll. 1241-4)

[I will sing with your servants in your bedrooms which are so beautiful,  
 the new song with the sweet sound that King Solomon sang.]

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<sup>55</sup> Tilliette sees the lives of blackened penitent saints as a literalization of verse 1 :4 of the *Song of Songs* (“Nigra sum sed formosa.” [I am black but I am beautiful].)

Marie's prayer demonstrates that she has an intimate relationship with God. She talks about being in His bedroom. She even mentions the highly erotic *Song of Songs* which is the subject of much mystic theology. Just as Bernard of Clairvaux does, the author of the *T* poem uses human love to approximate the love of God, but Marie's brand of mysticism is different in its ecological ramifications. As my analysis of Marie's relationship to her environment will show, the penitent saint achieves her union with God through physical union with the earth. The author of the *T* poem uses many of the same symbols of erotic love as the *Song of Songs* and Bernard of Clairvaux's commentaries,<sup>56</sup> but always does so in ways that further highlight the ecology of this erotic relationship by literalizing them. The flower-covered bed found in Bernard's commentaries becomes the earthen bed of the *T* poem. Marie becomes the tree that symbolizes the pillars of the Church in Bernard's commentaries. Throughout the text, the saint gradually becomes more intertwined with her natural milieu. By placing herself in a more humble position vis-à-vis her environment, she is able to perform a sort of ecological *imitatio Christi* to attain God's mercy. She lives like an animal, is punctured by sin-absolving thorns, and sacrifices her pleasure in order to achieve God's. Finally, her transformation into earth is what frees her soul to be reunited with its beloved in heaven.

In speaking of Marie's transformation as a process of becoming, I am inspired by the view of ecology presented in posthuman literary theory. The term 'posthuman' generally refers to contemporary critical theory that questions the anthropocentrism of

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<sup>56</sup> See especially sermon 46 wherein Bernard discusses the symbolism of the flower- and thorn-covered bed and the wood used to make the pillars of the bedroom (Clairvaux 276-293).

discourse and culture.<sup>57</sup> It is an umbrella term that lumps together work from various disciplines from the past few decades, so I should perhaps be more specific. I use the term ‘posthuman’ to refer to any brand of thought (medieval or modern) that pushes us to question anthropocentric language and practices that present the nonhuman world as inferior and subordinate to human beings. Posthumanism sees the way that humans are interconnected with and not separate from and not entirely autonomous within their environments. In my posthuman reading of the *T* poem, I am most inspired by Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Deleuze and Guattari propose a new way of seeing the environment as porous, open, and fluid. They question all suppositions of distinct entities and species by showing the way that all life is dependent upon a complex mapping (12) of relations (53-54) between all matter, all the way down to the molecular level. Bumble bees are necessary for the reproduction of flowers since they help spread the pollen from flower to flower. Animals eat plants and incorporate the organic matter into their bodies. All supposedly distinct entities are interconnected and mutually dependent; they cannot exist without one another, and their interactions transform their very being. Deleuze and Guattari use the term ‘rhizome’ to refer to this new perception of life, matter, and being. Whereas in the past, we have tended to perceive life in terms of arboreal relations—that is in terms of sexual relations that can be mapped in family trees<sup>58</sup>—the ‘rhizome’ bypasses these notions of species and sexual reproduction. Where the arborescent mappings depict

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<sup>57</sup> See Wolfe for a more thorough background on the history of posthuman theory.

<sup>58</sup> In the medieval context, tree diagrams have been used to depict not only familial relations, but ideas. For more on medieval tree diagrams, see Kay, Ladner, and Ritchey.

filiation in terms of a vertical branching out, the term ‘rhizome’ refers to a horizontally interconnected branching. For Deleuze and Guattari, various species are interconnected in a series of ‘rhizomatic’ relations which they refer to as ‘machinic assemblages’ since they are mechanisms that shape the way we perceive identity (6-7). The ‘rhizome’ has implications for the way we regard ecology and sexuality. Deleuze and Guattari write: “What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of ‘becomings’” (21). For Deleuze and Guattari, then, ‘becoming’ is an alternative form of reproduction in that it gives birth to new life by bypassing the sexual coupling between two sexes of the same species necessary for traditional, sexual reproduction. Fungus can grow on a tree, spreading its invisible roots throughout the supposedly distinct entity, for example. Rhizomatic reproduction is a process of transformation that is always in between one state and the next (25). Throughout their discussion, Deleuze and Guattari describe the interconnection of beings and matter as re- and de-territorializations (53-54). They use these terms both literally and figuratively. To return to the analogy of fungus, a mushroom becomes tied, and thus territorialized, to a decomposing body as it consumes it and spreads its roots throughout it. The fungal spores then get carried off by the wind, and the fungus is thus de- and re-territorialized when it lands on a new surface and begins to propagate itself. Borrowing from Saussurean semiotics, Deleuze and Guattari extend their notions of re- and de-territorializations into the domains of language and literature in order to question the ways in which human language depicts ecology. They describe the ‘rhizome’ as a “machinic assemblage” since it connects matter to meaning through



“semiotic chains” and “organizations of power” (7). This figurative aspect of the ‘rhizome’ describes the way human beings perceive themselves as the dominant species. Our ecological self-perceptions then help justify and perpetuate our dominance over the natural world, but this dominance is only supposed and is arbitrary. Deleuze and Guattari also use the concept of strata of earth and stone to question human notions of time. Using the metaphor of stone slowly folding over time as its chemical composition changes, Deleuze and Guattari describe the earth as “a body without organs” (40) in that it is in a state of constant flux on its way to becoming something else.

In many ways, Marie’s transformation can be seen as a process of becoming, as a rhizomatic form of reproduction, and as a series of re- and de-territorializations. In her early life, men dominate her in the same way that they dominate the natural world, and comparisons between her body and various forms of natural matter reveal the way that semiotic chains justify these men’s organizations of power. In order to subvert this patriarchal power, Marie must undo these associations between her body and the land through a series of re- and de-territorializations. Marie is constantly on a threshold and on the verge of something else until her death, when her body reunites with the earth and her soul reunites with God. In this way, a Deleuzo-guattarian reading of the *T* poem teaches us that everything is connected in ‘earth’ and in heaven, that life is an unending series of becomings, and that this process of becoming resembles a sexual union. The *T* poem offers a corrective to Deleuze and Guattari, however, in its invocation of moral and religious discourse. Ecological harmony becomes a metaphor for God’s divine plan. Deleuze and Guattari conceive of ecological interactions as alleatory in that they are random and happen by chance (53-4). In the *T* poem, however, all interactions and

relations are divinely pre-ordained as part of God's plan. Everything, good and bad, happens for a reason in the *T* poem, and in this way ecology is more a purpose than a consequence. God uses his creation to teach his creatures about humility and mercy. Marie's ecological interactions serve a purpose in the grand scheme of creation in that her becoming-earth leads to her becoming a saint and to her inspiration of others. .

In this chapter, I will outline Marie's process of becoming-earth as it is laid out in the text and as the reader follows her on her journey. In my analysis, I will pay particular attention to all manner of relationships, tracing the saint's trajectory from daughter, to courtesan, to hermit, and to saint. I will show how her shifting relationships, environments, and communities allow her to sublimate her sexuality from carnal pleasure into 'ecomystical union', and will conclude by explaining what this text has to tell us about ecology, sexuality, and the mechanics of self-transformation.

### The Imperfect Human Community

One of the primary relationships mentioned in the text, the one between creator and creature, is described as an imperfect one in need of repair. In the beginning of the text, the author explains the major lesson of this text: God's love and forgiveness can be achieved through penitence. In explaining the moral lessons that can be gleaned from hearing this *Life*, the author writes:

Car che saichent tout pecheor  
 Ki forfait sont au Creator  
 Que nus pekiés n'est si pesant  
 Ne si horrible ne si grans  
 Dont Dex ne fache vrai pardon  
 Par foi et par confession  
 A ciax qui prentent penitance. (ll. 13-19)

[For let all sinners who have sinned toward God know that no sin is so weighty, nor so horrible, nor so great that God does not truly forgive it for those who, by faith and by confession, accept penitance.]

The author here establishes the main struggle faced by the protagonist (sin) and the means necessary to eliminate it (faith, confession, and penitence). At this point, it is worth reviewing the differences between the words ‘penance’, ‘penitence’, and ‘repentance.’ Godefroy defines ‘penitence’ as “repentir du péché” [repentance of sin] and also gives “expiation du péché” [expiation of sin] and “punition” [punishment], which all emphasize the remorseful state of being of the sinner and what true remorse entails. ‘Repentance’ means “repentir” [to repent], which seems very close in meaning to ‘penitence’ but is not necessarily related to sin. ‘Penance’ can be translated as “pénitence, peine, punition” [penitence, grief, punishment] which emphasizes the means by which the sinner shows remorse for his or her sin. (Godefroy). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘to repent’ is “to feel contrition or regret” for a “sin.” The *OED* defines ‘penitence’ as “the outward expression of repentance or expiation” and ‘penance’ as “the performance of some act of self-mortification ... as an expression of sorrow for sin or wrong-doing.” Since these words originate etymologically from Anglo-Norman, it is not surprising that there is a similar meaning for the terms in both French and English.<sup>59</sup> In using the word ‘penitance’ to discuss the overall moral of the *T* poem, the author emphasizes the fact the sinner must demonstrate full contrition through acts of self-mortification to repair his or her broken relationship with God. By rhyming

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<sup>59</sup> Because of the similarity of these terms in French and English, I will try to translate them as literally as possible while keeping in mind the level of the sinner’s remorse and desire to expiate his or her sins that these terms connote.

‘pecheor’ with ‘Creator,’ the author reminds us that this text deals with the relationship between these two beings. S/he then demonstrates how sin is antagonistic toward their relationship by using the verbal expression ‘forfeit sont au.’ The use of the preposition ‘au’ reminds us that the creatures’ sinful acts are directed at God. Moreover, the sins keep the sinners from being able to reunite with God in heaven. The author emphasizes this when s/he reminds the readers about the importance of performing penitence before death (ll. 38-54). Repentance is described as a means toward repairing the broken relationship with the sinner’s creator, and to reuniting with Him in heaven. The language of the prologue already hints at the fact that this text treats the cyclical nature of life and transformation. The creator created His creatures in His image, they separated themselves from him through sin, and they are reunited through penitence and death.<sup>60</sup>

The author transitions from creation as a somewhat abstract theological concept to Marie’s literal creation, when s/he shifts from the prologue to recounting her birth and childhood. In this way, s/he contextualizes the theological lesson about repentance in the more concrete details of the saint’s Life. Marie’s relationship with her family, like that between sinner and creator, is also described as imperfect. The author vacillates between blaming her upbringing for her sin and describing her parents’ best efforts to prevent her from sinning. First, s/he affirms: “Illuec fu nee et baptisie,/ Mais malement fu enseignie./ Legiere devint en s’enfance” (ll. 59-61) [There she was born and baptized, but she was badly taught. She became frivolous in childhood]. The author avoids pointing fingers at

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<sup>60</sup> Friesen argues that Marie is a model of repentance and that her Life functions as an *ars moriendi*, or art of dying, since it teaches its readers how to mortify their flesh so that they are “living as if they had already died” (248).

anyone by using the passive voice. Who is to blame for her loose morals? Is it her parents' fault? Is it the Church's fault? A bit later, s/he describes her sinful pleasure as a disregard for her parents' wishes:

Por che qu'ele iert bele et gente,  
 Se fioit tant en sa jovente  
 Que tout fesoit le sien plaisir.  
 Ne li membroit pas de morir.  
 De deus parans ne se gardoit,  
 A tous homes s'abandonoit. (ll. 65-70)

[Because she was beautiful and pretty, she relied so much on her youth that she fulfilled all her pleasure. She did not think about death. Regardless of her two parents, she abandoned herself to all men.]

What had appeared at first as a problem of upbringing now appears as a conscious choice on Marie's part in spite of her parents' efforts to bring her up in the Church. The author continues to dramatize this scene of teenage rebellion by describing their attempts to punish her:

Ses peres, se mere vivoient,  
 Por peu que de duel ne moroient.  
 Il le voloient castoier,  
 El nes prisoit un seul denier ;  
 Ne prisoit casti de parent  
 Plus que fesist trespas de vent. (ll. 73-8)

[Her father and her mother were living but were almost dying of sadness. They wanted to teach her, but she did not even value them as much as a single coin. She valued her parents' education less than she did a passing gust of wind.]

Here, the author paints her as an ungrateful child. S/he goes on to quote Marie's mother's lecture to her lusty daughter:

Fille, chou li disoit li mere,  
 Car croi le casti de ten pere.  
 Se longuement tiens cest mestier,  
 Molt en arons grant reprouvier.

Por Dieu te prie, fille Marie,  
 Guerpis mais ceste legerie.  
 Quant cest mestier aras guerpi,  
 Nous te donrrons rice mari ;  
 N'est drois que tu soies perdue  
 Por souffraite de nostre aiue.  
 Fille, tu iés de grant parage,  
 Molt par est de ti grant damage  
 Que tu ainssi soies perie  
 Pour te malvaise legerie.  
 Tes peres en est si iriés,  
 Ja mais nul jour ne sera liés  
 Et maudist tote s'aventure  
 Quant faite a tel engenreüre. (ll. 79-96).

[Daughter, her mother was saying this to her, now give credit to your father's warning. If you keep this profession for a long time, we will have a great admonishment of it. For God I beg you, daughter Marie, leave behind from now on this imprudence. When you abandon this profession, we will give you a rich husband. It is not right that you should be lost because of a lack of help from us. Daughter, you are of high lineage. It is so upsetting that you should perish for your bad folly.<sup>61</sup> Your father is so angered over it. He will never any day be happy. He cursed his fortune when he made such progeny.]

Marie's parents' displeasure with her actions boils down to one problem: her refusal of the sexual norms of her society. In the words of Emma Campbell: "The rejection of human kinship in hagiography implies [...] a refusal of the social and sexual limitations of human relationships" (20). I would add, however, that the practice of marriage also imposes a system of human dominance over the natural world. Marie's parents seem bothered by their daughter's promiscuity, but mostly because it prevents them from marrying her off to a well-to-do spouse. Marie's parents view land and their daughter as objects to be possessed to secure their wealth. This is evident in the author's mentions of

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<sup>61</sup> This verse literally reads: "There is much damage for you that you should perish for your bad folly." I have altered it to sound better in modern English.

Marie's high social status ("grant parage") and the rich husband to whom they want to marry her. By describing her as their progeny ("engendreüre"), they further indicate that they consider her their possession. For Marie's parents, land is merely an object of wealth to be possessed for personal financial and political gains, and Marie's sexuality is subject to this system; she does not have the right to choose her sexual partners.

By refusing to marry, Marie subverts her society's system of gender and ecological norms. Rather than letting her father use her as a pawn in his political games for wealth and status, she decides to choose her own lovers to suit her fancy.<sup>62</sup> Marie's solution to her relationship problems with her parents is to run away from home so that she can pursue her own pleasure: "Por parfaire se volenté/ S'en fuï en autre regné,/ Tout sen parenté deguerpi" (ll. 101-3) [In order to achieve her desire, she fled to another kingdom. She abandoned her whole family]. Marie tries to re-territorialize herself by moving to a new country. In this way, she hopes to bypass her father's law of the land. By recounting the saint's childhood, the author shows us the reasons for which human and familial relationships can be strained and thus imperfect. As long as Marie has to fulfill others' desires, she is unable to fulfill her own.

As a selfish pleasure-seeking courtesan in Alexandria, Marie continues to have problems in her human relations. At first, it appears that she is able to have it all in the

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<sup>62</sup> See Karras and Pinto-Mathieu for a discussion of the legend of Mary of Egypt in the tradition of hagiographical texts dealing with promiscuous women. Karras's article is particularly relevant here because she traces the history of prostitution as presented in four hagiographical texts. According to Karras, the key to defining medieval prostitution was "indiscriminate sexuality" (5). This was a problem for some because it subverted the political system that reinforced gender norms. Medieval prostitutes were "common to all, the property of all men in a sense because they were the property of none" (10).

brothel: pleasure (l. 119), luxury (l. 123), and money (l. 118). However, it does not take long for problems to arise. The men begin to fight over her:

Li jovencel tout li plusor  
 Erent si espris de s'amor  
 Que devant sen huis a l'entree  
 En faisoient mainte mellee.  
 Por chou qu'il erent si ami  
 Se faisoient illuec hardi,  
 Des gisarmes et des espees  
 S'entredonoient grans colees.  
 Del sanc qui d'iax ert espendus  
 Encouroit aval le palus.  
 Le caitive qui che veoit  
 Nule paor ne l'en prenoit.  
 Se uns moroit de ses amis  
 Ele en ravoit quarante vis ;  
 Quant ele en avoit deux ocis  
 Ja plus tart n'en faisoit un ris.  
 Ja cil qui iert por li navrés  
 Par li ne fust seul regardés. (ll. 129-46)

[All of the many young men were so enflamed with her love that in front of her door at the entrance {of the brothel} they had many quarrels. They were so enamored that they were emboldened there. With polearms and swords, they gave each other many great wounds. The blood which poured out from them flowed into a muddy swamp. The poor unfortunate guy who saw this had no fear of it. For each of her friends that died, she sees again forty live men. When she had killed two of them, she was not even laughing later. Those who were wounded for her, were not even looked at by her.]

In this vivid scene of violence, the author makes use of hyperbole to emphasize the various problems that arise from the prostitute's sexual relations. She makes love to so many men that they become jealous and bloodshed ensues. What is even more striking than the river of blood is Marie's apparent lack of concern. She is so distracted by the herds of men that she cannot even be bothered to worry about the ones who are injured or dead. As we have just seen, the status quo in Marie's society is for the woman to be



passed from her father to her husband. Typically, women are objects to be possessed and manipulated by men in order to maintain their ownership of land and wealth. By making love to everyone for both money and pleasure, Marie refuses to be owned by any one man. Though she tries to subvert this system by re-territorializing herself as a courtesan in the city of Alexandria, she is unable to change the men and their perceptions of her. They still each want to be her unique possessor, and they still try to objectify her.

The fact that the men see Marie as an object to be possessed is evidenced by the description of her physical beauty.<sup>63</sup> The author affirms:

Reondes avoit les oreilles,  
 Mais blanches erent a merveilles,  
 Les iex cler et sosrians,  
 Les sorchix noirs et avenans,  
 Bouche petite par mesure  
 Et pie le regardeüre,  
 Le face tenre et coloree,  
 Com le rose qui sempre est nee.  
 Ja el nés ne el menton  
 N'aperceüssiés mesfaichon.  
 En som le col blanc com ermine  
 Li undoit le bloie crine.  
 Les mameles de cele dame  
 N'estoit pas menres d'une pome.  
 Desous le goule, en le poitrine  
 Ert blanche conme flor d'espine.  
 Blans bras avoit et blances mains,  
 Les dois reons, grailles et plains.  
 Gent cors avoit et bien mollé, (ll. 165-83)

[She had round ears that were marvelously white, bright and smiling eyes, dark and pleasing eyelashes, a mouth that was small in measure, and a pious gaze,<sup>64</sup> a tender and colored face like an eternally newborn rosebud. On her nose and on her chin, there did not appear to be a single fault.

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<sup>63</sup> Robertson has written extensively about this passage which he describes as Marie's *courtly descriptio* since it parallels descriptions of female beauty found in medieval romance ("Poem and Spirit" 314).

<sup>64</sup> Robertson translates this as "a gentle gaze" ("Twelfth Century Literary Experience" 73), but Godefroy translates "pie" as "pious" when it is used adjectively.

Above her neck, which was white like an ermine, waved her blond tresses. The breasts of this lady were no smaller than an apple. Below her face, her chest was white like a hawthorn flower. She had white arms and white hands, round, thin, and smooth fingers. She had a nice and well-molded body.]

In this passage, Marie clearly becomes an object through a telescoped male gaze that looks her up and down, fixating on various body parts. First, she is objectified by the men around her. Then, the author records this in his/her writing. Finally, the reader becomes implicated in the objectification of Marie's sensual body as s/he experiences the "guilty pleasure" of admiring her sensual body and following her in her sexual pursuits (Robertson, "Poem and Spirit" 316). The author also objectifies Marie through his/her use of simile. This is evident in the repetition of 'com' followed by various animal (ermine) and vegetal symbols (rose, hawthorn flower, apple). Marie's body is fetishized through these comparisons. The men wish to possess her like a domestic animal.<sup>65</sup> They want to pet her soft skin like a fur. They want to consume her sinfully like the apple eaten by Adam and Eve. They want to pluck her like a flower.<sup>66</sup> It is true that the author does not state this desire explicitly, but s/he implies it through these objectifications and similes. Marie even adorns herself with ermine fur (l. 200) in order to better please her lovers ("por mix plaisir a ses amans" l. 196). Here, the author's use of simile highlights another way to see how Marie is territorialized and connected to the natural world. These symbols represent the prostitute's precarious position in her society; even as she pursues

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<sup>65</sup> See Martineau's article about the enigmatic "erminette" passage of Machaut's *Voir Dit*. She discusses the history of ermine, and how they were kept as pets since Antiquity (351-2).

<sup>66</sup> The metaphor of the lady as rose of course culminates in the *Roman de la Rose*. See Eberly for a discussion of the hawthorn flower as a symbol of the *arbor cupiditatis* (and hence opposite of the *arbor caritatis*) in late-medieval love allegory.

her own desire, she is still the object of others. These similes tie the prostitute's body to the natural world in semiotic chains that justify man's dominance over her. Thus, Marie has failed in her attempt to improve her relations with other humans by moving to a new city and following her own desire.

As a prostitute, Marie does not only experience problems in her relationships with men, but with her community as a whole. Seeing the happy pilgrims heading off to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross, Marie realizes the joy that is possible in community, but from afar, highlighting her exclusion:

Cil qui estoient plus legier  
 S'en saloient hors el gravier ;  
 Main a main s'aloient joant  
 Par le rivaige li enfant.  
 Mais quant les aperchut Marie,  
 Ne puet muer qu'ele ne rie. (ll. 229-33)

[Those who were more light-hearted left the sandy shore. Hand in hand, the children left playing by the shore. But when Marie saw them, she could not keep herself from smiling.]

In this scene, Marie is excluded from communal joy. Though it is unclear whether or not she wishes she were with the joyful pilgrims, it is apparent that she notices their joy and her separation from the group. Perhaps this scene, which contrasts with the previous scene of men fighting over Marie, makes Marie realize her desire for the happiness that she can only achieve through union with God and his creation. In order to alleviate the discord in her life, Marie tries to de- and re-territorialize yet again by joining the pilgrims. Since she has no money, she asks that they allow her to board the ship as an act of charity:

Seignor, dist ele, pelerin  
 Dex vos amaint a bone fin

Et vos doinst tele volenté  
 Que me fessissiés carité.  
 Je sui chi une povre feme,  
 Et si sui nee d'autre regne,  
 Je n'i ai ami ne parent,  
 Se m'i esta molt malement ;  
 O moi je n'ai argent ne or,  
 Tot poés veïr mon tresor.  
 Je n'i ai autre manandie,  
 Mais molt pris vostre compaignie.  
 Se jou laiens o vos estoie,  
 Molt volentiers vos serviroie,  
 Et molt volroie o vos aller  
 Se vos me voliés porter. (ll. 267-82)

[Lords, pilgrims, she says, may God lead you all to a good end and give you such a will that you perform a charitable act for me. Here I am a poor woman and was born in another country. I do not have any friends or relatives here. I am in very bad shape here; I have neither silver nor gold with me. You can see all my treasure {before you}. I have no other possessions, but highly value your company. If I was there with you, I would gladly serve you, and I would very much like to go with you if you wanted to bring me.]

Marie begs the pilgrims to allow her to board the ship for free as an act of charity since her body is her only treasure. Despite the generosity of the pilgrims, Marie still remains promiscuous, offering her body-treasure to the pilgrims all night. In this way, the text shows how even Christian pilgrims cannot help her to change her ways, thus preparing the reader for her ultimate salvation and conversion through God's miraculous intervention. Marie seems to finally articulate in her own words her desire to be part of a community ("compaignie"), but the only thing she has to share is her body, and though her desire is well-placed, her actions are still misguided. In this way, the human community, even the Christian community, is still flawed.

In recounting her sexual exploits on board the ship, the author points out several more problems that result from her worldly relationships. S/he describes it as sinful (ll.

304, 306, 312), boundless, and indiscriminate pleasure: “A tous sengles aloit gesir/ Pour chou que miex peüst plaisir,” (ll. 299-300) [She slept with everyone in order to better please]. The author also reminds the readers that the men she sleeps with are either young (“jovenciax” l. 302) or married (“espous” l. 302). By phrasing her sexual acts thus, the author implies that Marie is corrupting youth and defiling the sacred bond of marriage. S/he also uses the word ‘liés’ to invoke its dual meanings, creating a double entendre that further suggests the role that sexuality plays in human society: “Li cors de li estoit tant liés,/ De riens ne cremoit ses pekiés.” (ll. 311-2) [Her body was so happy/intertwined. She did not at all fear her sins.] Godefroy gives two general meanings for this word. Primarily, the word ‘lie’ is an adjective that means joyous. Sometimes, however, when it is used as the past participle of the verb ‘lier’, it can mean “attaché, garrotté” [attached, tied up]. The examples given by Godefroy range from the literal meaning of being tied together chemically or physically with objects like laces or cement to the figurative sense of human relations like friendship and marriage. The word ‘lié’ and its variants recur throughout the text (ll. 311, 587, 559, 1030, and 1446), and mostly translate as happy or joyous. In this singular instance, I believe that both readings are possible. Marie uses sex to create bonds and to give herself a place in human society. She connects herself to the men by intertwining with their bodies in the sexual act, which is also a source of pleasure and happiness for her. By using ‘lier’ here, the author parallels Marie’s mother’s language in her previous lecture where she expressed her father’s unhappiness when she refuses to marry a rich husband. Now, the marital bond is stripped of its political, religious, and romantic significance and the act of union is boiled

down to its pure bodily form; it becomes a tie that unites bodies together in sin. Painting the portrait of a true prostitute, the author describes Marie's actions on board the ship:

Toute nuit iert en chemise;  
 [...]
   
Nient seulement en un lit,  
 Por parfaire a tos ses delis  
 Aloit le nuit par tous les lis.  
 [...]
   
Merveille iert d'une feme seule  
 Ki pooit souffrir si grant foule. (ll. 316-24)

[The whole night she wore only her undershirt. She did not stay only in one bed. In order to accomplish all of her delights, she went into all the beds at night. It was a wonder that one woman alone could suffer such a large crowd.]

This passage parallels the brothel scene in its use of hyperbole. Marie's ability to sleep with so many men in such a short period of time is described as a wonder ("merveille"). The rhyming of 'lit' and 'delis' establishes the bed as a site of Marie's pleasure, but the pleasure is bittersweet. Now, the men are not the only victims of prostitution. Marie experiences sadness and isolation when she arrives in Jerusalem and first encounters her new society because she is a stranger in a strange land far from all that is familiar to her:

Quant Marie fu arrivee,  
 Dolante fu et esgaree,  
 Souspire et pleure a le rive,  
 Ne seit que faire le caitive.  
 El n'i connoist home ne feme,  
 Molt li sambla estrange regne.  
 A le parfin, se porpensa  
 Que en le cité s'en ira  
 Et fera illuec son mestier,  
 N'a coraige de li cangier. (ll. 331-40)

[When Marie arrived, she was sad and lost. She sighs and cries on the banks; the unfortunate one does not know what to do. She did not know any men or women there. It really seemed like a strange kingdom to her. In the end, she thought to herself that she would go into the city and that

there she would do her profession. She does not have the intention to change it.]

Marie's sadness is the result of her separation from all that is familiar to her and her isolation within this new society, so she returns to the one thing that is familiar to her: prostitution. She continually tries to re-territorialize herself, moving her body to new places, but she cannot change the way that she and her fellow human beings perceive her carnal form and the occupation for which she uses it. Furthermore, she has not yet experienced remorse and the will to fully repent and change. Her penance comes soon, but it takes some miraculous intervention.

Marie's troubled worldly relations culminate in a highly symbolic experience of religious conversion. When Marie arrives at the church with the "procession/ Des pelerins d'outre le mer" (ll. 358-9) [procession of pilgrims from overseas], she tries to join the procession. At this point, the narrator suggests that her sinful profession should preclude her from taking part in the community of Christians:

Mais quant les aperchut Marie  
 Mist soi en cele compeignie.  
 Mist soi en le procession  
 Nient par bone entention.  
 Le pelerin qui le veoient  
 Se malvaistié pas ne savoient,  
 Car se il seüssent se vie,  
 Ja o iaus n'eüst compaignie. (ll. 363-70)

[But when Marie saw {the pilgrims}, she placed herself in their company. She placed herself in the procession, but it was not out of good intentions. The pilgrims who saw her, did not know about her bad deeds. For if they had known about her life, they would not have let her in their company.]

Ironically, the sexual act that allows her to link her body with other humans is the same act that should prevent her from joining the body of Christians in the church.

The text highlights her exclusion soon after. Though the other pilgrims are ignorant of her sins, a group of knights is not. Upon seeing her, they bar her entry from the church:

Dedens le temple en sont entré,  
 Dedens entra le compaignie,  
 Mais ainc n'i pot entrer Marie.  
 Quant el voloit avant aler,  
 Arier l'estouvoit reculer.  
 Dedens le presse se metoit,  
 Mais nule rien ne li valoit.  
 Chou li ert vis son escient  
 Que ele veoit une gent,  
 Bien li sambloient chevalier,  
 Mais molt avoient le vis fier.  
 Cascuns tendi vers li s'espee  
 Et le manechoit de l'entree.  
 Quant ele aloit un peu avant,  
 Des espees cremoit le brant. (ll. 372- 86)

[{The pilgrims} entered into the temple. The group entered, but Marie could not enter there. When she wanted to proceed, she needed to retreat back. The crowd was pushing themselves inside, but it was worth nothing to her. This was when with her eyes, she saw what she believed to be a group of people that looked to her like knights with cruel faces. Each one held out his sword toward her and blocked her entry. When she inched forward, she feared the blades of the swords.]

In using these verbs of sight and perception, the author paints this exclusionary experience as a vision of sorts. It is not that these people are necessarily cruel and pushing her out of the church, but that she is perceiving the experience thusly. Here, the author dramatizes Marie's feelings of exclusion. Her own guilt and divine mediation from God prevent her from feeling welcome in the church among the pilgrims. This exclusionary experience eventually allows for the intervention of a miraculous talking statue of the Virgin Mary that gives Marie the will to change.



When she is barred entry into the church, Marie goes to a corner where she cries to herself about God's anger (l. 402), complains about losing her creator (l. 404), and bemoans not being able to enter into the church (l. 407). Her position in the corner ("en un angle" l. 388) physically dramatizes her exclusion from the community of her church as well as her damaged relationship with God. It is at this point of extreme despair that Marie is ready to receive the message from God ventriloquized through the statue of the Virgin. Perhaps fearful of a disappointed ("marri" l. 397) and angry ("iriés" l. 402) God, Marie prays to the Virgin instead. In this prayer, she proclaims yet again her desire to flee from her society (l. 435) and her current sinful profession (l. 441). She also begins to suggest how she will be able to change herself: by exchanging her pleasure for God's. In language that parallels a previous passage, she affirms, "O le ton Fil meth me creance./ Toi meth en plege et en fiance/ Ke tous tans mais lui servirai" (ll. 437-9) [In your Son I place my belief. I hold you as guarantor and place in you my faith that I will serve Him for all time]. The use of the verb 'servir' here recalls that used by the prostitute when she was offering her body in exchange for passage to Jerusalem (l. 280). She is, in a sense, replacing her lovers with God. She also continues to suggest the transformation of previous symbols of carnality when she mentions the sinful apple eaten by Adam in a prayer to the Virgin: "Conme il [li Anemis l. 485] fist le premerain home/ Que li dechut par une pome" (ll. 489-90) [Just as {the Enemy} had tricked the first man, whom he deceived by an apple].<sup>67</sup> This passage recalls the description of Marie's breasts, which

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<sup>67</sup> This line needs some dissecting since it uses a vague third-person pronoun and the generic verb 'faire.' The "il" here refers to the mention of "li Anemis" from line 485. The text uses the verb 'faire' (fist) here vaguely to imply the Devil's actions in the previous line: "Issi le cuida enganer" (l. 488) [Here he thought

are no smaller than an apple (ll. 177-8).<sup>68</sup> By bringing up the apple, here, Marie demonstrates the realization that her body has been a conduit of sin which the Devil uses to manipulate men. It also reminds readers that this text is in an intertextual dialogue with *Genesis*. In the remainder of the text, readers follow Marie as she transforms from a prostitute into a hermit and then a saint by performing an extreme form of penitence that leads to her achieving ‘ecomystical union’ with God.

### Hermitage as an Alternative Community

Throughout her life, Marie has numerous problems in her relationships with her fellow humans. She continually flees to new places in an effort to escape the shackles of society, to take control of her own destiny, and to pursue her own pleasure. In this way, she flees to change herself and her role in her society. She is unable to change herself, however, while living within human society. In her hermitage, yet another attempt at re-territorialization, she does manage to change herself by changing her relationship to her environment. She becomes earth through a series of sublimations of sexual symbols from her prior life. As we will see, the transformation is not abrupt, but gradual, and her carnality persists for the remainder of her life. Her hermitage is presented as a subtle

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about tricking]. To clarify, I have inserted the subject and translated ‘fist’ to reflect the implicit reference to the prior line.

<sup>68</sup> Duncan Robertson has written extensively on Marie’s transformation and the various symbols used to describe her body. He notes that some symbols, like the hawthorn flower, are used in the descriptions of both her courtly beauty and her penitential transformation, thus connecting the portraits of “Mary the sinner and Mary the penitent” (“Poem and Spirit” 323). Later, he notes that both portraits use the same black and white color scheme and that the revelation of her penitential body in the wind evokes the same erotic vision as her prior self (“Twelfth-Century Literary Experience” 74). He argues that reusing the same symbols in both descriptions and the erotic tone in both descriptions “compel us to see Mary before and Mary after conversion as mirror images. Her eroticism subsists, her beauty subsists, intact, translated into spiritual terms” (75). Robertson does not discuss the mention of the apple beyond citing the mention of it in the *courtly description* and does not discuss its exegetical connotations.

shift and in-between state where she ceases to be human, begins to attain the divine, and reconciles the problems she has in her relationships with fellow humans and her creator. Her transformation allows her to repent fully, to learn about humility and mercy, and ultimately to reunite with God in the community of heaven.

The metaphor of breaking bread symbolizes the hermit's shifting notions of community in the text. When Marie first sets off on her way into the desert, we can see all three levels of community (human, natural, spiritual) at play. First, Marie is able to purchase the bread that will be her primary sustenance during her hermitage thanks to a pilgrim's alms:

Devant li vint un pelerin,  
Trois maailles li presenta,  
Trois petis pains en acata.  
Auques fu che de se substance  
Tant com el fu en penitance. (ll. 564-8)

[A pilgrim came before her. He presented her with three coins with which she bought three small loaves of bread. This was her sustenance for as long as she was in penitence.]

It is interesting to note the shift in the role of pilgrims here. As we saw before, she had to sleep with many pilgrims to pay her passage to the Holy Land. Now, a pilgrim is the patron responsible for funding her hermitage. After purchasing the bread, Marie has her own communion/baptism in nature:

Bien prés del mostier Saint Jehan,  
Sor le rive del flun Jordan,  
Se herbega sans nul ati,  
Un de ses pains menga demi,  
But de l'iaue saintefie.  
Quant en ot but, molt par fu lie,  
Sen chief leva de le pure onde,  
De tous ses pechiés devint monde. (ll. 571-8)

[Well near the monastery of St. John, on the bank of the river Jordan, she stayed with no provisions. She ate half of one of her loaves and drank some holy water. When she drank it, she was very joyous. She raised her head above the pure water. She became clean of all of her sins.]

The lack of other human beings in this scene is worth noting since it recalls the previous scene when Marie's sins prevented her from being able to join the other pilgrims in the church. Here, the text suggests Marie's proximity to the other humans in the monastery. The use of the verb 'herberger' (to lodge) is ironic. Normally, pilgrims would stay in the company of other human beings willing to host them. Marie, however, having experienced rejection, decides to sleep alone alongside the river. She then eats bread and drinks holy water by herself. Then, the passage seems to slip from her drinking water to her sin-cleansing baptism in it. The text is vague here. The author never says that she actually gets in the water, but s/he does say that it cleanses her sins. This baptism then prepares her for her last interaction with fellow human beings for the next several decades. The following morning, she goes to mass at the monastery, where she receives holy communion, presumably in the company of other humans: "Par matin leva, au moustier/ S'en va oïr le Dieu mestier;/ La rechut *corpus Domini*," (ll. 585-7) [In the morning she awoke, and she went to the monastery to hear God's office. There, she received the body of Christ]. These scenes of bread-breaking serve as a *mise en abîme* of Marie's process of transformation. She begins in the company of her human society, then lives apart from humans in nature before uniting her body with Christ's. Communion functions as a metaphor for community in the text. Marie's eating practices symbolize her status within her various communities—human, natural, and spiritual.

Let us now examine how Marie transforms herself by establishing an alternative community in nature. As we have just seen, bread is a symbol that links the human and divine. Bread, in that it requires agriculture and milling, is a food product that can be made by humans and not animals. Furthermore, it is an example of the human linked with the divine because of Jesus who invited his disciples to partake in his bread-body and wine-blood at the Last Supper. Although Marie brings bread with her in her hermitage, the bread does not serve as her only food. It even undergoes a transformation that parallels her own, and thus symbolizes her hardened human form:

Deus pains avoit ne gaires grans,  
 De chiaus vesqui par plusors ans ;  
 El premier an devinrent dur,  
 Com se fussent pierres de mur.  
 Cascun jor en usoit Marie,  
 Mais che iert petite partie,  
 Quant ele ot tot son pain usé  
 Puis esrachoit l'erbe del pré,  
 Com autre beste le mengoit. (ll. 667-75)

[She had two loaves of bread which were not large. She lived on these for several years. The first year, they became hard, as if they were stones from a wall. Each day, Marie made use of them, but only a small part. When she had used up all of her bread, then she plucked grass from the meadow and ate it like other beasts.]

The miraculous nature of this everlasting bread, as well as its hardness<sup>69</sup> symbolizes these same aspects of Marie's hermitage. The bread's material nature changes just as Marie's does. She also begins to resemble a beast, when she eats grass. The author's use of the word 'other' here, demonstrates the fact that Marie has realized her animality and become

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<sup>69</sup> Dawson argues that the repetition of the word 'dur' in Rutebeuf's *Lives of Mary of Egypt and Elizabeth of Hungary* emphasize the inimitability and undesirability of these saints' transformations. She discusses many of the same passages that I do, but does not discuss the fact that the older *T* poem uses the same language as Rutebeuf.

a beast. The author continues to emphasize Marie's beastliness with reference to her eating habits. She drinks water from the stream with her hand (l. 677) and forages for herbs and roots in the forest (ll. 681-2). In this way, Marie begins her transformation by changing her eating habits. By ingesting others and realizing her animality, Marie becomes the rhizomatic assemblage, and hence composite of matter, theorized by Deleuze and Guattari throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* (3-4). The author of the *T poem* thus breaks down Marie's body for the reader, showing the many things of which it is composed.

Marie's transformation is also made possible by the sublimation of her sexuality. As we have seen, Marie pursued the profession of prostitution because it allowed her to bypass her father's control of her body and her sexuality. As a prostitute, Marie experiences the dissolution of her interpersonal relationships as well as that of her personal relationship with God. Ultimately, in her hermitage, she sublimates her sexuality in a way that is pleasing to God. This helps her to overcome the difficulty of changing herself and to continue to pursue pleasures of the flesh in a different sort of way. This slippage from her carnal courtesan body to her penitent mystic body is made clear in the text through sublimated symbols. Just as bread symbolized Marie's relationship to her environment and her community, so does her bed. As a courtesan aboard the ship to Jerusalem, Marie slept in countless beds in order to pursue her "delis" (ll. 318-20) [delight]. The author often remarks about her various beds in her hermitage as well. We have already seen that when she first sets out on her journey as a hermit, she sleeps on the bank of the Jordan next to a monastery (ll. 571-3). Shortly after this, the author describes just how uncomfortable this bed was:

De terre dure fist sen lit,  
 Illueques jut toute le nuit.  
 Dormi, mais che fu molt petit,  
 Car li durs lis si li toli. (ll. 581-4)

[She made her bed out of hard earth. There she lay all night. She slept, but very little, because the hard bed deprived her of sleep.]

This is the first ascetic act performed by Marie during her hermitage, and it is significant since it intertwines her sexual and penitent selves. Juxtaposed with her previous scenes in the brothel and aboard the ship, this scene highlights the various differences. Now, Marie lies atop the hard earth instead of with her lovers. Rather than hopping from bed to bed, she stays in one place that night. The author highlights her stasis through his/her emphatic use of “illueques” [there]. Whereas on the ship Marie would not allow her lovers to sleep (“Toute nuit ceurent as estoiles./ Mais del dormir n’i ot nient,/ Car Marie si lor deffent.” ll. 294-6), now the earth hinders Marie’s sleep. Finally, while the prostitute’s bed was a site of pleasure, the penitent’s bed becomes one of discomfort.<sup>70</sup>

Later, the text mentions yet again Marie’s hard bed:

Tant ala par jor et par nuit  
 A faim, a soif et a dur lit  
 Que tant parfont fu el bocaige.  
 Toute devint illuec salvaige (ll. 613-6)

[She lived in such a way—day and night hungry, thirsty, and with a hard bed. The forest was so deep that she became completely savage there.]

Here, the author attributes Marie’s various lifestyle changes as the cause of her transformation. By changing her environment, her sleeping habits, and her diet, Marie begins to distinguish herself from her fellow human beings.

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<sup>70</sup> Duncan Robertson writes, “Mary’s penitence is a realization of her sin. The pleasures of bed and table give place, literally, to the privations of hunger, thirst and exposure” (“Poem and Spirit” 320).

The description of the penitent's transformed body emphasizes the shift in her relationship to her environment in that many of the symbols used in her *courtly descriptio* are re-purposed and seen in a new light.<sup>71</sup> First, Marie's clothes disintegrate:

Si souler furent tout usé  
 Et tout si drapel deschiré.  
 Li cors de li remaint tout nu,  
 N'avoit drapel ne fust rompu. (ll. 621-4)

[Her shoes were all worn out and all her clothes were torn. Her body remained completely naked; she did not have any clothes that were not ripped.]

The destruction of Marie's clothes symbolizes her becoming-animal. Human beings are the only species that create and wear clothing and textiles. Marie loses a distinguishing feature of her humanity when her clothes dissolve. It is also important to note that as a courtesan, Marie wore exquisite clothes, often made from animal furs. Now, she is closer to her natural environment in that she ceases to exploit natural resources in order to amplify her beauty and in that there is less of a material barrier between her and the earth.

This lack of protection from the elements accelerates her physical transformation:

Li chars de li mua coulor  
 Qui ains ert blanche comme flor  
 Que par yver, que par esté  
 Tout li noircirent li costé. (ll. 625-8)

[Her flesh changed color. She who before was white like a flower, by winter and by summer, her sides completely blackened.]

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<sup>71</sup> Robertson has written several articles on this passage. Citing the chiasmic verses and discussing the author's usage of the colors black and white, he has described this transformation as a turning "inside out" ("Poem and Spirit" 320), as a "photographic-negative image of her former self" ("Twelfth-Century Literary Experience" 73), and has even portrayed her shift from beautiful courtesan to ugly penitent on a Cartesian plane ("Twelfth-Century Literary Experience" 321). Robertson's analyses are careful and well-defended, but I would argue that the portrayal of penitence in this text defies such binaries since it questions binaries like human/animal, plant/animal, human/divine, earthly/spiritual, etc. I argue that this text dramatizes the process of hermitage as a slow and subtle shift, a process of becoming, and a series of sublimations rather than a complete reversal.



With no protection from the seasonal elements, Marie's skin becomes weathered.

The author then elaborates upon this transformation in a forty-four line description of her various body parts from head to toe (ll. 621-64). Whereas the *courtly descriptio* emphasized her rosy, soft, and round flesh, the description of her eremitic body emphasizes her blackness, the sagginess of her flesh, and the effects of the wilderness on her body. In comparing the two passages, the similarities and differences highlight her shifting relationship to her environment. In both passages, her hair is compared to an ermine (ll. 175-6 and 629-30), but for different reasons.<sup>72</sup> In the courtly description, the author emphasizes the way her blonde hair waves above her neck. In the eremitic description, s/he emphasizes its whiteness. Her face, which was compared before to a newborn rose, is now dark and dried up. Her mouth is black and shrunken: “Le bouce li fu atenvie/ Et environ toute noirie” (ll. 631-2). Her chin appears to be tinted with carbon: “Et avoit tant noir le menton,/ Comme s’il fust taint de carbon” (ll. 633-4). Her eyes are beady (“Atenevié” l. 635) and have lost their prior pride: “N’i avoit ore point d’orguel” (l. 636). Her chest, which before was white like a hawthorn flower (“flor d’espine” l. 180) is now compared to thorny tree bark (“A escorce samblant d’espine” l. 642).<sup>73</sup> Her breasts, which used to be larger than apples (l. 178) are now like empty gloves: “N’avoit plus char en ses traians/ Ne mais com il a en uns gans” (ll. 643-4) [She

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<sup>72</sup> Duncan Robertson talks about these aspects of her transformation in “Poem and Spirit” and “Twelfth-Century Literary Experience.” He does not, however, delve deeply into the symbolism of the ecological metaphors used to describe her appearance. In what follows, I will analyze the various symbols to determine the intertextual references and to suggest what they connote and imply about her shifting relationship to the environment.

<sup>73</sup> Marie's resemblance to a tree parallels the story of Daphne found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Daphne, fleeing Apollo's advances, begs her father to transform her into a tree. In transforming her tender breasts, he wraps them in bark (41)

no longer had flesh in her breasts, no more than there is inside a glove]. Here, the author uses the image of an empty glove to paint the picture of her saggy skin, devoid of fat and tissue. S/he takes this one step further in the description of Marie's stomach, which is sunken in because she eats so little: "Li ventres li estoit caoit,/ Petit de despense i metoit." (ll. 649-50). The author thus signals the austere conditions of Marie's eremitic existence as the cause of her blackened and desiccated body.

S/he builds upon this concept in his/her description of her feet:<sup>74</sup>

Li pié li erent decrevé,  
 En plusors lius erent navré.  
 Car el ne se gardoit d'espine,  
 Quant ele aloit par le gastine,  
 Che li ert vis sien esciant  
 Que ele n'i failloit nient  
 C'uns de ses pekiés li caoit  
 Quant une espine le pongnoit. (ll. 651-8)

[Her feet were cracked and in several places were hurt because she did not protect herself from thorns when she went through the forest in such a way that it seemed to her and to her knowledge that she was lacking nothing. Each time a thorn punctured her foot, one of her sins fell out.]

Now, the hermit's penitence appears like a sort of ecological *imitatio Christi*. Walking on thorns allows her to expiate sins in that it teaches her humility and enables her to experience compassion for Christ's suffering. She is no longer the lustful Eve tempting Adam with her apples. She is no longer the rosy flower waiting to be plucked by her lover. Now she is the beastly hermit pricking herself with thorns for her love of God. Furthermore, she demonstrates her true repentance. She desires this compunction so

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<sup>74</sup> Robertson rightly argues that the description of Marie's penitential body shifts the focus from her face to her nude body and feet ("The Anglo-Norman Verse Life of St. Mary the Egyptian" 39).

much that she believes she has everything she needs in spite of the extreme asceticism of her hermitage.

The author emphasizes her beastly nature when s/he describes her actions, as well. She bites her long talons with her teeth (“Ongles avoit longes et grans/ El les retailloit a ses dens” ll. 647-8). In her penitence, Marie’s flesh dissolves, and the barriers between her and her environment dissolve. Her clothes deteriorate. She is punctured by thorns. Her skin becomes coated with organic matter like carbon (l. 634) and moss (“N’iert merveille se iert moussue” l. 664). The shifting animal and vegetable metaphors signal Marie’s transformation. She is ceasing to resemble humans and is becoming earth. Her sexual body is de-territorialized when it is untied from the courtly natural metaphors and it is re-territorialized in through its new chains of semiotic connections. The dissolution of her courtly, sexual, and human body is the first step of Marie’s ‘ecomystical union’. Her body becomes the site of a new sort of community in that it ceases to affirm its human superiority and invites itself to be permeated by God’s various creations through this eremitic transformation which teaches her humility.<sup>75</sup>

Marie’s body may be remarkably transformed, but this transformation is neither quick nor easy. As we have already seen, Marie’s transformation is an uphill battle, since it is always easiest to maintain the status quo. In her hermitage, the struggle of identity transformation manifests itself yet again in the devil’s temptation of Marie with the memories of her past life of luxury:

Li diables le an premier,

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<sup>75</sup> One commentator of the *Song of Songs* by the name of Robert de Tombelaine reads the blackness described in verse 1:4 as the mark of humility in the soul (Tilliette 256). For Bernard of Clairvaux’s discussion of this verse, see sermons 3.2, 24.2, 25.1, 26.1, 27.1-2, and 28.1.

Le soloit sovent essaier,  
 Tout che li faisoit remembrer  
 Qu'ele soloit tos jors amer :  
 Les bons mengiers et les biaux lieux  
 Ou el soloit faire ses geus. (ll. 685-90)

[In the first year, the Devil often used to tempt her. He made her remember that she always used to love good food and the nice places where she used to have fun.]

This scene of temptation, shows us how Marie's sexuality was connected to her eating and living habits. Her *luxuria*<sup>76</sup> is a sin of many facets; her lust is tied up in her luxurious lifestyle. The author highlights this early in the text: "Car boire et mengier et luxure/ Cheert toute le siue cure" (ll. 123-4) [Because drinking, eating, and lust were her concerns]. Marie sells her body so that she can travel to exotic cities and eat delicious food. In order to maintain this lifestyle, she must buy lavish garments (ll. 197-202). In this way, her sins pervade her entire existence and shape her lifestyle. Furthermore, her way of life becomes attached to the places in which she lives. She can only afford to live apart from her family and outside of feudal systems of land ownership and marriage as a prostitute. She funds her luxurious lifestyle in Alexandria by working as a prostitute in a brothel. She pays for her cruise to Jerusalem by selling her body to the men on board the ship. This interconnection of place and lifestyle habits illustrates the implications of Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts of re- and de-territorialization for identity politics. In order to redefine her identity, Marie needs to move to undo her ties to the world and establish new ones. The *T* poem dramatizes this process of self-transformation by showing that re-territorialization alone does not suffice. Marie moves to new places twice in the text

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<sup>76</sup> Marie uses the words 'luxure' (ll. 406 and 468) and 'luxurieuse' (l. 474) to refer to her sins in the text.

before she is finally able to change how she and others perceive her, and even in her hermitage her body is still eroticized. In order to truly change, she must undo the associations between her body and the sins it committed through de-territorialization, a process of physical transition and a transformation of her relationship to her environment. In order to truly change, Marie requires both a new environment and a lifestyle change. She must uproot herself, undo her connections to her past environments, and establish new bonds through rhizomatic couplings. Changing her location, her diet, her sleeping habits, and her relationships with others allows her to sublimate her sinful carnality into a higher, more spiritual form of existence in her 'ecomystical union.'

Though Marie must initially sever ties with human society in order to transform herself, her transformation cannot be complete without some form of human intervention. Marie's alternative lifestyle and alternative community in nature are in many ways different from human society, but they are not entirely divorced from humanity. After all, Marie is a human. She needs to learn how to live with humans in order to fully transform herself and to influence others, two necessary steps on her way to becoming a saint. This is where Zosimas comes in. Marie and Zosimas have a platonic and complementary relationship that both sublimates their carnal love into charitable love and allows them to transcend their humanity and become saints. Marie's encounter with Zosimas functions as the culminating moment in her formation of an alternative community and in the re-territorialization of her body.

The complementarity of the two saints is evidenced by their parallel lives.<sup>77</sup> The author recognizes Zosimas's appearance in the text as a shift in subject ("Or lairons ici de Marie,/ Si parlerons d'une abeïe" ll. 701-2), but in many ways, Zosimas's hermitage resembles Marie's. The author summarizes the monks' annual Lenten tradition of eremitic retreat and reunion for Easter communion. Like Marie, the monks live a life of discipline ("Tant erent en grant descepline" l. 711); they wear hair shirts (l. 710); they walk through the forest with bare feet to expiate their sins (ll. 713-4); they eat bread (l. 720) and grass (l. 756); and they sleep on the ground (l. 762). The author does, however, highlight one major difference between Marie and the monks—their harmony within their community. Although monks live somewhat apart from society in the seclusion of their monastery, they have their own monastic community. The author highlights this when s/he describes the monks as friends ("compaignon" l. 768) and portrays the scene of their pre-Lent communion:

Quant venue iert le quarantaine,  
 El premier jor faisoient çaine,  
 Li abés les acumenioit  
*Corpus Domini* lor donnoit.  
 Quant les avoit aconmeniés,  
 Par ordre lor lavoit lor piés,  
 Puis aloient a orison  
 Et il lor faisoit le sermon,  
 Conmandoit les entrebaisier,  
 Puis lor ouvroit l'uis del mostier,  
 En le forest les envoioit,  
 A Damedieu les conmandoit. (ll. 733-44)

[When Lent came, on the first day they had their last supper. The abbot gave them communion; he gave them the body of Christ. When he had given them communion, by order, he washed their feet, then they went to

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<sup>77</sup> Posa describes this complementarity as a "mutuality." I will suggest that their spiritual complementarity is a sexual metaphor that furthers the notion of 'ecomystical union' in this text.

pray. Then he gave them a sermon, commanded them to kiss each other, then opened the door of the monastery and sent them into the forest, and entrusted them to God.]

This scene of communion between brothers contrasts with the scene when Marie was unable to join the Christian community in church. Although Marie does receive communion on the banks of the Jordan at the monastery before she sets off into the desert, there is no great scene of feet washing and kissing. Unlike the monks, she does not yet belong to a Christian community. While in hermitage, the monks do live in solitude and ignore one another (ll. 757-60), but they begin and end their journeys with communion in their community. For the monks, hermitage is an annual ritual<sup>78</sup> and time for reflection. It is a time when they can venture out from the seclusion of their monastery and meet hermits. As the author explains, this is one of Zosimas's expectations in performing his hermitage:

Hermite i cuida trouver,  
De Dieu voloit o iaus parler.  
Mais quant il ot fait vint jornees  
Qui molt erent desmesurees.  
Et vit que nul n'en peut trover,  
N'a coraige d'avant aler.  
A droit miedi commence s'eure  
De Damediu et si l'aure. (ll. 813-20)

[He thought he would find hermits there. He wanted to talk to them about God, but when he had completed twenty days which were excessively honorable, and he saw that he was unable to find any of them, he does not have the intention to go forward. At exactly noon, he prays to God and thus worships Him.]

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<sup>78</sup> The author emphasizes the rituality of this exercise when s/he repeats the language of this passage (ll. 733-44) later in the text (ll. 797-804).

Not only does Zosimas desire to meet another hermit, but the author reminds us of the necessity of this interaction. In using the word “desmesurees” [excessively virtuous]<sup>79</sup> to refer to Zosimas’s days in the wilderness, the author implies that his extreme virtue makes him prideful. His virtue lacks in sincerity because it only serves to bolster his ego and is not coupled by selfless good deeds. This sets the stage for Zosimas’s encounter with a model of humility: Marie. The text implies that this interaction and conversation with a fellow human being and holy person is part of his eremitic experience, and something that he hopes will help him to improve his faith and his relationship with God. It is at this point that God presents Marie to Zosimas in answer to his prayer.

When Zosimas first sees Marie, the pair express a sort of ambivalence and do not know what to make of one another. The repetition of verbs and expressions of sight and perception of highlight the Marie’s ambiguous identity:

Quant il ot s’orison fenie  
 Turna soi vers destre partie,  
 Si resgarda vers orient,  
 Un ombre vit son essient  
 Qui estoit ou d’ome ou de feme,  
 Mais ele estoit de l’Egyptiene.  
 Dex l’avoit illuec amenee,  
 Ne voloit plus que fust celee ;  
 Descouvrir voloit le tresor  
 Qui ert plus precieus que or. (ll. 821-30)

[When he finished his prayer, he turned to the right, then he looked towards the East. He saw by his faith a shadow of either a man or a woman, but it was that of the Egyptian. God had brought her there. He did not want her to be hidden any longer. He wanted to uncover the treasure that was more precious than gold.]

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<sup>79</sup> Godefroy defines ‘desmesuré’ as a past participle to mean “qui a franchi les bornes de la raison, de la vertu, de la justice; qui porte un vice quelconque à un excès démesuré, et en particulier orgueilleux à l’excès, arrogant” [that which has crossed the limits of reason, of virtue, of justice; that which bears some sort of vice to excess, and in particular excessively prideful].



By describing Marie as an androgynous shadow, the author signals the fact that she defies human conceptions of gender, species, and embodiment. Neither the narrator nor Zosimas can accurately articulate her status. Zosimas even thinks that this vision is an enchantment (l. 833) and prays to God to protect him from evil “temptation” (l. 836). This ambivalence highlights the fact that she is a liminal figure that defies the binaries of human language, but it is unclear why Zosimas sees this as a temptation. The use of the word “tresor” (l. 829) and later discussion of her revealed nude body make one wonder if Zosimas is afraid of being tempted sexually. In describing Marie as a ‘treasure’, the narrator harks back to the scene when the prostitute wants to board the ship and affirms that her only treasure is her body (l. 276). Though the objectification of her body as a prostitute was a negative thing, it is now part of her becoming-earth and ‘ecomystical union.’ It is that which allows her to achieve union with God and his creation. Whereas Marie’s human society only valued her for her sexual body, God and Zosimas value her for her deteriorated body which is more valuable than gold since her deterioration has given her the humility necessary to achieve God’s mercy. By taking up the prior physical metaphors of her body and repurposing them here, the author continues to demonstrate how her hermitage allows her to de-territorialize her body by changing its worldly associations into earthly ones. Though the author is re-contextualizing the image of Marie’s body as treasure, it is not completely devoid of its carnality and eroticism. As Cary Howie has shown in his various pieces on this text,<sup>80</sup> the scenes of interaction between Marie and Zosimas are still eroticized in their emphasis on discovering,

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<sup>80</sup> See “As the Saint Turns” and “Saints, sex, and surfaces.”

uncovering, and covering her nude body. After Zosimas finally sees Marie's face, the rest of her body becomes exposed:

Environ li estoit se crine,  
Tant blanche comme flor d'espine.  
Li blanc cavel et li delgiés  
Li avaloient dusc'as piés ;  
El n'avoit altre vestement,  
Quant ce li soslevoit le vent,  
Dessous paroit le char bruslee  
Del soleil et de le gelee. (ll. 841-8)

[Surrounding her was her hair, which was as white as a hawthorn flower. The white and delicate hair fell down to her feet. She had no other garment. When the wind lifted it, her flesh appeared beneath, burnt from the sun and frost.]

This passage resembles the various other descriptions of Marie's body both as a prostitute and as a hermit.<sup>81</sup> Now, Zosimas becomes the male voyeur looking at Marie from head to toe. The author even uses the symbol of the hawthorn flower yet again. Whereas before it was her chest which was white like the hawthorn flower, now it is her hair cloak which scarcely shields her nude body from the elements charring her flesh.

Marie's shame of her nudity causes her to experience an ambivalence when she encounters Zosimas. When Zosimas sees Marie's naked body, her initial reaction is to run. Given her prior difficulties with other humans (especially men) and her nudity, it is no surprise that Marie would run. Zosimas responds to Marie's flight by chasing her through the woods. This scene recalls the romance association between hunting and the

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<sup>81</sup> This passage also seems to be in dialogue with the story of Daphne found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There is a scene when Apollo is chasing Daphne and her flight makes her even more beautiful to him. This is highlighted by the breeze which unveils her body beneath her clothes, makes them blow in the wind, and throws her hair into the air (37). This intertextual reference further supports Howie's argument that there are erotic undertones to this scene.

pursuit of love.<sup>82</sup> Marie's animality continues to highlight her status as a courtly beauty once Zosimas enters the scene. In this way, the author demonstrates that Marie's carnality continues to persist when she is interacting with men. Zosimas is different from the other men, however. When Marie exhibits her shame of her nude body by hiding her face (ll. 868-90), she asks him to toss her a cloth ("dras" l. 876) with which she covers most of her body (l. 846). This scene recalls Adam's and Eve's shame of their nudity following their banishment from Eden. Soon after she clothes herself, she reveals to Zosimas that she is crying for the "horrible et lais" [horrible and ugly] sins she has committed (ll. 889-96).

The reason for their encounter is soon revealed: the pair teach one another about humility, compassion, and mercy. Marie's shame and sadness of her prior sinful existence elicits Zosimas's compassion. He returns her tears with his own:

Quant li sains hom l'ot si parler,  
De pitié commence a plourer,  
As piés li fait affliction,  
Requiert li se beneïchon. (ll. 897-900)

[When the holy man heard her speaking thus, he started to cry with pity.  
He falls at her feet with sadness, asking her for her blessing.]

Zosimas exhibits his pity and compassion not only with his tears, but in his prostration.

He emulates her humility by bowing down before her. The fact that he demands her blessing shows that he realizes she is a holy person who has something to offer him. He

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<sup>82</sup> Duncan Robertson describes the *T* poem as a "vulgarized" "summa" of the tradition of Mary the Egyptian's Life, that renders Mary the hero whose subjectivity resembles that of the romance genre ("Poem and Spirit" 316). Hunting often symbolizes man's amorous pursuit of women. This *topos* can be seen in Marie de France's lai Guigemar and in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide*. Though Robertson does not discuss her flight in connection with the hunting *topos*, in general he argues that readers are implicated in the courtesan's sexuality through their "*plaisir du texte*" ("Poem and Spirit" 316) and likens the pair's eventual separation to the "amor de lonh" *topos* of romance (324).

cries together with her (“ensement” l. 904), showing that his pity parallels her shame in this gesture of compassion. The author also mentions that he cries for mercy (“Merchi” l. 903). This scene culminates in a humility stand-off. Each hermit wants to be more humble and begs the other for a blessing. Marie explains to Zosimas that she does not understand why he would seek a blessing from such a sinner (ll. 917-8). She adds that it is he who should bless her first since he is a priest and has served God since childhood (ll. 919-34). Zosimas will not take ‘no’ for an answer. The pair continue to compete for the title of most humble, kneeling on the ground and begging for the other’s blessing until Marie acquiesces:

Or voit bien et entent Marie  
 Que li sains hom ne levra mie,  
 Tos tans iert en cele orison,  
 Se il n’a se beneïchon (ll. 941-4)

[Now Marie sees well and understands that the holy man will not get up at all; he continues to pray until he has her blessing.]

When Marie finally prays, she simply asks God, her “Creator” to forgive their sins and bless them (ll. 947-52). Following the prayer, the author implies Marie’s equality to Zosimas by making reference to their mutual gaze: “Molt s’entregardent ambedui” (l. 956) [They both looked at each other for some time].<sup>83</sup> Marie, who is often the object of the male gaze, is now finally able to exchange a mutual gaze with a man. Her interaction with Zosimas, in that it pushes her to pray to God and fully repent, helps her to improve her relations with men. The fact that Zosimas is Marie’s sole connection to human society becomes evident when she asks him for news about current events (ll. 957-62).

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<sup>83</sup> The author repeats this same line later when Zosimas witnesses Marie’s walking on water (l. 1188).

This scene also further illustrates that the pair's relationship is platonic and built on a mutual respect for one another. This platonic friendship, in that it helps her repent and repair her relations with the human world, helps Marie to transcend her humanity and to become a saint.

The text begins to suggest this transcendence in a scene of levitation. Readers watch as Marie's hermitage allows her to slowly divest herself of her human attributes and become permeated by her natural surroundings. Following her prayer with Zosimas, Marie's levitation symbolizes her transcendence of earth:

Ele garda vers orient,  
 Drece ses mains, al ciel les tent  
 Et Dé proie, le Creatour  
 Molt pieument et par amour,  
 Si que le bouce li movoit,  
 Mais nule vois ne s'en issoit.  
 De tere fu sempres ravie,  
 Si qu'ele n'i avenoit mie.  
 Zosimas ot paor molt grant,  
 Damediu en trait a garant,  
 Ke plus de deus piés et demi  
 Avoit entre le terë et li. (ll. 973-84).

[She looked to the east, raises her hands, holds them up to the sky, and prays to God, the Creator, most piously and with love. Her mouth moved, but no voice issued from it. She was lifted from the earth, so that she no longer touched the ground. Zosimas is very afraid. He turns to God for protection. There was more than two and a half feet between the earth and her.]

This scene marks the final stages of Marie's 'ecomystical union.' She is now in a liminal state of ravishment, floating between heaven and earth. She ceases to resemble earthly creatures, but has not yet ascended to heaven. The fearful Zosimas even notices the liminality of her status when he believes her to be a ghost ("fantosme" l. 989). In order to alleviate his fears about her superhuman status, she begins to tell him her life story.

This scene of confession, hints at the sublimated eroticism of their relationship through its discussion of covering and uncovering. When the couple first meets, it is Marie's nude body that is exposed to Zosimas. Now, it is her inner character and past sins that will come to light. Zosimas first begs her to do this:

Descoeuvre me tote te vie,  
 Por Dieu nel me celer tu mie.  
 Di le moi par confession,  
 Que Diex te face voir pardon. (ll. 1009-12)

[Uncover your whole life for me. For God, do not hide it from me. Tell me through confession so that God may truly forgive you.]

Zosimas reminds Marie that she must confess to repent and she agrees:

Sire, che li respond Marie,  
 Je ne le te celerai mie,  
 Quant tu nue m'as esgardee,  
 Ja me vie ne t'iert celee.  
 Trestoute le te conterai  
 Si que ja rien n'en celerai. (ll. 1013-8)

[Lord, Marie responded to him, I will not hide it from you at all. When you saw me naked, my life was not hidden from you. I will recount it all to you and will hide none of it.]

Here, the carnal and the spiritual become conflated yet again. Marie's nudity symbolizes her honest, open confession and contrition. Following her confession, she falls to Zosimas's feet in shame ("grant honte a" l. 1022) begging for his "merchi" (ll. 1024 and 1036) [mercy] and "carité" (l. 1037) [charity]. The author suggests the sublimated carnality of their love once more when Marie and Zosimas part ways for the first time.

When she leaves, he literally kisses the ground she walks on:

Molt a grant duel quant il le pert.  
 A le tere est agenoulliés,  
 La ou avoit tenu ses piés  
 Baisa le tere molt souvent (ll. 1088-91)

[He has much pain when he loses her. He kneels on the earth where she had held her feet. He kissed the earth many times.]

The sublimation of earthly love into spiritual love is made clear in this passage. Zosimas displaces his love for Marie into a love of the earth that teaches him how to love God:

Dex, dist il, loés soies tu  
 Qui en feme as mis tel vertu ;  
 Sire, ti puisse je amer  
 Qui le me donnas enconter. (ll. 1093-6)

[God, he says, may you be praised, you who placed such virtue in a woman. Lord, let me love You, who allowed me to meet her.]

Marie and Zosimas have a platonic relationship which teaches them about God's love through a sublimation of their carnal love into charitable love. They both benefit from this relationship. Zosimas learns to love God from Marie. Marie, in turn, needs to confess her sins to Zosimas so that she can repent fully. She cannot fully realize her union with God until she reunites and reconciles with her human community. This text presents the Christian community and the whole of God's creation, as the harmonious union between God, humans, animals, and all other facets of the environment. While Marie manages to repent through hermitage in the wilderness, there are a few tasks (such as confession and communion) that are only possible in the presence of other human beings. Thus, Marie's communion with Zosimas symbolizes her reconciliation with her human community, a necessary step on her way toward achieving 'ecomystical union' with God. When he leaves her the first time, she asks him to pray for her and to bring her communion the following year on the day of the Last Supper (ll. 1047-82). Zosimas obliges and another miracle ensues.

When Zosimas reunites with Marie, she further demonstrates her superhuman status and her changed relationship with men and God. She manages to do this first by walking on water: “Seur l’iaue rade va le pas” (l. 1165) [Upon the rushing water she steps]. This miracle, just like Marie’s levitation, demonstrates the way in which she is beginning to transcend humanity. Her position vis-à-vis the material world symbolizes her status in God’s community of Christians. Rather than sinking or floating within the water, Marie’s body defies gravity and human convention. She begins to demonstrate her divinity through her ecological *imitatio Christi* as she walks on water as Jesus had. Zosimas attributes this miraculous event to God (ll. 1178-80), and this time is not afraid. Now, he kisses Marie “par vraie amistié” (l. 1182) [out of true friendship] and he prays “por l’amor Dé” (l. 1184) [out of love of God]. Once again, Marie’s miraculous nature helps Zosimas to sublimate his human love for Marie into love of God. After they pray, Zosimas gives Marie communion, an act that makes her happy (“lie” l. 1220). As in previous passages in the text, communion symbolizes the union of the community of Christians with the body and blood of Christ. Tilliette argues that Marie’s communion functions as part of her mystic union with God: “Dans l’épisode terminal du récit, la pénitente remontera du désert’ [...] jusqu’aux rives du Jourdain pour y recevoir de Zosime la communion, c’est-à-dire consommer l’union mystique avec Dieu, avant de mourir saintement” (261) [In the final episode of the story, the penitent comes back from the desert up to the banks of the Jordan to receive communion from Zosimas there, that is to say, to consume mystic union with God, before dying holily]. Marie’s communion symbolizes God’s forgiveness and her acceptance within the community of Christians.



In a post-communion prayer, Marie drives home the point that in her penitence she strives to reunite herself with her Christian community through God's mercy in order to turn his pleasure into her own. Repeating the language of servitude that she had once used to refer to her profession as a prostitute, she tells God, "Quarante et sis ans t'ai servi" (l. 1225) [I served you for forty-six years]. She begs for his mercy ("Dex, aies hui de moi merci!" l. 1226) and in language seen in feudal and courtly contexts, asks for a reward ("guerredon" l. 1224) for this service. She further highlights the sublimation of erotic love when she orders, "Fait de t'ancele a ton plesir" (l. 1227) [Accomplish your pleasure with your servant]. For Marie, this pleasure is an earthly death that will allow her to reunite with God in heaven. She tells God that she would like to die (ll. 1228-9 and 1234) because life on earth cannot give her true joy ("vraie joie" ll. 1247-9). In this prayer, she also cites the *Song of Songs*, a passage (ll. 1241-4) which I discussed in the introduction of this chapter, and expresses a desire to join Jesus in his bedroom ("cambres" l. 1242): "Prie en ten Fil, Virge Marie,/ Que me mete en se compaignie" (ll. 1237-7) [Pray to your Son, Virgin Mary, that he put me in His company]. In this prayer, we find the best articulated description of what 'ecomystical union' is to Marie. In her hermitage, she learns about humility by becoming earth. Through her platonic friendship with Zosimas, she is able to fully repent and sublimate her carnal love into spiritual love. This friendship allows her to repair her relations with her human community and to unite with God in His community in heaven.

### Harmony on Earth

Though Marie begins her process of ‘ecomystical union’ the moment she becomes a hermit, she does not fully complete this process until her death. Zosimas helps Marie transcend her human body and prepare for death when he administers her final communion. As soon as he leaves her company, she prays to God, devotes herself to Him, body and soul:

Diex, dist ele, qui me fesis  
 Et en men cors ame mesis,  
 A toi le puisse je livrer  
 Et otrier et commander.  
 Or sai je bien que tu m’as chiere,  
 Car tu as oï me priere ;  
 Sevrer me viex de ceste vie,  
 Chi voi venir te compaingnie.  
 Je croi qu’ele vient por moi,  
 M’ame et mon cors conmant a toi. (ll. 1285-94)

[God, she says, You who made me and put a soul in my body, to You I can deliver, grant, and entrust it. Now I know well that you hold me dear because you heard my prayer. I want to separate myself from this life, I who see your company coming. I believe that it is coming for me. I give you my body and soul.]

This prayer takes up many of the themes we have seen throughout the text. Harking back to the intertext of *Genesis*, Marie again recalls the fact that God is the creator of humans. She reminds readers that humans have a body and soul, and that both of these things belong to God. She emphasizes the fact that she has turned her pleasure into God’s in this scene where she hands over her body to God so that she can be in His company. At this point in the text, it is important to note that Marie’s body and soul are still one as she is still alive.

Marie soon bids farewell to her earthly existence when she dies. The author dramatizes the interconnection of her body with the earth when s/he describes her death:

Dont s'est a le tere estendue  
 Si conme ele estoit tote nue,  
 Ses mains croisa seur se poitrine  
 Et s'envolepa en se crine  
 Et clost ses iex avenanment,  
 Ses nés et se bouce ensement.  
 En paradis s'en va durable,  
 Onc n'i osa venir deable.  
 En l'angeliel compaignie  
 S'en ala l'ame de Marie.  
 Li cors de li remest tot nu,  
 Fors d'un drapel tot desrompu  
 Ki en covroit une partie,  
 Povrement fu ensevelie. (ll. 1295-1308)

[Then she stretched out on the ground. As she was completely naked, she crossed her hands on her chest, enveloped herself in her hair, and closed her eyes graciously along with her nose and mouth. She goes to eternal paradise, where the Devil never dares to come. Marie's soul went into the company of angels. Her body remained completely naked, except for a torn sheet which covered one part; she was poorly enshrouded.]

In this passage, Marie lies naked with the earth one last time. Here, we witness the death of her body and her soul's reunion with God in heaven. The process of 'ecomystical union' is coming to a close, yet it is awaiting burial to complete its transformation. Perhaps this is why the author emphasizes the fact that her various orifices are closed. Her body miraculously rejects its porousness until it can be properly buried. The literalization of *Genesis* cannot conclude until Marie's body returns to the dust from which it originated. The emphasis on her various body parts reminds readers that the fetishization and objectification of her body that plagued her earthly existence will not be a problem for her in the afterlife. She thus finally manages to fully de-territorialize her body when her soul extracts itself from it. The *T* poem seems to offer a corrective here to Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of ecological interconnections. Though Marie repeatedly tries to change the way others perceive her and treat her body through new

rhizomatic relations with her environment, she is unable to do so completely until her death. Her slow process of becoming-earth is a metaphor for her earthly death which brings her heavenly life. Her bodily suffering and deterioration allow her to reconcile with her human and spiritual communities by severing her prior ties to the natural world. Her body thus becomes a conduit to achieving God's pleasure on earth, but the process of 'ecomystical union' remains incomplete until she can fully reconcile her relationship to her earthly and human communities.

Marie's burial leads to a scene of cooperation between human, animal, and mineral, and thus demonstrates how Marie becomes an example for other humans as to how live harmoniously with their environments. As long as Marie's body remains unburied ("desenterés" l. 1327), it cannot complete its transformation into earth. Unearthed, Marie's body remains in complete solitude: "A tere jut li cors Marie/ Tot l'an sans altre compaignie" (ll. 1317-8) [Upon the earth lay Marie's body for the whole year without any other company]. By using the adjective 'other' here to refer to Marie's company, the author subtly suggests that the earth should be considered as a sort of companion. This brings us back to the fact that the text posits Marie's hermitage as an alternative community in nature. Yet Marie still has an ambivalent relationship to her environment. Though the earth may accept her company, all animals avoid her in hermitage ("Ne li vint puis beste salvaige/Ne ature vive creature" ll. 696-7 [Neither wild beasts nor any other living creatures came to her again]) and death alike ("Sor li n'osa oisiaus voler/ Tant le voloit Dex honorer" ll. 1321-2 [No bird dared fly upon her, since God wanted to honor her]). The text is vague here and offers little explanation as to why this hermit who seems to have reconciled her relationship to the earth has so little

interaction with the human and animal world. In this way, this story stands in contrast with other saints' Lives about hermits who receive food from animals.<sup>84</sup> The absence of animals in this story of ecological harmony is rather curious. Perhaps the author wants to emphasize the extreme nature of Marie's solitude. One thing is certain—the lack of animals early in the text highlights Marie's relationship with the earth and the eventual arrival of the friendly lion. In the end, Marie reconciles her relationship with her various earthly communities through a cooperative burial scene.

Zosimas's cooperation in her burial symbolizes Marie's reconciliation with her human community. Zosimas arrives on the scene in accordance with his annual tradition of Lenten eremitic retreat. When he cannot find the body of his lady friend ("amie" l. 1357), he prays to God for help (ll. 1349-66). God presents the body to him with a bright light ("une clarté" l. 1370). Yet again, the author seems to have trouble describing Marie's unusual body. She is still in a liminal state. Her body lies on the ground (l. 1373), but she is on her way to becoming something else, something less physical. When Zosimas finally finds the body, he kisses her feet (l. 1381), but dares not approach the rest of her body ("A l'autre cors n'ose aprochier" l. 1382).<sup>85</sup> This passage reminds readers of the carnality of Marie's body which still connotes eroticism in its relation to Zosimas after her death. Readers are reminded yet again that Marie's soul needs to escape from her body so that she can finally surpass this carnality. By kissing Marie's feet, we are drawn back to the pair's last encounter when Zosimas kissed the ground

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<sup>84</sup> See Alexander for more information on this theme he describes as the "Elijah topos" (25-27, 55).

<sup>85</sup> See Howie "As the Saint Turns" for a description of the author's enigmatic use of the word "cors" here and throughout the text. He argues that this term euphemizes Marie's genitalia.

where her feet were (ll. 1089-91). This is a key to reading this scene. We are reminded again that Marie's destiny is to teach other humans about how to live humbly and in harmony with their natural world. Throughout the text, feet symbolize humility. Marie and Zosimas bow down at one another's feet, crying and begging for mercy (ll. 898-904). The hermits walk barefoot to learn humility and to expiate their sins through the pain of walking on thorns. Though Zosimas objectifies Marie's body in his adoration of this isolated and fetishized body part, it is for all the right reasons. Their relationship, though at times tempting in its carnality, allows them to sublimate carnal love into spiritual love through their platonic friendship. Marie's harmony with her environment is highlighted through yet another miraculous occurrence.

The text continues to grant agency to the earth, following Zosimas's prayer to God. God reveals his desire for Zosimas through an earthen poem. The following words appear above Marie's head:

ZOSIMAS, PREN LE CORS MARIE,  
SIL ENSEVLI O DIEU AÏE.  
QUANT TU L'ARAS ENSEVELI,  
PRIE POR LI PAR TE MERCHI. (ll. 1387-90)

[Zosimas, take Marie's body and put it in a tomb with God's help. When you bury her, pray for her by your mercy.]

The ambiguity surrounding the origins of this inscription make it appear miraculous. Given that it is written in the third person, it does not seem that Marie wrote it herself. Moreover, Marie never divulges her name to anyone whilst in the forest. Considering the fact that he does not know her name prior to this revelation (ll. 1329-36), it seems that she would have remained anonymous to posterity if it had not been for this miracle. The use of the passive voice further highlights the atmosphere of mystery surrounding the

miraculous inscription. The author uses the passive voice on two occasions to refer to the authorship of this earthen poem. When Zosimas first sees it, the author writes:

Il resgarda amont au chief,  
 Letres i vit com en un brief;  
 Es letres que li sains hom vit  
 Est cest commandement escrit (ll. 1383-6)

[He looked above at her head. He saw letters there as if in a short letter.  
 In the letters that the holy man saw, this command was written].

As if this one vague passive reference were not enough, s/he writes soon after: “Les lettres furent de bon tor/ Com se fussent faites cil jour,/ En le tere erent figurees” (ll. 1391-3) [The letters were of good form as if they were written that day. They were written in the earth]. The narrator and Zosimas are equally perplexed by the inscription. The use of the third person and the freshness of the inscription seem to imply that Marie herself is not the author. By placing the inscription in the dirt, however, the text seems to further emphasize Marie’s intimate relationship with the earth, and even suggests the earth’s cooperation in her burial. In this way, the text grants a bit of agency to the earth, Marie’s sole companion in her hermitage and death. This scene has implications for the way we as human beings see the earth. In their chapter on the genealogy of morals, Deleuze and Guattari ask the question: ‘Who does the Earth think it is?’ As a primary response to this question, they describe the earth as a “body without organs” (40). In this chapter, and throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari question the belief that the earth is a mere static background upon which beings like humans, plants, and animals perform their actions. Thinking more in terms of geologic time, they discuss the slow process of sedimentation and folding of strata which the earth undergoes and thus remind us about the earth’s dynamic geologic process of becoming (41). In order to

humanize this normally overlooked organic matter, they anthropomorphize it in saying that every stratum is a judgment of God that sings and expresses itself (44). While I do not think that Deleuze and Guattari meant for this to be taken literally, the image of a singing earth that voices its thoughts and feelings in geologic processes is strangely appropriate here in our discussion of Marie. Throughout her entire hermitage, she learns about God's infinite love by loving the earth through an intimate process of becoming. I could not think of a more beautiful conclusion to this story of alternative ecological friendship than the simple poetic eulogy offered up to Marie by the earth. Perhaps the author, in using the ambiguous passive voice here, wants to leave open the possibility that the earth also contributes to her burial and the sharing of her story with the human world. Perhaps this is the earth's way of promulgating Marie's story of ecological harmony in a way that other humans can benefit from its message. Ecological harmony in this text stands in as a metaphor of God's divine will and presence on earth. Harmony represents God's judgment manifested in the bodies, entities, and strata that are intertwined in this text.

The author further presents ecological harmony as God's will through the appearance of a helpful lion. When Zosimas tries to open up the earth, he is a "lost man" ["home esgaré" l. 1401] "Car il n'avoit riens aporté/ Dont il peüst le terre ouvrir" (ll. 1402-3) [Because he did not bring anything with which he could open the earth]. In this text about human-ecological interactions, it is tempting to read this scene of earth-opening as a metaphor for human beings' unraveling of their perceptions of the natural world. Marie may set out to change the way men see her, but she ends up pushing them—and herself too—to question the way human beings see themselves in relation to



their environment. The text further questions human superiority over the natural world by demonstrating various limits of humanity:

Un fust trova par aventure,  
 Foïr en voust le tere dure;  
 Il voust le tere manouvrer,  
 Ne le pooit seul entamer.  
 Tous tressuoit desous se haire  
 Et nule rien n'i pooit faire.  
 Grant besong a li sains d'aiue (ll. 1405-11)

[He found a piece of wood by chance. He wanted to dig up the hard earth. He wanted to manoeuvre the earth, but he could barely scratch the surface. He was sweating profusely under his hair shirt, and could not do anything. The saint had a great need of help.]

Zosimas suffers from the limits of his human body here. He is sweating; he tries tools to no avail. His human instincts lead him to want to use his hands. This is clear from both the references to tools and from the author's use of the verb 'manoeuvre' which literally means to work with one's hands. Hands are the human body part *par excellence*,<sup>86</sup> but they are failing Zosimas here. Furthermore, his sweating further indicates his fatigue. God sends a friendly lion to help Zosimas: "Diex li tramist bon compaignon/ Noient altre mais un lion" (ll. 1417-8) [God sent him a good companion that was none other than a lion].<sup>87</sup> While the earth was Marie's companion, now the lion is Zosimas's, and this human-animal friendship will help Zosimas to bury Marie while also teaching him about humility and mercy. Where Zosimas fails, the lion succeeds. This lion, like Zosimas, wants to kiss Marie's feet:

Les piés li commence a lechier,

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<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of the humanness of hands, see McCracken's "Skin and sovereignty in *Guillaume de Palerne*" esp. 364-6.

<sup>87</sup> The topos of the friendly lion is prevalent in medieval literature. The most famous example is Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au lion*.

Nes savoit autrement baisier ;  
 Signe faisoit de l'obeïr  
 Et que il le voloit servir (ll. 1421-4)

[He starts to lick her feet. He knows no other way to kiss them. He made a sign of obeying him and that he wanted to serve him.]

This passage serves several narrative functions. First, it demonstrates that this is not a ferocious man-eating lion. It also shows us that the lion, like Zosimas, respects and admires Marie. Finally, it draws our attention to the physical differences between human beings and lions. Humans and lions have differently-shaped mouths and thus kiss differently. In describing the lion's licking as a kiss, the author further blurs the distinction between human and animal and thus erodes the supposed human superiority yet again. Zosimas reveals a certain sense of mutual respect for the lion when he speaks to him in direct discourse (ll. 1436-44), just as the inscription in the earth had addressed him (ll. 1387-90). Marie's burial thus brings human, animal, and earth together as equals. They all have something to contribute and treat one another with mutual respect. It seems at first that Zosimas is the ever-superior human giving orders to the obedient subjugated animal, but he is quite cognizant of his human limitations and his need for help. He reveals his respect for the lion when he calls him "doz amis" (l. 1436) [sweet friend] and humbly asks for his help: "Mais j'ai grant besong d'aïe./ Se tu me voloies aidier" (ll. 1442-3) [But I have great need of help if you want to help me]. The lion is not only better at digging the hole than is Zosimas, but better than four men (l. 1457). The author seems a bit ambivalent about this lion's superhuman nature. Though Zosimas treats him like an equal or like his superior, the narrator then goes on to refer to the lion as a "beste mue" (l. 1472) [mute beast]. It is interesting that this portrait of human-

animal cooperation should end on the typical anthropocentric belief that humans are superior to animals because of their capacity for speech. S/he then goes on to refer to the lion's generous act as his "obedience" (l. 1478). Once this job is complete, the lion kneels on the ground (l. 1479) and then retreats back into the desert (l. 1482). Though the moment of posthuman animal appreciation is short-lived, Zosimas is greatly affected by it.

At the end of the text, Zosimas reveals what he has learned from Marie in a prayer to God. His relationship with Marie helps him first to better appreciate God: "Bien m'as démontré par Marie/ Que molt est fox cil qui t'oblie" (ll. 1487-8) [You demonstrated well by Marie that he who forgets you is very crazy]. He also learns the value of penitence: "Bien voi et croi tot sans dotance/ Que fort cose a en penitance" (ll. 1489-90) [I see well and believe completely without a doubt that great good comes from penitence]. He thus decides to devote the rest of his earthly life to expiating the sins of his body to achieve God's mercy:

Ja mais jor sans espaneïr  
 Ne serai mais dusc'al morir.  
 Tous jors mais espaneïrai,  
 Ja de mon cors merci n'arai (ll. 1491-4)

[I will not live another day without expiating until I die. I will expiate every day henceforth. I will never have mercy for my body].

Through his relationship with Marie, Zosimas learns that the human body is always tied up with sin through its relations to the world around them, that the key to erasing this sin is through the mortification of flesh, and that humans cannot be sin-free until they are separated from their bodies in death. This is not to say that earthly existence is completely negative, however. Marie's example teaches Zosimas and the readers of the

text that they can escape the sinful ties of their body by establishing new bonds and relationships with their environments. This message is so powerful that Zosimas feels compelled to share it with his fellow monks: “Il ne se volra mais celer./ De l’Égyptienne Marie/ Lor raconte toute le vie” (ll. 1502-4) [He no longer wants to hide it. He tells them the whole life of Marie l’Égyptienne]. In the brief recap of her life, the author mentions nothing of her sinful past. Rather, the story is retold from the moment Marie begins her hermitage in the desert. Zosimas mentions her walking on water, her death, the miraculous inscription in the ground, and the friendly lion. It thus appears that after her hermitage and death, Marie finally manages to de-territorialize herself, by detaching her body from all of its negative and carnal connotations. She is remembered by Zosimas and these other men for her unique relationship of humility to her environment and for the way God shows his mercy through the cooperation of his creation. Upon hearing her story, the monks respond by thanking God for the example she set: “A Diu en rendent il merchis” (l. 1518). Here, the double meaning of ‘merchis’ as both ‘mercy’ and ‘gratitude’ is made apparent by Marie’s story. God’s forgiveness of Marie’s sins is seen as an ultimate gesture of His love for her (ll. 1528-9). The ‘ecomystical union’ is thus complete when Marie is able to join Him in heaven.

### Conclusion

*La Vie de sainte Marie l’Égyptienne* redefines traditional notions of community by connecting ecology and sexuality as a set of mutually-defining relations between human beings, their families, their societies, their environments and their creator. In this chapter, I have traced Marie’s various relationships with the help of Deleuze’s and Guattari’s

notions of re- and de-territorializaion. Marie's sexual identity and self-worth are always described in ecological terms, illustrating invisible lines, roots, and webs of semiotic interconnections which invisibly tie the human body to the natural world. As the daughter of noble parents, Marie is seen for her value as a future bride. Her father wants to marry her off and thus sanction her sexual relationships in order to secure his hold over land. As a prostitute, Marie tries to subvert feudal systems of land ownership and dominance of women by fleeing her family and taking control of her own sexual destiny. She de-territorializes herself literally when she uproots herself and gives up her connections to her parents and their lands. By becoming a courtesan in Alexandria, she re-territorializes. As a courtesan, Marie is able to pursue her own sexual pleasure while also affording a luxurious lifestyle, but this comes at a cost. First, Marie is objectified by the men around her who see her only as an object of beauty, and who all want to possess her as their individual property. Second, she continues to experience difficulties in her relations with the human community. Men fight over her. She gets in the way of the sacred bond of marriage and corrupts youth. Also, her luxurious lifestyle prevents her from being able to join her fellow humans in the Christian community. A miraculous encounter with a statue of the Virgin finally helps Marie to de-territorialize herself once and for all.

In becoming a hermit in the desert on the banks of the Jordan, Marie is able to improve her relationship with her human community and with God through a process of becoming-earth. In a way that resembles Deleuze's and Guattari's conception of 'becoming', Marie undergoes a slow process of transformation where she transcends her human sexuality by re-territorializing herself. That is to say, she changes herself by

changing her relationship to the world around her. Marie's process of de- and re-territorialization involves a series of lifestyle changes which transform her attitudes, her appearance, and the way she is perceived by others. Whereas the courtesan shrouded herself in animal furs and dined on exquisite foods, the hermit wears and eats next to nothing. The woman who once wore ermine furs as a symbol of her status, begins to resemble ermines and other beasts with her long white hair, her talon-esque fingernails that she bites, and her weathered skin. Throughout her hermitage, Marie transcends her humanity by becoming earth. The text calls attention to her ambivalent relationship to the natural world in scenes of shape-shifting and levitation. The *T* poem highlights the liminality of this process through various comparisons. Marie is described alternately as a beast, as a shadow, as a ghost, and as a beam of light. The author illustrates Marie's posthuman status with various references to her weathered, mossy skin that looks like animal fur and tree bark. At times, Marie asserts her status as an entity distinct from her environment. She levitates, walks on water, and her dead body does not decay for an entire year. At other times, her body is porous and penetrated by her natural environment.

My use of the word 'penetrated' here is not coincidental. I conceive of Marie's becoming-earth as a sort of 'ecomystical union' and the realization of God's will through sublimated sexuality. I argue, following Deleuze and Guattari, that becoming is a process that substitutes arboreal relations for rhizomatic ones which liberate one from the sexuality of reproduction (18-21). The *T* poem illustrates many of Deleuze's and Guattari's theoretical concepts in the concrete story about one woman who transformed herself. This helps us to better understand the mechanics of men's dominance of women

and nature which suggests possibilities for subverting this dominance. In her first attempt at re-territorialization, Marie still experiences problems in her human relationships. She does move to a new geographical location and subverts her father's attempts to tie her to the land in a political marriage, but she substitutes this relationship with another kind of sexual relationship. She comes to realize that her problems are the result of society's ideals for women. No matter where she lives, she is seen as an object to be owned and dominated. She is treated like a flower and pet, and the descriptions of her beauty reflect this. She is given little agency, which makes the process of self-transformation all the more difficult. In order to get beyond the strictures of the human world, Marie creates her own alternative (and nearly human-free) community in nature. By taking human sexuality out of the equation, Marie is more easily able to change her lifestyle. As the saying goes, however, 'old habits die hard.' Marie facilitates her becoming-earth by sublimating her sexuality in a new rhizomatic form of promiscuity. Thus Marie's mixing with and penetration by her environment replaces the sexual relation to which she is accustomed. In a sense, she embraces the objectification to which she is subjected and uses it as a tool to learn about humility and mercy. The divine and miraculous aspects of this text come to stand in for what is perceived as haphazard and aleatory in Deleuze's and Guattari's theories. The religious and moral register of the *T* poem adds a sense of meaning and purpose to this posthuman ecology.

Humility becomes a metaphor for God's pleasure in Marie's 'ecomystical union,' and mercy represents the accomplishment, realization, or *jouissance* of this union. By using the same words ('servir', 'plaisir') and symbols (bed, ermine, hawthorn flower) to describe Marie's relationships both before and during her hermitage, the author of the *T*

poem demonstrates how self-transformation works like a slow process of shifting and sublimation. S/he also invites us to read the hermitage scene and Marie's interactions with Zosimas as sexualized. I am not arguing that Marie is having sex with the earth. Rather, sexual and ecological metaphors are used to translate complex theological ideals into a register comprehensible to a human audience. As I have shown throughout this chapter, the *T* poem functions as an exegetical text, literalizing ideals found in *Genesis*, the *Song of Songs*, and commentaries thereof. Marie demonstrates how we can turn our human, carnal, and sexual pleasure towards a more desirable end. In her hermitage, Marie is able not only to improve her relations with human society and the natural world, but to guarantee a place for herself in God's community. Marie learns the ultimate lesson in humility and mercy when she becomes one with God by becoming one with her environment. In her platonic friendship with Zosimas, she reconciles her strained relationship with the men of her species. Though the temptation of sexuality still persists, this tension allows for an intimacy that leads to harmony when sublimated in the right way. Marie's death and burial then teach Zosimas about how cooperation with the natural world can bring man into harmony with God. By witnessing and playing a significant role in Marie's transformation, Zosimas is also able to become a vehicle of God's Word for the human community. The text thus projects its message about community through the telescoping of one community through another.

In coming to the end of the text, we must also return to the beginning: *Genesis*. The author of the *T* poem clearly foregrounds the relationship between the Creator and His creation as the ultimate strained relationship in this text. Thanks to Adam and Eve, Marie is born in the world with original sin which manifests itself as a persistent



temptation she must learn to overcome. As I have shown, this message is clearly outlined very early in the prologue of the text:

Car che saichent tout pecheor  
 Ki forfait sont au Creator  
 Que nus pekiés n'est si pesant  
 Ne si horrible ne si grans  
 Dont Dex ne fache vrai pardon  
 Par foi et par confession  
 A ciaux qui prentent penitance. (ll. 13-19)

[For let all sinners who have sinned toward God know that no sin is so weighty, nor so horrible, nor so great that God does not truly forgive it for those who, by faith and by confession, accept punishment.]

Many read the relationship between God, angels, human beings, animals, and the earth as hierarchical, eschatological, and vertical, but the *T* poem invites us to see these relations as horizontal and cyclical. In the vertical view of creation, God is the Supreme Being, followed by his angels who reside in the heights of heaven, then followed by earthly creatures over whom man is seen to have dominion. Indeed, *Genesis* invites us to see man as God's most powerful creature on earth. Adam is given the task of naming the animals (*Genesis* 2:19) and of tilling the earth (*Genesis* 3:17-19). When looked at from man's perspective, this seems like a sort of power and dominance. But what happens when we perceive this relation from God's, the animals', and the earth's eyes. In this chapter, I have tried to suggest the ways in which caring for the earth and animals through labor, toil, and penitence teach Marie humility and help her to overcome her propensity to sin in a ways that allow her to achieve union with God. When we begin to see the earth as a medium for self-transformation rather than as a mere object to be possessed and dominated by men, we can finally realize God's intentions in giving Adam dominion on earth and the agency of earth in helping humans to realize their potential

and improve their relations with God. Perhaps the ultimate temptation of original sin is to see oneself as superior and true humility can only be achieved when one realizes that he or she is merely a part of creation, and thus horizontally and cyclically connected. We were made from earth and must reunite with the earth if we are ever to achieve union with God. The metaphor of becoming earth represents our common struggle to cease to see ourselves as superior over various others.

Chapter 3—Ecohomosocial Triangles: Resources, Power, and Identity Fluidity in  
Wauchier de Denain’s *La Vie de saint Benoît*

Introduction: Ecohomosocial Relations in the Benedictine Environment

Wauchier de Denain’s *La Vie de saint Benoît* (ca. 1204-1212)<sup>88</sup> demonstrates how water can become a medium for and symbol of self-transformation and how other resources—natural, cultivated, and man-made alike—can be used to centralize power and improve relations between people. This text proposes an alternative model of patriarchy that subverts traditional norms regarding sexuality, masculinity, and the management of resources. Born during the tumultuous times of the barbarian invasions in Rome, Beneoit abandons his family, friends, and school to pursue a life of asceticism in a rocky grotto. His abstinence, his intimate relationship to his environment, and his various friendships and rivalries teach him important ideals like chastity, humility, and charity, and his extreme virtue makes him both loved and despised by many. Over the course of his lifetime, Beneoit is sought out for his leadership abilities and becomes the abbot of a veritable monastic empire. At other times, the monks resent him for his virtuous power and attempt to kill him. Beneoit accomplishes numerous miraculous feats in his lifetime, many of which demonstrate the importance of food, water, and other resources to monastic culture and power. Beneoit’s alternative eco-patriarchy allows him to establish

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<sup>88</sup> See the appendix for an edition of this text, biographical data about Wauchier de Denain, information about Wauchier’s patron, Philippe de Namur, and the manuscript tradition of this text. I will use the spelling of my base manuscript (Bibliothèque nationale de France fr. 412) for all character names except for the title of the Life, which I translate into modern French and refer to in the shorthand as *Benoît* throughout this chapter. A list of character names in the appendix also appears with my edition.

his monasteries as centers of power during the periods of famine, destruction, and strife that characterized the fall of the Roman Empire.

With its emphasis on fraternity, masculinity, cooperation, and rivalry, *Benoît* can provide new insight into contemporary critical theory on homosociality. In devising my own theory of ecohomosociality as it plays out in the medieval monastic environment of *Benoît*, I am most inspired by the work of René Girard and Eve Sedgwick. For Sedgwick, ‘male homosocial desire’ is the “emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality [that appears] in an intimate and shifting relationship to class [and that cannot] be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole” (Sedgwick 1). Sedgwick’s definition of male homosocial desire is based upon Freud’s oedipal triangle and Girard’s conception of the triangular relationship of rivalry and emulation between two males and an object of their desire. Sedgwick revolutionizes the way we look at triangulated desire in two ways. First, her theory of homosocial desire demonstrates that the bond linking the two desiring males is just as important as those linking either of the males with the object of their desire (21). Second, contrary to Freud and Girard, Sedgwick sees the triangle as asymmetrical when people of varying genders and hence levels of power enter into the structure of desire (23). My theory of ecohomosocial desire is indebted to Sedgwick’s notion of ‘male homosocial desire’ in its emphasis on masculine relationships, gender, and class, yet I argue that her highlighting of gender overlooks the role played by environment in establishing power, building relationships, and defining identity. For this reason, I would like to return to the work of Girard. One advantage of Girard’s triangular formulation of desire is that it is not limited to human relationships.

In giving the example of Don Quixote, Girard explains how the object continually changes with each adventure (the marionettes, the windmill, etc.) but the triangular structure always remains (Girard 12). For Girard, the three points of the triangle are constituted by the subject, the object, and a mediator who also pursues the same object of desire. The subject thus imitates and envies the mediator who serves as both his role model and rival in their pursuit of the object (11-2).

I borrow from Girard the dual relationship of rivalry and emulation between men in pursuit of their object of desire and from Sedgwick the role played by gender and class in these triangulated relationships, but my theory seeks to examine what happens when ecology and the divine are brought to bear on the model. Girard briefly mentions the imitation of Christ as a motivating force for Christians (12), but does not delve further into the subject of spirituality. *Benoît*, a text ripe with homosocial bonds, triangles of desire, and fierce rivalries over power and the control of resources, augments Girard's and Sedgwick's theories by adding a third dimension to their two-dimensional triangle. While the triangle is helpful for depicting lateral relationships between three entities, its two-dimensional form is too simplistic to account for the complex web of interconnected entities in an environment or for the various facets that constitute human identity. Perhaps this is why Sedgwick's study scarcely goes beyond gender and class in discussing identity. In my reading of *Benoît*, I would like to suggest a new schema that can account for the interconnection of ecology, sexuality, and spirituality within the monastic environment—the ecohomosocial cone. My schema does not replace the triangle, but compiles an infinite number of interconnected triangles together around a circle, for a cone is merely a triangle spun three-hundred and sixty degrees creating a

circular base. For the numerous monks, there is one ultimate object: God. He represents the apex of the cone. The cone is a superior configuration because it can be composed of an infinite number of triangles; each monk's individual quest for God is represented by a single triangle within the cone. Beneoit sits at the center of the circular base of the cone since he serves as both the model and rival for numerous monks in their quest for God. Beneoit mediates the relationships for all of the monks through his control of their behavior and management of resources. The monks establish their relationships with God, Beneoit, and one another through their relationship to the material world. Resources thus become the lines connecting the men and God in the ecohomosocial cone since these materials mediate their relationships with one another and with God. They share meals with one another; they fast; they give food to the needy; they help one another with agricultural chores; they construct wells. Various impediments get between the monks and God (temptation from the Devil, lust, greed, etc) and attempt to disrupt the harmony of the form, but the end goal always remains the same. As abbot, Beneoit's job is to keep his men in line. In addition to founding monasteries, Benedict is also famous for having written *The Rule of St. Benedict*,<sup>89</sup> a monastic conduct book that lays out the ideal comportment for all Benedictine monks. The double entendre of the word 'Rule' as both a guideline and a geometric tool for creating straight lines becomes ever apparent as we examine the structures of the men's homosocial bonds.

In keeping structure and order, Beneoit regulates every aspect of his monks' existence. *The Rule of St. Benedict* is the saint's most important legacy. This text, a set

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<sup>89</sup> Henceforth I will refer to this text as the *Rule*.

of guidelines for monks that dictates everything, from diet to reading habits and materials to hierarchies of power for the monastery, was the most widely practiced Rule in medieval France. Given the importance of diet, it is not too surprising that the saint's Life would place such an emphasis on the control of resources. In both the *Rule* and the Life of Benedict, resources are depicted as both necessities and possible impediments to achieving union with God. If a monk is greedy or gluttonous, for example, it may prevent him from going to heaven. Given that the text is set during times of invasion, destruction, and famine, nothing is taken for granted by the characters. From water to oil to wine to grains to flour, resources are commoditized and grant the bearers power among men and within their communities. Yet, if they are managed poorly, they can keep the monks from acquiring their ultimate desire: God.

Since controlling water and other resources grants power and asserts masculinity, liquids and foods function as both symbols of and media for identity formation and change in *Benoît*. The *OED* defines 'ecology' as "The branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment. Also: the relationships themselves, esp. those of a specified organism." When one thinks of the relationship between human beings and their environment it may seem more logical to consider the relationship between human beings and water than that between human beings and oil, grains, and wine, yet there are several reasons to consider man-made agricultural produce alongside water in this discussion. Classical philosophers, like Plato, consider wine, oil, and even plant matter as "species" of water.<sup>90</sup> In *Benoît*, wine, oil, and plant matter

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<sup>90</sup> In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes how water and other elements, like earth and fire, function as building blocks, combining with one another in triangular forms (Plato 1180) to make things like the human body

function in the same way as water. All are building blocks of the human body that shape identity and help build communities. In addition to using water for drinking, the monks would have also needed water to irrigate the crops used to make wine, oil, and flour. In *Benoît*, many of the feats and miracles center around consuming water, foods and beverages, learning how to work with, in, or around water to perform agricultural and domestic tasks, and dominating water and food sources to facilitate life for other human beings. Beneoit and his monks establish their masculine power in their communities through their regulation, control, and consumption of water and foodstuffs. Both the literal and figurative meanings of “fluid” are appropriate here as borders, allegiances, identities, and communities are formed and reformed through the exchange of resources in this text. The monks’ identities are just as fluid as are their commodities.

Wauchier de Denain’s *Benoît* is a translation of Book II of Gregory’s *Dialogues* which were likely composed between 593 and 594 (Gregory 1979 25-7), about fifty years after Benedict’s death (Zelzer 329). Given the situation in Rome during Benedict’s life and Gregory’s papacy—“floodings of the Tiber, the plague, and threats from the barbarians” (329)—it is logical to see such an emphasis on water and other resources in this text. As with many prose vernacular translations of Latin saints’ Lives written during the thirteenth century, Wauchier’s text was destined for a very different audience than was Gregory’s version. Wauchier de Denain’s patron, Philippe de Namur, was a Flemish regent ruling for his brother Baudouin who was, following his exploits during

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(1163). Plato enumerates several “species” made from the juices and saps of plants which are in turn composed primarily of water: wine, oil, honey, and *opos* (a vegetable acid) (Plato 1185).



the Fourth Crusade, serving as emperor of Constantinople.<sup>91</sup> Wauchier's lay audience was separated from Gregory's temporally by over six centuries and some fifteen hundred kilometers. The various differences between the two audiences begs the question why would a thirteenth-century Flemish regent be interested in a sixth-century text about an Italian abbot. On the surface, perhaps, the answer is not obvious, but when one examines various aspects and themes of the text, it becomes more apparent why Wauchier's patron would be interested in such a text. Perhaps one explanation for Philippe de Namur's interest in Beneoit lies in the saint's ability to centralize power during the distressing times of the barbarian invasions. In many ways, Beneoit's monasteries function like a religious empire that fills in the void left after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Water would have probably been of interest to Wauchier's Flemish patron, as well. Obviously water is a necessity for all human beings and hence a building block of civilization. The most ancient civilizations were built near water sources. Numerous Roman treatises on architecture like those of Vitruvius and Frontinus, which were preserved in monastic libraries, dealt with the subjects of irrigation and plumbing (Bonde and Maines 628). Medieval monasteries likewise used water for food, flushing latrines,

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<sup>91</sup> For more information about Philippe de Namur's patronage of Wauchier de Denain, see the introductions to editions of Wauchier's texts by Szkilnik (7-8), Thompson (12-13), and Lynde-Recchia (12-13). See Wolff for a discussion of Philippe de Namur's brother, Baldwin of Flanders and Hainaut, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople. He discusses Baldwin's and Philippe's father's interest in prose histories (283), Baldwin's contribution to monastic privileges between 1200-1202, Philippe de Namur's regency (288), fealty to Philippe Auguste in 1206, and the fate of Baldwin's daughters under Philippe de Namur's regency (292-4). See Collet for a treatment of literary patronage in the court of Flanders in the thirteenth century. He discusses the significance of Flanders in light of the Fourth Crusade (89), the interest in chronicles of various sorts, Philippe de Namur's court and the interest in "une culture de divertissement" (89), the desire for texts about the East (96), and Wauchier de Denain's continuation of *Perceval* and his *Vie de sainte Marthe* (103). Grossel also discusses the history of literary patronage by Philippe de Namur and his family, suggesting some possible sources of inspiration for his interest in ascetic themes (54-7), eastern or exotic milieus (61), and critiques of avarice and praise of humility (63).

the production of saleable goods, and for religious ceremonies. Water was so important in the monastic milieu that “monasteries became the principal locus for the use and innovation of hydraulic technologies in medieval Europe” (625). The rulers of Flanders also had to make use of hydraulic technologies and aquatic engineering throughout the Middle Ages to make their marshy lands habitable and profitable for maritime activities. The coast of Flanders was subject to numerous devastating floods in the early centuries of the common era (100-800 AD), sometimes being completely covered (Curveiller 28). In the subsequent centuries, the Flemish people undertook many projects to protect the coastline from flood and to make it marketable for industry and trade. They built dykes, locks, and canals (29). Much like the situation in *Benoît*, these projects required the cooperation of the monasteries (32). While the specific dates of these various projects are not entirely clear, Curveiller estimates that the situation stabilized by the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth century. At this point, the counts of Flanders give various land grants to found abbeys (33). Around 1169, Philippe d’Alsace, the uncle of Wauchier’s patron Philippe de Namur, completed a project to accelerate the drying of the marshy lands and to create canals navigable by commercial boats (34). By the end of the twelfth century, the maritime façade becomes lucrative and cities desired by the county of Alsace are founded. Like *Beneoit*, the counts and ecclesiastics of thirteenth-century Flanders must strengthen their bonds with the rural peoples to gain control of the water projects (36). Given the parallel struggles of *Beneoit* and the counts of Flanders in harnessing water to centralize power in their regions, it is understandable why Wauchier would translate this text for Philippe, the count of Namur. For both

Beneoit's monks and Philippe de Namur's family and people, water became a harmonious source of unity that helped bolster men's political power.

In this chapter, I will examine the multiple layers of triangulated relationships between God, the Devil, Beneoit, his monks, resources, and the people of their communities that confer power and provide a new model for understanding masculinity. In Girard's and Sedgwick's triangles, men assert their masculinity by imitating their predecessors. As we shall see, Beneoit's model is less an imitation than it is an inversion of his society's ideals regarding patriarchy, masculinity, and empire. Fluids become the medium for and metaphor of the shifting ideals of masculinity in this text, and the hermitage and monastery become sites of this change. The very structure of the monastery sets up ideals for community, friendship, education, self-improvement, and radical reformulations of hierarchies of power. Once they enter the monastery, the class and social status of the monks outside of the monastery cease to matter.<sup>92</sup> First, we will examine how Beneoit rejects the models of his forbears. Next, we will see how his management of resources during his hermitage and monastery building creates bonds between the monks and the larger community surrounding their monasteries. Finally, we will see how these triangulated relationships allow Beneoit to achieve his ultimate goal: union with God in the community of heaven.

### Vessels and Values: Patriarchy Broken and Repaired

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<sup>92</sup> See chapter 63 of *The Rule of St. Benedict* for a discussion of rank in the monastery. See Fortin's two articles on friendship and social class in *The Rule of St. Benedict* for a nuanced discussion of how these themes play out in this text. There are parallels with *Benoît* to be explored further, but that is not the subject of this chapter.

*Benoît* begins with a scene that sets the stage for the text's revolutionary model of patriarchal ecology and identity fluidity. The first episode of the text, which is depicted in miniatures in some of the extant manuscripts of Wauchier's *Benoît*,<sup>93</sup> involves a broken vessel. I argue that this scene signifies the rupture between the patriarchal model of the past and Beneoit's new brand of patriarchy.

Beneoit is born of high lineage in Nursia, so his parents can afford to send him to Rome for school. The holy boy soon realizes that this way of life is not in accordance with his own personal ideals, so he “deguerpi sa meson, & les choses son pere, & l'escole” (I.1)<sup>94</sup> [abandons his house, his father's things, and school]. From the very beginning of the text, the author emphasizes Beneoit's breaking with his father's lifestyle and hence his rejection of his primary patriarchal role model.

Soon after, Beneoit aligns himself more with his primary female role model—his nurse. Curiously enough, the text barely mentions Beneoit's mother, but it seems that his nurse has been hired by his family as his caretaker away from home. The text is vague in using the word “norrice” (II.1), not specifying whether she breastfed him as a baby or not. I would argue, however, that the mere suggestion of breastfeeding connoted by this word suggests a primary way that liquids/food have bonded the pair together.

When the nurse borrows an earthen vessel (“un vessel de terre” II.1) from some nearby neighbors, something happens that causes the pair to share bodily fluids yet again, yet this time metaphorically. After having used the vessel, the nurse places it on the table

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<sup>93</sup> See for example London, British Library, Royal 20 D.VI fol. 161v and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale française, fr. 412, fol. 158 vb.

<sup>94</sup> All citations of *Benoît* refer to the chapter and section divisions of my edition which can be found in the appendix.

in such a way that it accidentally breaks in two. Given the proximity of this scene to the mention of Beneoit's abandonment of his 'father's things', it seems as if the author evokes the shattered vessel as a metaphor of the broken patriarchal system that Beneoit is about to repair. When Beneoit finds his nurse, her tears elicit his compassion:

Seinz Beneoiz li bons jovenceauls n'i estoit mie. Més tantost com il revint, trova il sa norrice plorant por le vessel qi brisiéz estoit. Qant li relegieus vit sa norrice plorer, il en fu mout dolenz. Si prist les pieces del vessel. Si se coucha en orisons tot plorant envers Nostre Signor. Tantost com il fu redreciéz & il ot s'orisson finée, il trova sein & entier le vessel si q'il n'i parut jointure ne trace. Lors le rendi a sa norrice, & si la conforta mout docement (II.1).

[Saint Beneoit the good young man was not there. But as soon as he came back, he found his nurse crying for the vessel that had broken. When the religious man saw his nurse crying, he was very sad about it. Then he took the pieces of the vessel. Next he lay down in prayers crying to Our Lord. As soon as he stood up and finished his prayer, he found the vessel safe and whole so that there did not appear to be any cracks or traces. Then he gave it to his nurse and thus comforted her very sweetly.]

Beneoit parallels his nurse's crying in his tearful prayer. Their shared bodily fluids lead to Beneoit's miraculous act of compassion: the repair of the vessel. This act foreshadows Beneoit's future abilities to repair the broken patriarchal model.

The symbolic power of this vessel is not lost on the people of the church. The neighbors who learn about the miracle, hang the vessel at the entrance of the church so that "cil qi apres vendroient seussent com seinz Benoiz fu tres s'enfance de haute merite & de seinte vie envers Nost[re] Signor" (II.2) [those who would come after should know how St. Beneoit was, since childhood, of high merit and holy life toward Our Lord]. The vessel thus reminds all the members of the surrounding community about Beneoit's precocious holiness enabled by the power of his Christian faith and works to help persuade converts to join the Church. The author explains that this vessel remained at the

entrance of the church “trequ’au tens des Longuebarz qui la terre guasterent” (II.2) [until the time of the Lombards who destroyed the land]. Here, the author reminds the reader of another struggle with which the holy man will need to deal as he builds his Christian community amongst the pagans and barbarians.

### Benedict’s Hermitage: Male Bonding in the Desert Wilderness

The very act of compassion that brings Beneoit closer to his nurse also tears them apart. Desiring to evade his growing fame following his first miracle, Beneoit flees his nurse without saying a thing. Although he sets out to pursue a life of asceticism in a desert hermitage, his period of solitude ironically depends upon his cooperation with a new friend—a young monk by the name of Romeins. Upon meeting the hermit, Romeins asks him many questions and Beneoit “li dist tote sa pensée” (III.1) [tells him all his thoughts]. Romeins then becomes a guide for Beneoit: “il li aida & conseilla de qanq’il pot & sot benignement & docement” (III.1) [he helped him and counseled him as much as he was able and knew benignly and sweetly]. He then leads him to the deserted place that becomes his hermitage. The hermitage is called Sublacus because it is a mountain beneath a lake complete with a waterfall and a tight pit in which Beneoit nestles himself. Since this grotto is isolated, hard to reach, and has its own water source, it is the perfect hermitage for Beneoit. It is thus the product of his new friendship which, in turn, develops out of the men’s parallel desire for God. We begin to see the triangular form of their desire, which is reflected both literally in the angular mountain shape and figuratively in the pair’s parallel pursuit of their love object: God. In this instance, their matching desire is a positive thing, and it also seems that in the hermitage, the men can

switch back and forth more easily from the roles of subject and mentor than can Girard's examples like Don Quijote and Sancho Panza.

Beneoit's hermitage is further enabled by Romeins's self-sacrifice. Through their friendship and cooperation, the pair develops an elaborate system to feed Beneoit. Romeinz must save the bread given to him in his monastery and sneak off at the usual time to bring it to Beneoit. Romeins provides the hermit with a rope and a bell. When he lowers the bread on the rope, the bell rings, and the hermit knows his dinner is coming (III.2). Here, the triangular relation of hermit, monk, and God allows Beneoit to achieve his preferred lifestyle, but trouble soon sets in. In Girard's conception of the triangle, the relationship of imitation between subject and role model can lead to rivalry. The *OED* defines 'rivalry' as "the action of rivalling; competition; the state of being rivals, an instance of this." In the Benedictine environment, rivalry is often personified in the competition between God and the Devil, between virtuous men and those prone to vice. Wauchier explains: "Li deables ot de ceste chose grant envie car il est mout dolenz qant il voit a nului bien fere" (III.3) [The Devil is very envious of this thing because he is very sad when he sees someone doing good]. The Devil, God's and the monks' rival, seeks to disrupt the harmony of their union out of jealousy and envy by breaking the bell attached to the rope. Ironically, the Devil's gesture is that which allows Beneoit to join his Christian community on Easter Sunday. Even evil and malice have a purpose in God's plan.

Sympathetic to Beneoit's starvation after the Devil breaks the bell, Romeinz tells his priest "Beneois, mes serz, muert de feim" (IV.1) [Beneoit, my servant, is dying of hunger]. When they see one another, the priest reminds Beneoit that he can end his fast

since it is Easter. The three men then all eat together. The sharing of bread and wine is the ultimate unifying act of the Christian community. The triangulated relationship between Christians, Jesus's body and blood, and God brings all Christians together in the infinitely interconnected triangles of the cone of Christianity.

Once again, Beneoit's exemplary actions make him stand out as a leader of men. Beneoit is paradoxically exalted for his self-debasing humility. Beneoit's lifestyle is so natural and minimalistic that he ceases to resemble his fellow human beings: "En cel tens meimes avint qe li pasteur troverent le seint home la ou il habitoit en sa fosse. Et qant il le virent la en tel maniere & vest[us] de peaus, il cuiderent qe ce fust une beste" (V.1) [At the same time, it happened that shepherds found the holy man there where he was living in his pit. And when they saw him there in such a manner and dressed in skins, they believed that this was a beast]. In the Benedictine ecohomosocial triangle, the role model's beastliness is what makes him exemplary. He thus begins to attract a mass following of disciples who bring him food and whom he "ensegnoit & doctrinoit de saintes paroles" (V.1) [was teaching and indoctrinating with holy words].

It is at this point that the Devil's jealousy rears its ugly head again. First, he sends a black bird ("un merle" (V.2)) to fly around his face, but the holy man does not want to grab it. Rather, he is able to make it disappear with a sign of the cross. When the bird leaves, the man is soon overcome by a "grant temptation de sa char [...] car il avoit jadis une feme veue qe li malignes esperiz li ramena devant en sa pensée, & une si grant volentéz l'en vint por la grant beauté qu'il ai avoit veue q'il ne savoit qe fere" (V.3) [great temptation of his flesh ...because he had in the past seen a woman that the evil spirit brought to his mind and such a strong desire came to him for the great beauty that



he had seen that he did not know what to do]. Beneoit's solution to this dilemma is to divert his erotic energy:

Tantost se desvesti toz nuz si com il chei de sa mere, & vint a un buisson qi toz estoit pleins d'espines & d'orties. Si se lessa cheoir dedenz, & si se torna dedenz tant & retorna qu'il fut toz plaiéz & oritéz & qe li san[g] coroit de son cors de totes parz. Eisni chaça il & osta les plaies q'il avoit en sa pensée par les dolereuses plaies dont il s'estoit navréz par defors. En ceste maniere venqui il le desirrier q'il avoit & mua en douleur. (V.3)

[Right away he undressed completely naked just as he fell from his mother and came to a bush that was full of thorns and barbs. Then he let himself fall inside it and rolled in it so much and came back so wounded and pricked that blood flowed out of his body from all parts. He thus chased away and rid himself of the wounds that he had in his thoughts by the painful wounds with which he was hurt on the outside. In this way he vanquished the desire that he had and changed it into pain].

Wauchier lingers on every detail of this scene from describing the holy man's burning lust ("cele tres grant flambe del desirrier" (V.3)) to the way he remedied it. It is fitting that the solution to Beneoit's temptation lies in a nude roll in the thorns. As he does frequently in his life, Beneoit uses his relationship to his environment to bring himself closer to God. He also continues to serve as an example for his monks who "alerent a lui por sa vie ensivrrre & sa doctrine" (V. 4) [go to him to follow his life and his teaching].

#### Benedict's Abbotship: Rivalry, Disobedience, and Discipline

When the monks of a nearby monastery ask Beneoit to become their abbot, rivalry ensues yet again. Beneoit initially refuses the monks' offer to become "lor peres & lor mestres" (V.1) [their father and their master], saying that "il ne porroit mie ne ne covendrait q'il menast lor mors ne lor manieres" (V.1) [he could not nor would it be suitable that he guide their morals and their manners]. When Beneoit finally does accede, the language

emphasizes the violence necessary on the abbot's part to inculcate virtue. Beneoit punishes ("chastoier" (V.1)) and indoctrinates ("doctrine" (V.1)) the men so much that it starts to bother ("anoier" (V.1)) the monks. Their disgust then brings them together to conspire against him: "Si le pristrent entr'eus a blasmer por ce q'il ne pooient fere ore ce qu'il soloient" (V.1) [They then take to blaming him between them because they were no longer able to do that which they used to do]. The expression "entre'eus" [between them] parallels the title of Sedgwick's book *Between Men*, highlighting how the homosocial triangle created by the men's parallel quest for God leads to interesting dynamics in their own relations with one another. While sometimes these relations can be seen positively in the forms of friendship or male bonding, in this case, the resentment leads to conspiracy against the master, to rivalry and competition between the virtuous Benedict and the sinful monks.

The men attempt to kill Beneoit by poisoning his beverage. Contrary to prior scenes when disciples brought food, water, and communion to Beneoit's hermitage to sustain him, the men now try to use his need of sustenance to kill him. When Beneoit performs the sign of the cross on his drink, "brisa li vesseaus & vola en pieces, & aussint fu il esqarteléz com se l'en i eust geté d'une grant pierre" (V.2) [the vessel broke and flew into pieces and was then torn apart as if it had been thrown from a large stone]. In referencing a broken vessel, Wauchier harkens back to Beneoit's first miracle, the repair of the nurse's broken vessel. In drawing a parallel between these two scenes, he reminds readers that Beneoit has yet to perfect his new model of patriarchal ecology. The system is still broken, as is the triangle uniting the men in their quest for God. Realizing that the men's morals and his own are still too different ("mes meurs & les vostres ne

s'acorderoient mie" (V. 3)) and that the men will not imitate him as their role model, Beneoit leaves, telling his monks to find a new father according their customs. Though this scene paints Beneoit as a severe tyrant despised by his men, it also prefigures the height of his monastery building, suggesting that his severity is that which ultimately makes him a good patriarch. The shift from the story about the poisoned beverage (VI) to Beneoit's foundation of twelve monasteries (VII) is abrupt within the text. The narrator transitions between the two disparate scenes by saying, "Dont se departi seinz Beneois de la si s'en rala a son leu en la roche qu'il mout amoit" (VII.1) [Then St. Beneoit left from there and went back to his place in the rock that he used to love so much.] Following his difficulties with the monks, Beneoit's reaction is first to return to the hermitage where he does not have to interact with many people and then to found new communities based on his beliefs.

In constructing his complex of twelve monasteries, Beneoit creates his own internal familial structure and hierarchy modeled on Christ's disciples. Wauchier writes "par l'aide Nostre Signor fist il .xii. eglisses ou il fist de .xii. moines peres qi ensemble o lui arrestoient, & desoz chascun, mist il freres qui vesquirent par seinte ruile: si com il meimes lor avoit ensignie & doctriné" (VI.1) [with the help of Our Lord he made twelve churches where he made twelve abbots (literally monk fathers) who used to stay with him and under each one, he placed brothers who lived by holy rule: just as he himself had taught and indoctrinated them]. The emphasis on a familial structure, hierarchies of power, and imitation of virtuous conduct is evident in the language of this passage. The triangular hierarchical structure can be replicated *ad infinitum* because of the hierarchies of power, the imitation of virtue, and the continual growth of the Church inherent in

Beneoit's monastic model. Beneoit imitates Christ, the abbots imitate Beneoit and the twelve disciples, and future monks imitate their abbots. All are bonded together in their mutual devotion to God. Beneoit begins to be further recognized as a patriarch by the surrounding community as the "hauz hom." Men like Euitius and Placidum send their sons Maurus and Theralius to Beneoit "por norrir & por ensignier" (VII.2) [to nourish and teach]. Godefroy defines "norrir" as "élever (un enfant nouveau-né) en l'allaitant" [to raise {a newborn child} by breastfeeding it] and by extension, both "élever" [to raise] and "entretenir par des aliments" [to feed]. "Norrir" thus encompasses both feeding and upbringing, two jobs undertaken by Beneoit, the abbots, and the senior monks of the monastery in his hierarchies of power. Teaching and feeding are valued equally as Beneoit's primary tasks. He becomes the boys' adoptive father in this new model of patriarchy, and sharing communal meals is a very important aspect of the lifestyle that brings them together. Just as he had done as abbot in the first monastery, Beneoit continues to enforce a strict set of rules covering all aspects of the monastic lifestyle and to administer corporal punishment when the monks break any rules. When the abbot Pompeiens is unable to rectify the behavior of one young monk, Beneoit steps in to handle the situation by punishing the lad himself: "Beneoiz le bati d'une verge por la viuté qi en son cors estoit entrée" (VIII.5) [Beneoit beat him with a rod for the vileness which had entered his body]. Emphasis is always placed on parity between the monks, reminding one of the double meaning of 'Rule' as both a list of restrictions and a geometric line in which all monks must fall into place. When one young boy refuses to join his fellow monks in prayer, "Ses abbés le chastia pluseurs foiz & amonesta de ce fere qe li autre frere fesoient" (VIII.1) [His abbot punished him several times and

admonished him to do that with the other monks were doing]. As usual in the ecohomosocial triangle, there is an emphasis on imitation and accord among the brothers of the monastery.

The duties of the abbot are two-fold. Just as much as it is his job to punish the men to keep them in line, it is also his duty to facilitate life for the monks. At times, this involves harnessing the power of resources to help the monks have more time to focus their energy on their relationship with God. Three of the twelve monasteries founded by Beneoit are “en som la hautesce de la roche” (IX.1) [atop the highness of the mount]. As we have already seen, the mountain is an ideal place for hermitages since the arduous lifestyle inculcates virtue and since the altitude puts the hermit closer to God. For the average monk, however, the difficulty of fetching water is too dangerous: “m[u]lt estoit grief chose & traveilleuse as freres de cez .iii. eglisses de descendre au lac en la valée por prendre eue car il avoit grant peril & grant poor a ceus qi descendoit de la monteigne” (IX.1) [this was a very difficult thing and was tiresome to the monks of these three churches to descend to the lake in the valley to fetch water because it was a great peril and was fearsome to he who was climbing down the mountain]. Contrary to Beneoit’s rocky grotto, this mount does not have its own water source. When Beneoit was a hermit, even he understood the value of having food and water provided for him. His experience in the wilderness with his companion Romeins thus allowed him to become a sympathetic abbot. Just as the arduousness of the hermitage brought Beneoit and Romeins together through ecohomosocial bonds, so does the difficulty of living atop a mountain for the monks. The monks of all three churches join together (“Por ce

s'assemblerent li frere des .iiii. eglisses." IX.2). When the monks ask Beneoit to move the monastery to another place, he 'engineers a miracle.'<sup>95</sup>

Beneoit responds to the monks' plight by comforting, mentoring, praying for, and becoming a role model for them, thus outlining numerous duties of an ideal abbot through his exemplary behavior. When Beneoit comforts the monks, his paternal compassion is evident: "il les conforta mout benignement & mout docement" (IX.3) [he comforted them very kindly and very gently]. This portrait of sweet compassion, which parallels Romein's support during Beneoit's hermitage (III.1), contrasts sharply with that of the severe disciplinarian seen elsewhere in the text. The ideal abbot knows when to love and when to punish. Beneoit's immediate response to his paternal compassion is to experience first-hand the monks' plight: "Et qant vint la nuit, il monta la roche ensamble o lui l'enfant qi Placidus avoit non" (IX.3) [And when night came, he climbed the mountain together with the child who was named Placidus]. It is fitting that Beneoit, the spiritual father, would accompany his spiritual son atop the mountain in this ecological *imitatio Mariae*. Beneoit models the compassion of the ultimate parent, the Virgin Mary, who had to suffer by watching her child suffer. Beneoit puts himself in the position of the monks to better understand their plight, and also to model his ideal behavior for them. When they arrive atop the mount, Beneoit hands the situation over to God to whom he prays. He then decides to mark this holy place by placing three stones at the prayer site ("il mist trois pierres aussint com por enseignes la ou il l'avoit fete" IX.3). Here and on numerous other occasions in the text, Beneoit realizes the importance of place and that

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<sup>95</sup> I borrow this term from Ellen Arnold who discusses how hydraulic technology is described as miraculous in some historical accounts of monastic foundation (Arnold "Engineering Miracles").

certain places are holier than others or are more conducive to cultivating a relationship with God. The difficulty of the eremitic and monastic lifestyles in the wilderness forces the men to work together in desiring God's love. This is why Beneoit decides to pray for a solution to his water dilemma rather than to move the monastery "en autre leu" (IX.2) [in another place] as the monks had asked. By marking the earth with the three stones Beneoit creates a material triangular mark that parallels the symbolic ecohomosocial triangles seen throughout the text. The next morning, Beneoit continues to teach his monks about the value of pain, hard work, prayer, and faith through his exemplary behavior. When they complain yet again about having to fetch water, he says to them, "Alez & si Chavez la roche deseure la ou vos troveroiz trois pierres mises ensemble. Nostre Sires est bien si puissanz qu'il puet eue fere venir en som la monteigne & vos oster del grant travail ou vos estes" (IX.4) [Go and then dig beneath the rock there where you will find three stones placed together. Our Lord is so powerful that he can make water come on top of the mountain and deliver you from the great torment in which you are]. Upon his word, the monks dig and find water "a si grant plenté tresq'a hui cest jor en descent ele d'en som la montagne tres q'en la valée. Et cil en orent & ont assez qui la habitent" (IX.5) [so plentiful that to this day it descends from the top of the mountain down to the valley. And those who live there pray for it and have enough]. Beneoit's triangular relationship between God and resources becomes such an example that the monks learn from him, and all future inhabitants of this region have water thanks to him. The water source then becomes another material manifestation of God's love of man.

The following miracle in the text also involves hard work, prayer, and water.

This time, however, the water becomes more an obstacle than a necessity for existence.

Wauchier tells of a monk named Gotus whom Beneoit sends to do some gardening:

“Beneoiz li comanda a pre[n]dre un fauchart por oster buissons & orties fors d’un leu ou il voloit un cortil fere, & cil leus estoit pres del lac qi desoz la roche estoit” (X.1)

[Beneoit commanded him to take a scythe to remove bushes and thorns from a place where he wanted to make a little garden, and this place was near the lake which was beneath the mountain]. He works so hard chipping away at the bushes that he loses the blade in the water that is so deep he has trouble finding it (“il s’esforçoit en tel maniere, li fers del fauchart failli fors del manche. Si chei el lac en tel leu qe nus ne cuidast ja-més que li fers peust ester trovés si estoit l’eue parfonde” X.1). When Gotus sees that he lost his blade, he seeks the help of another monk: “il trest a Maurum & si li dist le domache qu’il avoit receue” (X.2) [he withdrew to Maurus and told him about his misfortune].

Maurus then turns to Beneoit who performs yet another miracle: “il ala au lac, si prist le manche del fauchart qe Gotus tenoit en sa mein. Si le bouta en l’eue, & meintenant revint li fers de la parfondece. Si rentra el manche si com il avoit esté devant” (X.2) [he went to the lake, then took the handle of the scythe that Gotus was holding in his hand.

Then he put it in the water and immediately the blade came back from the depths. Then it returned to the handle just as it had been before]. This miracle demonstrates how ecohomosocial triangles can become intertwined through the bonds between the men.

Within the monastery, there is a hierarchy of monks. The abbot teaches the senior monks who then become models for the more recent converts. We see yet again how Girard’s concept of imitation comes into play in the monks’ quest for the love of God.

In the following miracle, Maurus also becomes a leader in the monastery for the younger monks. In the opening line of this chapter, the narrator explicitly mentions why



Beneoit is absent: “Une autre foiz avint qe seinz Beneoiz estoit en sa ceaille & Placidus, qi estoit moines & assez enfes, issi defors a tot un vessel por puisier el lac de l’eue”

(XI.1) [Another time it happened that St. Beneoit was in his cell and Placidus, who was a monk and was a very young child, went out with a vessel to draw water from the lake].

In this introductory sentence, Wauchier outlines the numerous lessons to be garnered from this miracle. First, by handling the daily chores and helping one another, the monks allow the abbot to devote himself to contemplation and prayer in his cell. Next, in mentioning the young age of Placidus, the text emphasizes his lower position in the hierarchy, thus explaining why he is performing the more menial chores and why he needs the older monks to help him. As with all the other water situations in the text, difficulty ensues: “Si com il s’abessoit por l’eue prendre, il n’en sot mot si fu dedenz cheus” (XI.1) [Just as he lowered himself to collect water, without even realizing it he had fallen in]. Beneoit then prophetically realizes what has happened: “Seinz Beneoiz, qi dedenz sa cealle estoit, sot tantost ceste chose.” (XI.2) [St. Beneoit, who was in his cell, knew this thing right away]. Next, he calls Maurus and apprises him of the situation. Maurus then performs a miraculous ecological *imitatio Christi*: “Or poez oir merveille: qe tantost come Maurus ot receue la beneiçon & son comandement s’en ala isnelem[en]t tresq’al lieu ou l’onde avoit l’enfant mené. Si le prist par les cheveus & repera arriere toute par deseure l’eue si securement q’il cuidoit aler par terre.” (XI.3) [Now hear a marvel: as soon as Maurus had received the blessing and his commandment, he went promptly to the place where the wave had carried the child. Then he took him by the hair and went back entirely atop the water so surely that he thought he was walking on land.] Maurus himself is amazed by and afraid of his miraculous ability to walk on water (“Si

s'en esmerveilla & espoori mout durement" XI.3) and goes back to Beneoit to recount his deed. Beneoit attributes his abilities to his obedience: "Seinz Beneoiz dist qe ce n'estoit mie par ses merites; einz estoit par l'obedience qu'il avoit aemplie" (XI.4) [St. Beneoit said that it was not by his merits but by obedience that he had achieved {this}]. Maurus then attributes the miracle to Beneoit's commandment: "Et Maurus disoit encontre qe ce estoit tant seulement par son [co]mandement, car adonc ne li sovenoit d'obedience" (XI.4): [And Maurus said on the contrary that it was only by his commandment because he did not used to be mindful of obedience]. Here Maurus confirms the triangles of imitation made possible by the monastic lifestyle; Maurus is only able to learn obedience because of his abbot's commandments. The virtuousness of the monastery is then made manifest through further aquatic miracles: "La ou l'eue qe seinz Beneoiz avoit estruit & fet en l'oneur Nostre Signor Jesucrist croissoient & monteplioient. Par cieus miracles & par autres, plieuseurs genz i venoient por deguerpir la seculer vie, & si se sosmetoient a sa doctrine" (XI.4) [There where the water that St. Beneoit had brought about and made in the honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ {the followers} grew and multiplied. For this miracle and others, many people came to leave the secular life and then submitted themselves to his doctrine]. As with the three stones, God makes his love manifest to the monks through natural miracles. The abundance of water both attracts people to the monastery and symbolizes the growth of the Christian Church in this formerly pagan region overcome by barbarian invaders. Furthermore, the use of the word "submit" (sosmetoient) further illustrates the hierarchy of power within the monastery. The interconnecting ecohomosocial triangles will repeat *ad infinitum* as the abbot imitates

Christ, the monks imitate the abbot, and the miraculous deeds that result from the faith and obedience attract generations of new followers.

As Girard pointed out in his conception of the triangle of desire, rivalry is just as prevalent as imitation when two people are pursuing the same love object. Once again, Beneoit's ability to attract followers causes jealousy, which is attributed to the Devil. The jealous man, a priest named Florentins from a nearby church "fu espris envers le saint home par malice del deable. Si comença a avoir envie de ses fez & de ses oevres" (XII.1) [was inflamed toward the holy man by the malice of the Devil. Then he started to be envious of his deeds and his works]. Florentins, whose jealousy is inspired by the Devil, resents Beneoit for his miraculous deeds and extreme virtue and sends a poisoned loaf of bread to Beneoit. Resources here threaten to tear the men away from God rather than bring them closer to him and one another. Beneoit realizes that the bread is poisoned, and has a crow carry it away where no one can find it. Beneoit is well aware of the priest's motivations: "Li seinz hom vit l'envie qe li prestres avoit vers lui & la felonie. Si en fu pl[us] dolenz por le prestre qe por lui meismes" (XII.5) [The holy man saw the envy that the priest had toward him and the fury. Then he was sadder for the priest than he was for himself]. When Florentins realizes he is unable to kill Beneoit, he decides to tempt the monks: "il se pensa qu'il toudroit les ames a ses deciples en tel maniere q'il envoieroit devant eus .vii. damoiseles totes nues qui par les meins s'entretendroient & karoleroient & joeroient ensemble. Einsi[n]t, trestorneroient lor pensées & enflameroient en luxure" (XII.5) [He thought to himself that he would take the souls of his disciples in such a way that he would send before them seven naked damsels who would be holding hands, and dancing in circles, and playing together]. Beneoit's

response to Florentins's temptation of the monks is to strengthen the hierarchy of the monastery by bringing in more leaders for the weak monks: "Si establi & mist partout prevoz & freres qi demorassent, & puis si prist ensemble o lui petit compagnie de moines, si s'en ala & tint sa voie" (XII.5) [Then he established and placed all over provosts and monks who should remain, and then he took together with him a small company of monks, then he went and stayed on his path]. Beneoit knows that he has to establish a strong group of leaders in the monastery before moving on to found other monasteries and to spread the Word of God. He realizes how the leadership structure creates a culture of exemplarity, role-modeling, and imitation that gives all the fortitude to overcome temptation.

When Beneoit goes on to found his next monastery, the great Abbey of Monte Cassino, the envious Devil returns. Immediately upon building this monastery, Beneoit has a vision of the Devil. This time, the Devil has "grant douleur [...] & grant ire" (XIII.4) [great pain and great ire] and is very unhappy about Beneoit's works. The Devil's anger is personified in his enflamed body. His mouth and eyes are overcome with flames ("espris de flambes la bouche & li oel li ardoient" XIII.4). This description of the Devil's appearance contrasts interestingly with the numerous instances of holy water in the text. Here and elsewhere, the Devil's temptation is described as a flame, or burning sensation overtaking the body. The solution to putting out these flames is consistently water. This vision also prefigures a literal fire that destroys the monastery at Monte Cassino. When the monks find a pagan idol and throw it in the kitchen, "feus fissist de totes parz de la meson si q'il cuidierent qe li defices de la cuisine fust toz espriz & enflambéz" (XIV.3) [it set fire to all parts of the house in such a way that they believed

the whole building of the kitchen was entirely overtaken and in flames]. Beneoit manages to stop the flames with his prayers. In this story, the burning idol symbolizes the threat of pagan religions in this region. Beneoit must spread his message like a flood of holy water through prayer and good deeds to put out the flames.

The Devil returns to Monte Cassino to kill a young little monk (“un jeune moniot” XV.1) who is crushed by bricks while building a wall. The monks bring the dead boy to Beneoit in a bag because he is too torn up to carry any other way. They place him outside of Beneoit’s cell while he is in prayer and he is brought back to life. This miracle teaches that the young monks are the ones who are most susceptible to the Devil, further justifying the hierarchical structure of the monastery.

We have already seen the Devil attempt to kill Beneoit and a young monk, and we have seen him tempt Beneoit and the monks with beautiful women. The next group of examples involves the eating and management of food resources. *The Rule of St. Benedict* contains numerous restrictions on eating and drinking. It is no surprise that the Life of Benedict would allegorize the *Rule* with examples of men not following these restrictions. To make the switch from beautiful women to tasty morsels shows us the extent to which women were commoditized like foodstuffs and how food and water were sought after and desired like women. When these parallels are noted, it seems completely logical to see resources in a triangulated relationship between men, just as Girard and Sedgwick had previously seen the relationship between men and the objects of their desire.

*Benoît* presents three different examples of men breaking the rules for eating and drinking. In the first example, two monks break the rules by eating at a woman’s house

before Vespers. Beneoit prophetically knows that they are lying to him (XVI). He then goes on to tell them not only where they ate but what they ate and how it was prepared. The monks beg Beneoit for forgiveness, and he absolves their sins.

In the second story of alimentary sin, two monks on the way to see Beneoit are doubly tempted to break their fast (XVII). One monk brings food with him and asks the other if he wants to eat with him on two occasions. The other monk refuses both times, saying “Amis, non ferai; je ne mangerai mie car je suel toz tens jeuns venir a saint Beneoit, nostre pere” (XVII.1) [Friend, I will not do it; I will not eat at all because I always fast when I come to visit St. Beneoit, our father]. Evenutally, they find themselves in a beautiful prairie where there is “une mout bele fonteine qui mout estoit clere & delitable, & tieus choses si estoient mout plesanz a ceus qi estoient lasséz” (XVII.3) [a very beautiful fountain that was very clear and nice, and these things were very pleasant to those who were weary]. The weaker monk then tries to convince the other monk to drink from this fountain, arguing that if they take a break to rest, they will proceed “plus heitiement” (XVII.3) [more happily] for the rest of the way. The monk gives in this third time, but Beneoit realizes right away the sin they committed and blames it on the Devil, saying, “Li malignes esperiz qui a toi parla en la voie par ton compaignon ne te pot mie e[n]orter qe tu feisses sa volenté a la premiere foiz, ne a la seconde, més a la tierce sormonta il a ce qu’il vout fere” (XVII.4) [the sly spirit who spoke to you on the way through your companion was not at all able to urge you to perform his will the first time, nor the second, but the third time he overcame {you to achieve} that which he wanted to do]. Where Beneoit and the monks had at times used resources to become closer to one another and to God, the Devil uses them here to tempt

the men to sin. The same materials that bring the men together can also tear them away from God if used improperly. Like the monk in the previous example, this monk also falls to Beneoit's feet begging for mercy. Ironically, the Devil, in some ways, pushes the monks closer to Beneoit through his temptation. In sinning, they realize their weakness and their reliance upon Beneoit for his exemplary relationship with God.

In the third example of a food sin, a child monk by the name of Ylarates tries to steal a flask of wine. This liquid vessel, which harkens back to the others seen elsewhere in the text, becomes the site of yet another miracle. Not only does Beneoit prophetically realize that the monk is trying to steal a flask that someone sent as a gift to the monastery, but he also warns the boy not to drink it, but to pour out the contents. The boy tests Beneoit's prophecy by pouring out the flask. When he does "en issi uns serpenz" (XXII.2) [a serpent came out of it]. I would like to suggest that this serpent-ridden flask also symbolizes how the prior patriarchal model is flawed. This flask was one of two sent along with the boy by a nobleman of the village. The boy becomes greedy and tries to keep one vessel for himself, teaching us that part of the problem with men controlling resources is greed since they do not share them with those less fortunate than themselves. Even though this boy is young, Beneoit still wants to teach him the values of communal pooling of resources, sharing with the surrounding community, and having faith in God. Though the boy's primary intention is to take care of his own nutritional needs, the problem is that in doing so he exhibits selfishness, greed, and a lack of faith. As some other food miracles in this text show, Beneoit wants the monks to share not only with one another but with people from the surrounding community to both attract new followers to the Church and to increase the monks' faith in God's ability to provide for them.

The problems with patriarchy and the solutions afforded by the monastic model of governance are made more apparent soon after this incident. Wauchier writes about a time when “une g[ra]nt famine vint en cele region si qe totes les genz de la contrée en estoient destreinz” (XXV.1) [a great famine came to this region so that all the people from the country were oppressed by it]. Not only is the region suffering, but the monks are, as well: “Adont failli li blez en l’abeie seint Beneoit; lor peins estoit si failliz q’il n’en i avoit qe .v. tant seulement de remanant. Li frere en estoie[n]t tuit esmaiés, ne ne savoient qe fere” (XXV.1) [Then wheat was lacking in St. Beneoit’s abbey; their bread was so lacking that they only had five {loaves} remaining. The monks were all worried and did not know what to do]. This passage recalls prior scenes when the security of having food and water allows the monks to focus on their relationships with one another and with God. As long as they do not have enough to eat, they begin to worry which gets in the way of their relationships. Beneoit notices their pain and tells them, “Por qoi estes voz si tristes en vos corages por ceste besoigne? Sosfrez hui tant seulement & demein avroiz vos a grant plenté ce qe mestiers vos fera” (XXV.1) [Why are you so sad in your thoughts for this need? Endure today only and tomorrow you will have an abundance of that which your need will bring you]. Beneoit reminds his monks to have faith in God to provide them with the resources necessary for survival. The next day, they find some sacks of flour on their doorstep. The monks learn from this “c’on ne devoit mie douter ne desperer qui a mestier & besoigne” (XXV.2) [that one who has demand and need should neither doubt nor despair]. Despite this lesson in faith, selfishness and greed continue to be a problem for the men during these times of famine.



The monastery becomes a center of power during the times of famine and barbarian invasions. Beneoit takes it upon himself to take care of the needy: “departi & dona seinz Beneoiz a toz ceus qi besoigneus estoient totes les choses qi viandes estoient en s’abeie. Ne ni remest el celier riens nule fors un pou d’uile en un vessel de voirre” (XXXII.1) [St. Beneoit divided and gave to all those who were needy all the food in the abbey. Nothing remained in the cellar except for a little bit of oil in a glass vessel]. This vessel, like the others in the text, highlights another situation where the patriarchal model fails. As we soon learn, the cellarer Agapites, disobeys Beneoit who asks him to give away the last bit of oil. The moral characters of the two men are contrasted. While Beneoit “tout voloit doner en terre ce q[‘i]l avoit por aquerre la joie del ciel” (XXXII.2) [wanted to give away everything he had on earth to attain the joy of heaven], Agapites “ne le vout faire” (XXXII.2) [did not want to do it]. When Beneoit discovers his disobedience and asks him about it, Agapites replies that he did not want to because “s’il li eust doné ce tant d’uile neis point n’en fust remés a oes toz les freres” (XXXII.2) [if he had given away this much oil there would not be any remaining for all the monks]. Where in previous examples, the monks are brought closer to one another and to God by sharing food, in this instance, their greed gets in the way of their faith and thus hurts their relationship with God. Beneoit becomes so “corrociéz” (XXXII.2) [enraged] that he has the monks throw the vessel out of a window “car il ne voloit mie qe aucune chose remainsist en l’abeie par inobedience” (XXXII.2) [because he did not want anything to remain in the abbey through inobedience]. Even though the symbolic vessel “fu getéz seur les pierres” [was thrown on the stones], it “ne brisa mie ne ne respandi mie” [neither broke nor spilled at all] (XXXII.3). Furthermore, the oil barrel in the cellar which was

previously completely empty, begins to overflow: “li estoupaus del toniel coumença a soslever parce qe li huiles croissoit, & tant qu’il comença a cheoir par deseure for[s] del tonel seur le pavement habundanm[en]t” (XXXII.4) [the cork in the barrel started to rise because the oil increased and so much so that it started to fall abundantly on the pavement beneath the barrel]. In the prior scenes where broken or cursed vessels symbolized the greed of the men and the problems with patriarchy, this miraculously unbroken vessel and the abundance of oil signify the advantages of the monastic model of resource management. Paradoxically, it is by giving up everything that the monks are able to have an abundance of food. Here the miraculously intact vessel symbolizes Beneoit’s repairing of the broken patriarchal model. Rather than selfishly hoarding resources, the monks are expected to share their resources with the surrounding community. Unlike the familial patriarchs who care primarily for themselves and their families, the monastic patriarchs band together to take care of the needs of others before taking care of their own. In this new model, caring for others and the unit of the family are still important, but the family unit encompasses more than just the biological family. This new family is the spiritual family, an expanded family that includes all of God’s children.

The Place of Women in Beneoit’s New Model of Patriarchal Ecology

The place of women as an object of desire is seminal in Girard's and Sedgwick's triangles of desire, but women are rarely an object of desire for the men in *Benoît*, and when they are it is seen as a sin or as a distraction from their devotion to God. As we have seen in the numerous anecdotes about Beneoit's extreme virtue, severe discipline, and miraculous feats, women occupy an ambivalent place in *Benoît*. Women are mothers, nurses, nuns, temptresses, sisters, and delicate creatures in need of moral rectification and help from men. For the monks, desiring a woman is an obstacle that gets in the way of their relationship with God, much like coveting resources. Though this text is ambivalent in its presentation of women, they are foundational in Beneoit's new model of patriarchy. In what follows, I would like to suggest that the feminine book-ends of the text provide a framework for understanding Beneoit's self-transformation and his new model of patriarchy. Before turning to the final miracles, I will give a brief overview of the various scenes depicting women.

Let us begin with the figure of the mother since every man's first encounter with a woman is with his mother. Beneoit's mother is almost completely absent in the text. *Benoît* skips over most of the saint's childhood. No details between Beneoit's birth and his abandonment of his family are mentioned, and when Beneoit does leave home, Wauchier does not even list his family members in the things he is leaving behind: "deguerpi sa meson, & les choses son pere, & l'escole" (I.1) [he abandoned his house, and his father's things, and school]. This is not too surprising since tradition has it that Benedict's mother died in childbirth (Boo and Braun 4), but it seems that not having a mother prevents Beneoit from fully understanding the value of feminine relationships. The only mention of Beneoit's mother in the text occurs when he tempted by the thought

of a beautiful woman. When he punishes himself by rolling around in thorns, Wauchier uses the following simile to describe his nudity: “se desvesti toz nuz si com il chei de sa mere” (V.3) [he undressed completely nude just as he fell from his mother]. This simile is not included in Gregory’s account (“nudum se in illis spinarum” II.2).<sup>96</sup> According to Godefroy, the verb ‘cheoir’ can mean either “échoir, tomber” [to fall] or “être soustrait” [to be taken away]. Either translation here emphasizes the emotional violence of his birth. None of the examples given by Godefroy are used in the context of birth, so Wauchier’s diction seems exceptional here. In choosing this word, Wauchier highlights the lack of connection between mother and son in the birthing scene. It is as if his arrival on earth was a sudden shock and we do not see the nurturing mother caring for her son. Furthermore, by evoking the image of a falling infant in a scene where the hermit is being tempted by the thought of a beautiful woman, the author connects Beneoit’s difficulties with the opposite sex with his troubled and/or nonexistent relationship with his mother.

The language of love and compassion used to describe Beneoit’s relationship with his nurse suggests that his nurse fills the void left by his mother and the other family he abandons (or is abandoned by) in the text. When Beneoit first retreats from society to his rocky grotto, his nurse is the only person who accompanies him: “sa norrice, qi mout l’amoit, l’ensivi qi faillir ne pot & nus autres” (II.1) [his nurse, who loved him much, followed him, she who could not fail in her duty, and nobody else]. Beneoit’s nurse loves him, does not want to let him go, and is the only person so attached to him that she follows him. The text emphasizes this through the expression “nus autres” [no others].

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<sup>96</sup> All citations of Gregory’s *Dialogues* come from the 1979 edition by de Vogüé with facing page French translations by Antin. I give chapter numbers in Roman numerals and section numbers in Arabic numerals.

She is more troubled by his flight into the desert than are his family members, teachers, or classmates. The love between the nurse and child seems mutual since it is for her that Beneoit is able to perform his first miracle by repairing the broken vessel. His compassion for her tears makes him “dolenz” (II.1) [sad]. What he is lacking in his relationship with his absent mother is more than compensated for by his substitute mother, his nurse. Perhaps it is this newfound sense of family that inspires him in devising future spiritual families in his monastic model. Beneoit learns that family is less a biological relation than it is a spiritual one, that spiritual families can compensate for what one is lacking in one’s biological family, and that spiritual families can repair the broken patriarchal model.

That biological families can become an obstacle in one’s spiritual quest becomes apparent later in the text when a young monk visits his parents. To emphasize his role as a child, Wauchier uses the diminutive “enfanton” (XXVIII.1) [little child] to describe him. He explains that he “amoit mout son pere & sa mere” [loved his father and his mother very much] and left to visit them “sanz le congié seint Beneoit” [without Beneoit’s permission] (XXVIII.1). The young boy then dies while with his parents. When they bury him, some miraculous force keeps throwing him from the grave. The boy’s parents then seek Beneoit’s help. He gives them an oblation to place at the boy’s feet in the sepulcher. This time, the boy remains in the grave. This miracle reminds readers that like Jesus and Beneoit, monks must be dead to their families if they are to devote themselves entirely to God. Mothers and other family members are obstacles that distract from loving God fully.

The young, beautiful women mentioned elsewhere in the text are likewise obstacles to be overcome by the monks in their spiritual journeys. On two occasions in the text, the devil uses beautiful women to test the men's faith. In the first instance, the Devil makes a black bird fly in Beneoit's face while he is in his rocky grotto (V.2). The bird flies in his face annoying him, and when it flies away, Beneoit's flesh is overcome by a great temptation as the Devil brings a beautiful woman to his mind (V.3). It is at this point that Beneoit rolls naked in thorns. In this scene, woman is first associated with the black bird and the Devil. In trying to cure himself, Beneoit tries to substitute woman with plant: "Einsi chaça il & osta les plaies q'il avoit en sa pensée par les dolereuses plaies dont il s'estoit navréz par defors. En ceste maniere venqui il le desirrier q'il avoit & mua en douleur" (V.3) [He thus chased away and rid himself of the painful wounds in his mind with the painful wounds by which he was hurt on the outside. In this way, he vanquished the desire that he had and turned it into pain]. This is one of the first instances in the text where we clearly see the slippage from women to environment. Beneoit sublimates his carnal desire in his roll in the thorns. He substitutes pleasure with pain in order to better pursue his love of God. Furthermore, his homosocial bonds help him in ridding himself of temptation: "si com il tesmoingoit a ses deciples, fu la temptation de cele volenté en lui si dontée que onques puis n'en senti rien. Donc comencierent plusieurs genz a deguerpir le siecle & alerent a lui por sa vie ensivvre & sa doctrine" (V.4) [Just as he was testifying to his disciples, the temptation of this desire in him was so conquered that he no longer felt any of it. Then numerous people started to abandon society and went to him to follow his life and his doctrine]. In this episode, Beneoit realizes how lust for the opposite sex becomes an obstacle to attaining God's

love. He also learns that there is strength in the homosocial bonds afforded by the monastic model; the men can help one another to sublimate their carnal lust into spiritual love.

The second example of temptation by beautiful women further highlights this point. When the jealous priest Florentins realizes that he cannot kill Beneoit, he then tries to break the mens' bonds by sending seven naked young ladies, holding hands, singing, and playing together to tempt the monks (XII). When Beneoit sees this, he tries to fortify the hierarchical structure of the monastery by adding more leaders to watch over the younger, weaker monks. In building his monasteries, Beneoit realizes that the triangular hierarchical structure of the monastery facilitates everyone's pursuit of God. These temptresses seem more like instruments used and abused by the Devil and Florentins to undermine God's and Beneoit's power than they do like active agents of malice.

Yet another story highlights how women can become unwitting participants in helping the men to sin. Wauchier tells of a "religieuse feme" (XVI.2) [religious woman] who has some of Beneoit's monks over for dinner, and Beneoit prophetically knows the men ate against his rules. In this story, little is said about the woman and whether or not she knew that the men are not supposed to be eating. The restriction against eating outside the monastery on days when the monks would be coming back home is described as a "costume" (XVI.1) [custom] that was "bien gardée & mout bien tenue" (XVI.1) [well-kept and well-held] in the monastery. The story thus places the blame squarely on the monks. Here and elsewhere in the text, the monks are expected to be moral leaders in their communities, and at times it is even their job to inculcate virtue in the women in

their surrounding community. In another story, Wauchier recounts how there were some nuns to whom Beneoit sends his monks “por eles doctriener & amonester q’eles Nostre Signor servissent ententivement & l’ordre tenissent por avoir vie parmenable” (XXIII.1) [to indoctrinate them and to advise that they should serve Our Lord attentively and should keep order to have everlasting life]. In Beneoit’s new model of patriarchy, the monks are not expected to avoid all women entirely. They are permitted to have relationships with nuns when it is spiritually beneficial.

Later in the text, Wauchier tells of two haughtily speaking nuns who are excommunicated by Beneoit for their behavior. In the vast majority of the text, Beneoit’s job is to inculcate virtue in the monks. This is the only instance when he takes it upon himself to punish women (and not men) for their behavior, so it stands out as extraordinary. These two nuns have a monk who “les servoit” (XXVII.1) [used to serve them]. In spite of his assistance and expected moral guidance, these women “ne pooient tenir lor langues envers lui qe mout sovent ne le laidengassent de paroles” (XXVI.2) [were not able to hold their tongues toward him whom they so often harassed with words]. The servant frequently experiences “grant ire” (XXVI.1) [great anger] because of this. When the “preudom ot mout longuement sosfert cest anui & cest lime” (XXVI.1) [wise man had endured this pain and this torment for so long], he complains to Beneoit about it. Beneoit sends a monk to threaten them with excommunication. At this point, Wauchier inserts a rhyming verse passage in his prose:

Car femes tencent volentiers :  
 Ce leur samble mout bons mestiers.  
 Puisqe tences ont entreprisses,  
 Eles n’en erent ja surprises.  
 Ainz liment tant qe mal lor vaut.



Dex qi les fist si les consaut,  
 Et nos ausint ! Car m[o]lt sovent  
 Avons a eles mal covent,  
 Voire as pluseurs, non mie a totes.  
 Mal font celes qi sont estoutes (XXVI.1)

[Because women dispute willingly: this seems to them a very good job. Since they have undertaken quarrels, they will never be subdued. Thus they irritate just as much as evil is worth to them. God, who made them, should advise them, and us too ! Because we very often have bad commitments with them. This is true for many, but not all. The women who are audacious act badly.]

As I discuss in the introduction to my edition of *Benoît*, the insertion of rhyming verse passages is a defining characteristic of Wauchier's style.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, since this is only one of two rhyming verse passages in *Benoît*, it is significant. The fact that Wauchier decided to linger upon one of the few stories about women in this text, and the only example of wittingly sinful women, is telling. Both this and the other rhyming verse passage, which occurs toward the end of the text and also emphasizes the importance of virtue, suggest that Wauchier believes this to be a moral of the Life of Benedict worth highlighting. Not only do women need to learn better conduct from God, men need to learn how to interact with them better as well. When one considers this moral in conjunction with the book-ends of the text, it seems clear, though ironic, that the Life of Beneoit is just as much a text about men learning to interact with women as it is one about men pursuing God by strengthening their relations with one another.

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<sup>97</sup> For more on this feature of Wauchier's style, see Appendix "Introduction: A. Author." See also Meyer "Légendes", "Wauchier de Denain", and "Versions"; Thompson "Introduction" pp. 24-5, 61 and "From the Translator's Worktable"; Lynde-Recchia "Introduction" p. 19; and Szkilnik "Introduction" p. 9 and "Ecrire en vers, écrire en prose".

These various portraits of mothers, nurses, temptresses, and nuns in need of indoctrination prepare the reader for the arrival of Scolastica, Beneoit's spiritual companion who allows him to finally resolve his conflicted relationship with women before he dies. Scolastica, like the other female characters in *Benoît*, is an ambiguous figure.<sup>98</sup> Though she is celebrated in tradition as the twin sister of Benedict, it is not certain whether she actually was his sister by blood. Both Gregory the Great and Wauchier describe Scolastica as his sister ("soror" and "seror" respectively) who devoted herself to God since childhood, but neither discusses the saints' relationships with one another or their parents during childhood. Given that there is no mention of Scolastica in the earlier chapters describing Beneoit's childhood and family, it is unclear whether Gregory and/or Wauchier use the term sister in the monastic sense, which could be an accepted translation of "soror/seror." We do know that Scolastica was a nun and that the Benedictine monks were encouraged to have spiritual relationships of mentorship with nuns. Gregory and Wauchier include one other detail about the pair's past relationship. Gregory explains that Scolastica used to visit Benedict once a year, meeting him just outside of the monastery ("ad eum semel per annum venire consuererat, ad quam uir Dei non longe extra ianuam in possession monasterii descendebat" XXXIII.2). The frequency of Scolastica's visits seems to be an issue of confusion for the medieval translators and/or scribes of the Life. Out of the six manuscripts of Wauchier's text that I have been able to consult (there are sixteen in total), half say that she visited once a day and

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<sup>98</sup> For information on Scholastica's relationship with Benedict and her function in the text, see de Vogüé "La rencontre", Cusack "St. Scholastica", Morrissey "Scholastica and Benedict", and Boo and Braun "Emerging." See Goffart for a discussion of the history of the translation of Scholastica's relics.

the other half say that she visited annually.<sup>99</sup> Further research needs to be done on the Latin manuscript of Gregory's *Dialogues* Wauchier consulted in writing his translation<sup>100</sup> and the transmission history of the sixteen manuscripts of Wauchier's *Benoît* to determine why we encounter this discrepancy and whether or not it was a choice made by Wauchier to further emphasize the relationship between the pair. These few details are all we are given in either text to understand the relationship between Beneoit and Scolastica before their meeting recounted in chapter XXXIII of the second book of Gregory's *Dialogues* and chapter XXXVI of Wauchier's *Benoît*. Pearse Aidan Cusack writes, "It seems to me, in view of the evident utility of 'sisters' in medieval hagiography, that it would be an unwarranted inference to make Scolastica a natural sister of St. Benedict. We may reasonably infer that a holy woman lived in this place, either in a hermitage or in a conventual *cella*, and that she was on intimate terms with the holy abbot" (Cusack "St. Scolastica: Myth or Real Person?" 159). Not all of the contemporary scholars who work on Scholastica are as quick to reject the possibility that she was his sister, but all admit that the tradition since Gregory's *Dialogues* infers a blood relationship and furnishes details not mentioned in Gregory's text, the oldest surviving account her Life. Whether or not Scholastica was Benedict's natural sister or even really existed, she is interpreted by modern critics as a narrative tool used by Gregory to make a point.

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<sup>99</sup> C<sup>3</sup> (London British Library Royal 20 D.VI), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale française 413, 13496, and 23117 also give "jor." Paris, Bibliothèque nationale française ms. fr. 183, 185, and nouv. acq. fr. 23686 give "an."

<sup>100</sup> Thompson argues convincingly that the source for Wauchier's translation was ms. Valenciennes 175 ("Introduction", p. 59).

In Gregory's *Dialogues*, the story of Scholastica appears between a story about a young boy whom Benedict resuscitates and stories recounting the deaths of three saints (Scholastica, Germain of Capua, and Benedict). De Vogüé sees the Scholastica episode as a transition between Benedict's miracles on earth and his contemplation of the beyond (de Vogüé 270). The dialogue between Gregory and Peter sets this text up to be an example of how desire can be achieved through prayer (Cusack 146). What is surprising, however, is that this episode shows how Benedict's desire is superseded by Scholastica's. De Vogüé discusses this fact at length, showing through parallels between the *Dialogues* and *Luke 7:36-50* (wherein Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman, an act which is criticized by a Pharisee) how God chooses Scholastica's desire over Benedict's because God is love and Scholastica loved more (de Vogüé 257). In this way, Gregory contrasts the impotence of Benedict with the power of Scholastica (264) and the conflicts that can arise when love contradicts the law (i.e. Benedict's *Rule*). Morrissey reads the story of Scholastica as "a rather singular parable, illustrative of...men and women in general...and of humanity and God" (Morrissey 251). She compares the words used to describe Benedict's desire ('volo') with those used to describe Scholastica's ('cupio') to argue that her desire is "more heartfelt" (253). She describes the story as one of a "spiritual relationship" (255) that shows "how man does need woman and the woman indeed deserves settlement in her favor" (254). She argues that in this episode God reconciles man/woman and heaven/earth (256). Boo and Braun also read the Scholastica story for what women can teach men, seeing her role as one of complementarity (252). They suggest, "Perhaps {Scholastica} reminded Benedict to be a little easier on the young boys in the monastery and on the old and the sick" (Boo and Braun 3).

As mentioned in the introduction to my edition of Benedict (see Appendix, Introduction B), Wauchier extracts the story of Benedict from all of its surrounding dialogue between Gregory and Peter. Thus, in the episode of Scolastica, we have no dialogic framing to tell us that this is an example of saints achieving their desire through prayer and that Scolastica achieves her desire over Benedict's because she loved more ("illa plus potuit, quae amplius amavit" *Dialogues* XXXIII.5). Nevertheless, Wauchier evokes the emotion of love as found in this parable through his description of Beneoit's and Scholastica's relationship. In the textual analysis that follows, I intend to discuss further the function of Scholastica in Wauchier's text. I argue that she is the spiritual counterpart who teaches Beneoit to be more compassionate in his earthly relationships, helps him to negotiate his conflicted relationships with women and family, and makes him realize the flaws inherent in his severe *Rule* before he dies.

In *Benoît*, spiritual family is often favored over biologic families. When Beneoit first sets off on his own, he leaves his family behind (I.1). He soon leaves his nurse and spiritual mother, as well (III.1), to build spiritual families in his monasteries. He then becomes the spiritual father to young men like Maurus and Placidus (VII.2). In the monastic community, abbots serve as the father (pere) and the monks consider themselves brothers (freres). Their moral fortitude is strengthened, and they are able to perform great feats (like Maurus's ability to walk on water XI) because of their relationships with one another. In this way, *Benoît* demonstrates an advantage of leaving one's family to found a spiritual family. Monks, like the prideful servant (XXIV) are expected to forget their prior lives and status once they enter the monastery. One young monk who visits his parents without permission even ends up dying and being thrown

from his grave (XXVIII). Depictions of biological family in this text are not entirely negative, however. In the story of the monk who dies while visiting his parents (XXVIII), Beneoit provides oblations to the parents that help him to remain in his final resting place. In the episode immediately preceding the story of Scolastica, Beneoit resuscitates a peasant's dead son even though he thinks he is unable to accomplish such a feat (XXXV). In the guise of offering a transition between this episode and that of Scolastica, Wauchier writes: "Or vos conterai un autre miracle qe Nostre Sires fist por l'amor d'une seue seror qi mout estoit seinte feme" (XXXV.4) [Now I will tell you about another miracle that Our Lord performed for the love of a sister {of Beneoit} who was a very holy woman]. In this way, Wauchier boils Gregory's dialogues down to two major points: 1) that this is a story about family and 2) that the miracles were accomplished out of love. Wauchier removes the exegetical references found in Gregory's text to Paul's prayers to God to remove his thorns (XXXIII.1), to John ("Deus cartas est" XXXIII.5) and to Luke ("illa plus potuit, quai amplius amavit" XXXIII.5), but keeps the aspects that would be more pertinent for a lay audience (namely, the emphasis on the role of women in society and in the monastery, and the benefits of human relationships in attaining God's love).

Wauchier presents Scolastica as a spiritual counterpart for Beneoit. She resembles Beneoit in many ways and compensates for his flaws, thus showing some possible positive roles for women in monastic society. Scolastica is described as a "seror" [sister] who "s'estoit donée & atronée tres s'enfance & otroié, & por manoir en virginité & por plus entierement entendre as oevres Nostre Signor par qoi ele pleust pleire a Deu, estoit ele devenue none, & avoit deguerpies totes les vanitéz de cest siècle"

(XXXVI.1) [gave herself, turned herself over, and granted herself to God since childhood, and to remain in virginity and to devote herself entirely to the works of Our Lord so that she might better please God, she had become a nun and had abandoned the vanity of this time]. Scolastica's goals, virtues, and conduct here resemble Beneoit's as made evident throughout the text. It is interesting to note Wauchier's description of Scolastica in comparison with Gregory's. Gregory does not go to such great lengths to describe Scolastica's virtue: "Soror namque eius, Scolastica nomine, omnipotenti Domino ab ipso infantiae tempore dicata" (XXXIII.2) [His sister, named Scholastica, consecrated from childhood to God Almighty]. Wauchier apparently expands the brief sentence of Gregory's text to emphasize her virginity, her desire to please God, and her rejection of the vanity of the world. In this way, he likens her even further to Beneoit than had Gregory. Why does Wauchier feel the need to emphasize Scolastica's virginity and devotion to God? In a way, he is setting her up to be a spiritual partner and platonic female friend for Beneoit who normally does not interact much with women. By mentioning her virginity, it is as if he wants to make it abundantly clear that their amorous interaction is entirely spiritual and not at all erotic.

Though we do not know much about their lives together, we soon learn that they meet frequently to discuss spiritual matters. She seeks his counsel daily (or annually depending on the manuscript): "Cele damoisele avoit acostumé devenir chascun jor une foiz a saint Beneoit son frere, & li sei[n]z hom, qi mout en estoit liéz & qi mout l'amoit de grant maniere, venoit a li en une meson defors la porte, & parloit a li, & la doctroinoit, & mostroit seintes paroles" (XXXVI.1) [This damsel had the habit of coming each day to St. Beneoit her brother, and the holy man, who was very happy about it and who loved

her so very much, used to come to her in a house outside the door, and used to talk to her, teach her, and show her the Word]. This recalls section XXIII when the narrator explains the custom that Beneoit used to send his monks out to teach nuns. Given that Beneoit rarely leaves the monastery, the mention of the fact that he goes through the door of the monastery to see Scolastica demonstrates just how important this is to him. Wauchier emphasizes this further by saying that the Beneoit loved Scolastica. The only other time the author mentions Beneoit's love is in reference to his grotto: "Dont se departi seinz Beneois de la si s'en rala a son leu en la roche qu'il mout amoit" (VII.1) [Then St. Beneoit left from there and went back to his place in the rock that he used to love so much]. He loves Scolastica even more than he loved his grotto; this is clear in Wauchier's use of the the adverb "mout" (very) and the phrase "de grant maniere" (in a great way) that he uses to emphasize the extreme nature of his love for Scolastica. It is also important to note that this is the only time in the text when Beneoit is referred to as "liéz" (happy). All other uses of this word in the text refer to others' reactions to Beneoit's advice and miracles. The man who usually spends all of his energy making others happy finds his own happiness in his friendship with Scolastica. In this way, she fills a void left unfulfilled by his duties as abbot.

After describing Scolastica and establishing the parameters of their friendship, the narrator then goes on to recount a story of a particular day. He explains that on this day, they "furent tuit le jor ensemble & parlerent de seintes paroles" (XXXVI.2) [were together the whole day and they spoke about holy words]. Though their friendship is chaste, it is in some ways likened to romantic love as seen in courtly contexts. The narrator frequently refers to Scolastica as "la seinte damoisele" (XXXVI.2) [the holy



maiden]. Gregory never refers to Scolastica as holy or as a saint since she was not yet canonized at the time he wrote the *Dialogues*, some fifty years after the events took place (Boo and Braun 4). Godefroy defines ‘demeseile’ as “fille noble; femme mariée de la petite noblesse, et même de la bourgeoisie” [noble girl; married woman from the petty nobility, and even from the bourgeoisie]. The various examples he gives show this word being used to describe all manner of young women in texts of various genres from courtly romance to even saints’ Lives. In the context of *Benoît*, the word ‘damoisele’ is used to describe only a handful of women: 1) the seven naked damsels who are sent to tempt Beneoit’s monks (XII.5), 2) the two nuns who send Beneoit towels as a gift (XXIII.3), 3) the two nuns excommunicated by Beneoit for speaking haughtily (XXVII.2), and 4) Scolastica. Wauchier uses the word ‘damoisele’ specifically to refer to beautiful young women in need of guidance from the men. Scolastica is the only ‘damoisele’ who is described as holy. In using the epithet ‘la seinte damoisele’, which he repeats three times (XXXVI.2-3), Wauchier seems to feel the need to emphasize the chasteness of their relationship and to distinguish Scolastica from the other women in the text.

Though Scolastica is ‘the holy damsel’, their relationship has affinities with the romance and lyric *topos* of the *aubade*. Wauchier recounts that after having spent an entire day together, Scolastica begs Beneoit to spend the night with her, saying “Beaus frere, je te pri que tu en tote ceste nuit ne me deguerpisses. Einz parlerons aucunes choses des clestieus joies tresq’a demein a la matinée” (XXXVI.2) [Handsome brother, I pray that you do not abandon me this whole night. Then we will talk about some things about the celestial joys until tomorrow morning]. Though Scolastica’s intentions are

pure, one cannot help but notice the resonance between her desire to stay up all night talking to Beneoit and the *aubade*, the poem announcing the arrival of morning when two lovers must separate. By conflating the courtly and the spiritual in this scene, Wauchier presents their spiritual love as a sort of sublimation of human, sexual relationships. Since the pair is celibate, their chaste relationship with one another allows them experience a close, loving relationship with a member of the opposite sex without any of the conflicts that can arise from carnal and sexual relations. Despite the innocence of their love, Beneoit is reluctant to stay as it contravenes his *Rule*. He explains to Scolastica: “Bele suer, qe est ce qe vos dites? Dont ne savez vos bien qe je ne puis fors de ma celle demorer en nule maniere?” (XXXVI.2) [Beautiful sister, what are you saying? Now, you know well that I cannot in any way stay outside of my cell].

Beneoit’s reluctance only adds fuel to Scolastica’s fire. She becomes relentless and ends up praying for Beneoit to stay: “Ele mist ses .ii. meins ensemble seur la table, & puis si enclina son chief seur ses paumes, si fist a Nostre Signor une mout corte orisson” (XXXVI.3) [She put her two hands together on the table and then bowed her head on her palms and then prayed a very short prayer to Our Lord]. Though the text does not immediately say what she is praying for, it becomes apparent when we see a change in the weather. The skies, which had been previously described as “si clers & si purs” [so clear and so pure] and the night which had been “si serie & si coie qe nue ne oscurté n’i aparoit de nule part” [so serene and so quiet that no obscurity appeared anywhere] suddenly turns to storms (XXXVI.3). The narrator explains that as soon as she lifts her head, “tonoie & espart vindrent de totes parz en l’eir si grant & si orible q’il sembloit mei[n]tenant qe foudre deust tot le monde a craventer, & une si grant habundances d’unes

grosses gouttes de pluie vint ensamble o cez tonoirres qe seinz Beneoiz ne si frere ne se porent movoir en nule maniere d'ensemble o la damoisele" (XXXVI.3) [such great and horrible thunder and lightning came from all directions that it seemed then that lightning would crush the world, and such a great abundance of fat drops of rain came along with this thunder that St. Beneoit and his brothers could not move in any way from the damsel]. Here, Scolastica takes a page from Beneoit's book by harnessing the power of faith and prayer to bring about an abundance of liquid. Instead of doing so to help others, however, she does this to bring about her own comfort and salvation. The narrator connects the rain drops to her tears, saying "Et par les lermes qe ele avoit plorées seur la table en ses meins la ou ele avoit son chief aciné, estoit cele grant pluie venue par la proiere qe ele fet avoit a Nostre Signor" (XXXVI.3) [And by the tears that she had cried on the table in her hands there where she had bowed her head, had come this great rain by the prayer that she had made to Our Lord]. In evoking the image of a crying woman, Wauchier harks back to the first scene in the text when his nurse's tears elicit Beneoit's tears and his compassion. This time, however, Beneoit is not moved to pity. Rather, he appears angered and even blames his sister for bringing about the change in weather.

Beneoit's initial reaction to his impotence is to complain ("il se comença mout a compleindre") and to ask her "Qe est ce qe tu as fet?" (XXXVI.3) [What is this that you did?], placing the blame for his broken rules upon the woman in this scene. Later, the narrator reminds readers that though Beneoit stays, it is against his will: "Si demora, non mie par sa volenté, el leu ou il ne voloit par sa volenté demorer" (XXXVI.4) [Then he stayed, not at all by his desire, in the place where he did not want to stay by his desire]. This scene is one of the few instances in the text when we see Beneoit's powerlessness

against both women and the forces of nature. This scene reminds us that Beneoit is not the ultimate leader of men, and that God is. At times, men must learn to be flexible and adapt to unexpected situations even when they go against the rules. With all the emphasis given to Beneoit's reluctance here, one wonders what God's plan is in orchestrating the pretext for Beneoit to spend the night with Scolastica.

The narrator explains that the pair "demorerent tote la nuit ensemble" [stayed together the whole night] and that they "se referent & saoulerent de parler des esperiteus p[ar]oles" [they restored each other and filled up by talking about spiritual words] (XXXVI.4). Though spiritual discourse is the defining characteristic of their friendship throughout this passage, the significance of this night soon becomes apparent. The next day, when the skies clear, Beneoit goes back to his abbey and Scolastica goes back to her cell. On the third day, Beneoit then has a vision of Scolastica ascending into heaven in the form of a dove. He then experiences "mout grant joie por ce qe ele en estoit portée en la haute gloire" (XXXVI.5) [very great joy for this that she had been carried to the highest glory]. He even thanks God: "Si en rendi graces a Nostre Signor, & loenges" (XXXVI.5) [Then he gave thanks and praise to Our Lord]. It is not until Scolastica's death and ascent into heaven that Beneoit realizes the value of his night spent with her and the spiritual guidance he gave her. In this miracle, the second to last miracle of his life and the third to last one in the text, Wauchier comes full circle. While Beneoit's first miracle suggests the initial problem, namely that the patriarchal model is broken and needs to be repaired, two of the final three miracles of the text provide a sort of closure. During much of the text, Beneoit tries to live mostly apart from women. While it helps him and the monks to avoid temptation, it also keeps them from fixing the broken

patriarchal model. Because of his relationship with Scolastica, Beneoit learns to be flexible in his *Rule*, that a woman's love can be spiritually beneficial, that there is a place for familial love in the monastic model, and that God's ultimate plan will prevail. The pair's spiritual bond is mutually beneficial and brings them closer to God. Scolastica experiences the salvation she needs to ascend into heaven, and Beneoit finally tests and proves his faith in God's almighty power. Beneoit realizes that he must learn to live with women and family rather than apart from them if he is to truly effect change in his society. One cannot help but notice the parallels between this overall lesson and Wauchier's rhyming-verse excursus on the ills of women cited above. Men are just as much to blame for bad women as are the women themselves. While it seems that the primary goal of the hierarchical and triangular structure of the monastery and Beneoit's strict *Rule* is to inculcate virtue in men through imitation and to eschew vice by eliminating rivalry between men with varying values and levels of faith, the lack of women, in the end, appears as the ultimate flaw. Even Beneoit realizes toward the end of his life that he needs to have intimate relations with women just as much as he does with men if he is to repair the broken patriarchal model.

Following this antepenultimate miracle, only two other miracles are recounted in *Benoît*. The first of these, which happens before his death, recounts how the saint witnesses the ascent of yet another saint, Germein de Chaples (XXXVII). The final miracle, a post-mortem miracle, centers around a woman. In this miracle, a woman is healed of insanity in Beneoit's grotto (XXXIX). This woman, was "fors del sens qi par sa grant rage estoit dervée q'ele coroit par mons, & par vaus, & par bours, & par champagnes jor & nuit" (XXXIX.1) [was outside of reason, she who by her great

madness had become so crazed that she used to run across mountains and by valleys and by cities and by countrysides day and night]. This woman's malady is made manifest by the way she wanders the earth aimlessly. It is not until she discovers Beneoit's grotto that she finds comfort and stability, electing to remain there for the rest of her days.

### Conclusion

Wauchier de Denain's *La Vie de saint Benoît* brings to life the lessons in virtue, morality, and monastic conduct laid forth in *The Rule of St. Benedict* by contextualizing them and dramatizing them within the story of the saint's life and struggles. Both texts deal with various issues that would have been of interest within the thirteenth-century environments of medieval Flanders. Beneoit serves as an exemplar of virtue and masculinity, teaching readers that the key to centralizing, establishing, and maintaining power lies in improving relationships between men, women, and their environment.

Beneoit sees in his society a broken patriarchal model and sets about to propose a new model of masculinity that compensates for the flaws in the broken one. The small number of female characters in this text, rather than diminishing the importance of women, actually highlights the essential role of women in defining ideals of masculinity in this text. Women occupy an ambiguous place in this text, serving alternately as mothers, nurses, temptresses, figures in need of guidance from men, and spiritual sisters. *Benoît* is book-ended by stories about men's interactions with women. The first miracle, in which Beneoit repairs his nurse's broken vessel, comes to serve as a metaphor for the broken patriarchal model which Beneoit sets out to repair over the course of his life and

in his leadership role as abbot. The emblematic vessel reappears on numerous occasions in stories exhibiting men's greed in hoarding resources and their lack of faith in God's ability to provide for his believers. When the men have faith, the vessel remains intact and results in an abundance of resources. Beneoit and his monks learn that it is by giving up everything and sharing with the needy ("departi & dona seinz Beneoiz a toz ceux qi besoigneus estoient totes les choses qi vaines estoient en s'abeie" XXXII) that they can rely on having an abundance of food and water. Over the course of his life, Beneoit resolves his conflicting relationships with women, transforming them from problematic and nearly absent figures to a necessary part of his monastic model. He and his men not only share food with the women and vice versa, but they engage in spiritual bonds which help inculcate virtue in all while sublimating sexual temptation in Platonic friendships that bring them closer to God.

Another key aspect of Beneoit's repaired patriarchal model lies in the men's bonds with one another. Just as Beneoit's friendship with Scolastica brings the pair closer to God, so do the friendships with the monks. In this chapter, I proposed a revision to Girard's and Sedgwick's triangular conceptions of male bonding. My theory of the ecohomosocial cone shows how men's relationships with one another, with women, and with resources help the men achieve union with God. While Girard's and Sedgwick's two-dimensional triangles are useful in showing how imitation and rivalry define friendships between men with similar objects of desire, they do not accurately account for the numerous dynamics at play in the monastic environment. My ecohomosocial cone takes into account the foundational role played by the material world in mediating relationships between human beings and God. Human beings need food and water for

survival, yet excessive consumption and greed can detract from one's relationship with God. The monastic model is built upon a hierarchical structure of imitation and emulation that is constantly threatened by the temptation to sin and rivalries between God and the Devil and the men. In the best friendships, like that between Beneoit and Romeins, taking care of a brother's need for food can help a monk to focus on his relationship with God. In the numerous examples of rivalry, like the various monks who ate against Beneoit's *Rule*, one monk can be lead astray by listening to the advice of a rival exemplar, of someone who goes against Beneoit's advice.

Beneoit and his monks learn that the key to building a strong community of Christians that can withstand devastating plagues, Barbarian invasions, and famine, lies in the fortitude of the triangular, hierarchical structure of the monastery and inverse ideals of food management. While it seems counter-intuitive to give away one's last bit of food during a famine, this action results in an abundance of food in *Beneoit*. Through their generosity and faith, Beneoit and his monks become exemplars for the surrounding community. Their actions allow them to centralize power and to grow the church, and this growth and abundance is afforded by the ecohomosocial cone of the monastery. This cone allows for infinite triangular relationships between monks, their role models, and God. All are stronger because they can count on one another, and it is this fortitude that attracts followers to the Church. The communal pooling of work facilitates everyone's pursuit of God.

In *Benoît*, water functions as a symbol of and medium for self-transformation. Beneoit transforms himself from a wealthy son, to a humble hermit, and finally to a model leader by transforming the way he lives within his environment. As a hermit, he



intentionally places himself in the austere rocky grotto, eating and drinking the bare minimum, and relying on others for sustenance. In this way, he learns the values of humility, faith, and cooperation between men. It is these values that inspire him in devising a new patriarchal model in his monastic foundation. Though his hermitage is short-lived, the various lessons he learns reappear like refrains in the text. Because of his experience as a hermit, he is able to become an exemplar for the various monks who then inculcate virtue within the younger monks. All monks help one another to procure water and other necessities for survival. Their cooperation allows them to achieve much more than anyone could while working individually, and in this way, the strength of the cone is clear.

### Conclusion: Environment and the Structuring of Identity

In her introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty, following the historian Donald Worster, explains that though ecocritics cannot reform ethical systems, but they can help “to understand and critique the root causes of environmental degradation and to reformulate an alternative view of existence that will provide an ethical and conceptual foundation for right relations with the earth” (Glotfelty xxi). Some of the most significant environmental issues facing humans today—reshaping political practices with more respect for the environment, finding sustainable food sources, providing clean drinking water, and building cities in ways that diminish our negative impacts on the environment—are the same issues that medieval hagiography addresses in its stories about hermits and monastery founders. Medieval French hagiographers of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries vernacularize theological ideals about humility in and contextualize alternative environmental and sexual ethics within their stories about hermit-saints who transform themselves and their societies by changing the way they live within their environments.

Gender scholars have shown that human identity is an intricate construction composed of various pieces and molded by language, social norms, and practices. I build upon the work of gender scholars by demonstrating the roles of the environment and spirituality in shaping identity in medieval narratives about hermit-saints who encourage others to question anthropocentric and sexist social norms. In order to understand the construction of identity, unravel its myriad pieces, and refashion it in new ways, we must focus on the connections, on the space between the different parts. We must go against

the grain of the status quo and read between the lines that delineate between the self and the other and between different identity categories. Social norms are repeated and replicated from generation to generation, and it is only by challenging them that we can arrive at new outcomes. Various critics have previously demonstrated either how medieval literature treats posthumanist ideas or how saints' Lives defy sexual norms, but none has thoroughly treated the intersection of ecology and sexuality in hagiography. Saints' Lives about hermits trace the trajectories of human beings who are subjected to social norms, fail to assimilate, reject society, and ultimately transform themselves and their societies by negotiating between their own sexual, ecological, and religious ethics and society's expectations. Hermit-saints contest the binaries of language and the dominant social practices of their time by living in the space between identity categories, between nature and culture, and between humanity and divinity. They ultimately succeed in transforming themselves and their societies through their relationships with nature, their human communities, and God. This gives them—and us the readers—an optimal vantage point from which to observe the sexual and ecological norms and societal structures that shape identity within various environments.

In this dissertation, I have examined three saints' Lives from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that show the overlap between ecological and sexual norms: Guillaume de Berneville's *La Vie de saint Gilles* (ca. 1170), the anonymous *T* version of *La Vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne* (late twelfth century), and Wauchier de Denain's *La Vie de saint Benoît* (early thirteenth century). Though I have chosen these texts because they exemplify different sexual and ecological paradigms, the texts converge on various points. All three Lives present relationships between hermits, monks, society, God, and

the environment in similar ways, thus making a case for considering human-environmental in terms previously used to describe only human-human relations. These Lives present a sampling of ecological and sexual topoi that allow me to examine various roles played by the environment in the process of identity formation and change. Each text offers its own brand of alternative sexual and environmental ethics, thus demonstrating the heterogeneity of medieval attitudes toward the environment. All texts allegorize larger debates about the functions of eremitism and monasticism in twelfth-century society by showing their respective contributions in shaping sexual and environmental norms. In all three chapters, I demonstrate how the writers invoke Biblical and exegetical texts to advocate for the benefits of humility in shaping sexual and ecological ethics. I reread these Lives through the lenses of contemporary theory (gender, ecocritical, ecofeminist, and posthuman) to arrive at new theoretical concepts (the '*homo sapiens* matrix', 'ecomystical union', and the 'ecohomosocial cone') that articulate the sexual and ecological norms and the discursive and societal structures that shape identity within various medieval environments. Bringing together saints' Lives, biblical exegesis, and contemporary theory has allowed me to build a bridge between scripture, biblical exegesis, medieval literature, and contemporary theory to devise new theoretical concepts that show the role of the divine in shaping the self and how the interconnection of ecology and sexuality impacts identity formation and change. In what follows, I will trace the overarching themes of my dissertation and offer some possible conclusions to demonstrate what my arguments about medieval saints' Lives can contribute to larger debates about ecology and identity.

The most significant lesson to be learned in studying ecology and sexuality in saints' Lives is that everything boils down to relationships. The hermit-saints I study try in vain to flee the families and societies from which they feel different and excluded. Gilles, Marie, and Beneoit have conflicted relationships with their families and societies early in their lives. All three reject marriage and abandon their families to become hermits in the wilderness. Gilles refuses to dominate women, land, and animals by marrying, procreating, and perpetuating feudal systems of land management. Marie initially refuses to be objectified and possessed by her father and her suitors. She ultimately surrenders herself to God by becoming His object and possession in order to achieve His desire on earth. Beneoit abandons his earthly family to form his own spiritual family in the monastery. In the end, however, he reconciles the two families in his relationship with Scolastica, his earthly and spiritual sister. Ironically, it is by fleeing their families and societies that these saints are able to cultivate new relationships with other humans and with their environments. Gilles finds companionship with a nursing doe who fills in his familial void by becoming his wife/mother. Marie has an intimate relationship with the earth thanks to the solitude of her hermitage. Beneoit cultivates relationships with his fellow monks and with the larger community through his management of water, natural resources, and foodstuffs.

All three hermit-saints end up realizing that they must learn to live in society and not away from it if they are to become the people they want to be and encourage others to reflect on the violence of their society's sexual and ecological norms. In this way, these texts advocate a reconciliation between the eremitic and monastic lifestyles, between solitude and society, and between the human, the nonhuman, and the divine. Because

these hermit-saints straddle different societies and environments, they learn the importance of living both within and at the margins of societal norms. Gilles and Beneoit become abbots and spiritual fathers to the monks of their monasteries. Marie ends up finding friendship with Zosimas, a monk who hears her confession and administers her communion, thus enabling her to complete her penitence and to learn how to interact virtuously with members of the opposite sex. She, in turn, becomes a role model for the monks of his monastery and for the readers of the text who hear her story and learn from it. In all instances, the hermit-saints benefit from the increased awareness of their situatedness within their environments and transform their relationships to human society and to God, showing how all relationships are connected to one another in terrestrial and celestial space. Their relationship with God becomes the ultimate relationship encouraging them to have better relationships with the people, animals, and things around them. They learn how the material world mediates their relationship to the spiritual world.

In surrendering their dominance on earth for the salvation of their souls, all three hermit-saints aspire to be humble in their relationships with human beings, their environments, and God alike. *Gilles* espouses a model of environmental ethics based on humble values found in the Beatitudes in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12) and in *The Rule of St. Benedict*. Gilles believes in empowering the meek by sharing all of his worldly possessions with the sick and poor. He also rejects hunting and other aristocratic pursuits based upon dominance of others, opting rather to live like an animal. Realizing his animality helps him to found a monastic community based on sustainable practices of agriculture and fishing. *Marie* presents an eco-centric model of mystical

union inspired by *Genesis*, *The Song of Songs* and Bernard of Clairvaux's commentaries on it. In her penitence, Marie makes herself humble to the will of God in a process of eremitic objectification. *Beneoit* writes his own model of humility in his *Rule*. For Beneoit, becoming a monk means giving up everything one has. When the monks enter the monastery, they must leave behind their money, their families, and their status within earthly society. They are subjected to God's will and the hierarchy of power in the monastery. The models of humility set forth by these three hermit-saints have many parallels with contemporary theory. As I have shown in the introduction, various veins of theory advocate for seeing humans as enmeshed within, as opposed to dominant over, their environments. The medieval eremitic and monastic exemplars, by invoking biblical exegesis, give readers more of an incentive to transform their ways by suggesting the eschatological reasons to be humble. Where critical theory often concludes making readers aware of inequalities in human-environmental relations, saints' Lives seek answers beyond the terrestrial realm and provide steps toward change. Seeing humans and all of creation interconnected on a continuum culminating in God's divine plan and the joys of heaven, medieval saints, and indeed the readers they inspire, have every reason to treat their environments with respect.

Vernacular saints' Lives translate complex theological ideals by contextualizing them within stories about figures familiar to a medieval, lay audience. The characters encountered in these texts are at once quotidian and atypical for medieval readers. On the one hand, as human beings, children, friends, lovers, and leaders these saints are relatable and deal with the same sorts of problems and relationships as would their readers. On the other hand, they transcend their humanity by challenging social norms, by becoming

hermits, and by becoming saints. In this way, saints' Lives empower their readers by showing them the pathways to change in the stories of their own processes of self-transformation. Gilles teaches his aristocratic compatriots about the problems associated with feudal practices of land ownership and hunting and offers an alternative lifestyle based on non-violent and sustainable living practices. Marie teaches Zosimas and her readers about the problems that can result from men desiring to objectify women and nature and encouraging them to see themselves as part of and not dominant over God's creation. Benoit teaches his monks the benefits of the communal pooling of resources and how to be better stewards within their communities. Commonplace values like love, respect, friendship, leadership, and humility are vernacularized in the stories of these hermit-saints, demonstrating the benefits of virtuosity and how change can be effected by transforming one's relationship to his or her environment. The idyllic spaces of the hermitage and the monastery approximate the divine on earth for a human audience attempting to imagine the abundance of God's love that can be found in heaven and the means toward achieving it while on earth. Human beings' relationships to the material world thus become a medium for perfecting their relationship with God and achieving salvation.

Another overarching theme of my dissertation has been to schematize the relationship between the material world and the divine and the conduits to self-transformation. In devising my theoretical concepts, I combine close textual readings of saints' Lives with larger debates found in various veins of critical theory, bringing the environment to bear on issues hitherto underexplored. My study picks up where poststructuralist and feminist scholars leave off and pushes previous scholarship in new



directions. Building upon the work of the formalists who increased focus on the way signs and symbols signify meaning in literary texts, the poststructuralists focused more on the process by which contexts imbue language, social practices, signs, and symbols with meaning. In both of these branches of critical theory, there was a hyper-focused attention to symbols, structures, and their meanings. The poststructuralists—many of whom were students of psychoanalytic, Marxist, and feminist critique—attempted to understand how context shapes the meaning of discourse (Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 62-81). For poststructuralists, the sign is not just a static two-sided unit composed of the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’ as Ferdinand de Saussure would have it, but rather “a momentary ‘fix’ between two moving layers” that continually shifts like a chameleon “changing [its] colours with each new context” (145). My research builds upon the critical tradition of the past century, by revealing how medieval French hagiographers depict the role played by environment in shaping identity and by suggesting some theoretical structures to represent the relationships between human beings, their environments, and their identities in language, social practices, and space.

The three theoretical structures I propose in this dissertation—‘the *homo sapiens* matrix’, the horizontal view of creation implied in ‘ecomystical union’, and ‘the ecohomosocial cone’—all invite us to reconceive of relations (between people, discourse, the environment, and God) spatially. My critical predecessors—particularly Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, René Girard, and Eve Sedgwick also conceived of the relationships between people, their societies, and their environments spatially, but the focus of my study has allowed me to examine specifically the structures and strictures that delimit identity and the role played by the divine in shaping human-environmental

relations in the medieval environments of the hermitage and the monastery. My concept of the '*homo sapiens* matrix' takes Butler's concept of the 'heterosexual matrix' (Butler 208 note 6) and contextualizes it within both lived and textual space. Butler's concept illuminates our understanding of the connection between language and identity, and suggests that the solution to political change lies in individuals' ability to parody the marginal figures who do not fit neatly within the matrix. The '*homo sapiens* matrix', seeks to broaden Butler's concept to better show the role played by environment in shaping identity which can become fluid, malleable, and adaptable to changing contexts and circumstances, much like the poststructuralist view of the changing nature of the relationship between the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. Deleuze and Guattari challenge vertical and arborescent mappings of creation that make use of tree diagrams to depict ecological relations between human beings and their environments (Deleuze and Guattari 21). The problem with these tree diagrams is that they imply a false human superiority over nature. Horizontal mappings allow us to see ourselves as enmeshed in and not dominant over our environment. We depend on plants, animals, and organic matter for our survival even more than we are able to dominate them. My chapter on *Marie* likewise argues that the author of the *T* poem presents human beings in a horizontal, and not vertical, relationship to God's creation, thus showing how medieval thinkers invoke God to encourage humans to see beyond their anthropocentrism. In my third chapter, I propose a revision of René Girard's and Eve Sedgwick's triangles of desire in shaping masculinity. My concept of the 'ecohomosocial cone', like Girard's and Sedgwick's triangles, epitomizes the relationships of desire and rivalry that shape masculine identity. Going a step further than Girard and Sedgwick, however, my concept

shows how masculine relationships are mediated by the exchange of natural resources and foodstuffs which help the monks to build relationships with one another, with the surrounding community, and with God. While the work of these theorists paves the way to conceiving of gendered and ecological relationships spatially, by bringing the environment and the divine into the discussion, I have been able to show how medieval thinkers evoke ethics and spirituality to describe values consonant with posthuman ecology for their readers and how identities become mapped in real space. In this way, I bridge disparate theories and ideas, and offer further insight into the benefits of considering spirituality in contemporary critical theory. Medieval hermit-saints are dynamic, liminal figures who straddle the space between various binaries—human/environment, man/woman, human/divine—so readings of these texts allow me to inhabit the space between branches of critical theory.

Contemporary criticism and theory is only just beginning to uncover the many ways in which ecology and sexuality are interconnected in language, literature, and social norms, and my own research is likewise opening the door to further study of the role played by environment in shaping all aspects of identity. I have only examined a handful of saints' Lives in my dissertation, but the paradigms I have discussed appear in various medieval texts of all manner of genres. The practices of nursing animals and hunting as a means to discovering one's identity that we have seen in *Gilles* also appear in texts such as the Old French Crusade Cycle (McCracken "Nursing Animals"), *La Vie de saint Eustache*, and Marie de France's *Guigemar*. The connection between the female body and nature as found in *Marie* recurs in texts like *Le Roman de la Rose*, *Le Roman de Silence*, and *Le Roman de la Violette*. There is also a literary tradition of saints' Lives

about prostitution like *La Vie de sainte Marie-Madeleine*. Water management, as we have seen in *Benoît*, is an issue that plagues numerous monastery builders in saints' Lives like *La Vie de saint Germer* and *La Vie de saint Josse*. We can witness the role played by water in shaping masculine identity in romances like *Yvain*. There is also a tradition of encyclopedic and practical architectural texts about the symbolism and management of water that would greatly expand the analyses of my dissertation. Contextualizing the saints' Lives I study alongside other saints' Lives and texts of various genres will allow scholars to better ascertain what is uniquely original about the genre of hagiography in its depictions of ecosexuality, and how these saints' Lives are in dialogue with contemporaneous literature. In this dissertation, I have examined several pertinent sexual and environmental issues that appear in hagiography and critical theory, but there are still further issues and critical avenues that would help broaden the discussion. For example, *La Légende de saint Grégoire* (thirteenth century) deals with incest and human beings' relationship to stone and *La Vie des Pères* (thirteenth century) demonstrates the role that agriculture plays in sublimating erotic desire. Using ecology to sublimate desire, a pervasive issue in my dissertation, could help us to expand treatment of sublimation in psychoanalytic theory. Studying how taboos prescribe ideal behavior between human beings and their environment, à la anthropological theory, is another aspect of my research that merits future attention. Another further avenue of inquiry would be to examine the relationship between environment and identity more broadly—both thematically and generically. I have indicated throughout my dissertation, especially in my chapter on *Gilles*, that in the same way that ecology shapes sexual identity it also impacts identity categories like race, ethnicity, national identity, religion, and class.

Further study would be necessary to unravel how these other identity categories are shaped by the environment, how landscape and topography are used to justify borders between different social and ethnic groups, and how different ethnic groups are animalized as others, particularly in light of the events of the Fourth Crusade which I discuss in the introductory material to my edition of *Benoît* (appendix) and in my third chapter.

Saints' Lives from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries demonstrate how medieval hagiographers conceived of the relationship between human beings, their environments, their societies, and God, pushing readers to reexamine their roles in society and consider alternative viewpoints. They present various perspectives on the role played by environment in shaping identity and that played by social norms and practices in shaping ecology. Each saint's Life presents a unique program of environmental and sexual ethics based on religious ideals for personal and social change suggesting possible problems with the medieval status quo and potential pathways to change. Hermit-saints live in the space between cultures and identity categories, giving hagiographers and their readers a privileged place from which to question anthropocentric practices and to negotiate between religious, environmental, and sexual ideals and current practices. This study has been the first in-depth treatment of the intersection of ecology and sexuality in saints' Lives. Though some critics have already examined sexuality in saints' Lives or the way environment shapes identity in the genre of romance, none has examined ecosexuality in hagiography. This dissertation builds upon the work of gender theorists, ecocritics, and medieval critics to propose new ways of conceiving of the way relationships between human beings and the world around them

play out in space and suggesting the value of considering hagiography in contemporary critical theory dealing with ecology and sexuality. Contemporary theorists can learn much from the stories of medieval hermit-saints who, by realizing their interconnection with their environment, are able to transcend their humanity and to influence others to see the world differently. Hermit-saints were thus posthuman *avant la lettre*.

## Appendix

Wauchier de Denain

*La Vie de saint Benoît*

### Introduction

#### A. Author

Wauchier de Denain was a writer working in Flanders in the beginning of the thirteenth century. All that we know about him comes from his texts. He names himself in a rhyming-verse passage in his translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*:

Et je sui Wauchiers de Denaing  
 Qui voldroie que un tel saing  
 Lor donast Diex que l'avarice  
 Laissassent, et [a] genterlisce  
 Se tornassent et a largesce.<sup>101</sup>

This passage not only tells us the author's name, but his hometown, as well. It also gives us a hint as to his intentions as a translator, to turn *avarice* into *largesse*.

In the prologue to this translation, he also names his patrons, which helps us to date his work:

Més a cels qui l'entendent volentiers vodrai je conter, por ce qu'il i  
 praignent bones essamples et retiegnent, les vies des sainz peres que li  
 bons cuens Philippes, marchis de Naimur, qui fu fil Baudoin le bon conte  
 de Flandres et de Haino [et] la bonne contesse Margarite, a faites translater  
 de latin en ronmanz après saint Jeroime, qui ensint commence.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> This quote comes from Szkilnik's edition of *L'Histoire des moines d'Egypte* (p. 7).

<sup>102</sup> See Lynde-Recchia's introduction to *La Vie de saint Marcel de Lymoges* (p. 12).

Philippe de Namur ruled as regent of Flanders and Hainaut from 1204 until his death in 1212 (Lynde-Recchia 12).<sup>103</sup> This means that Wauchier likely completed his translations of the texts found in this manuscript during this time.

Unfortunately, Wauchier does not name himself in all of his texts. Scholars have diligently determined his literary output through careful and methodical research. Paul Meyer was the first to ‘discover’ Wauchier while examining the history of the Old French hagiographical *légendiers*. These compilations of saint’s Lives were created through a process of accretion and abbreviation. Each compilation began on a foundation of a previous compilation that was sometimes simply copied, sometimes added to, sometimes abbreviated, and sometimes reordered. Wauchier’s saints’ Lives appear in the third branch of these compilations, the so-called *légendier C*. Meyer attributes several saints’ Lives to Wauchier first by beginning with the texts where he names himself, and then noting stylistic similarities with other texts. The most distinguishing feature of Wauchier’s prose saints’ Lives is his insertion of moralizing verse passages in the midst of his prose translations.

Nearly a century after Meyer’s discovery of one of the first French prose translators, there began a new wave of research on Wauchier de Denain. Michelle Szkilnik, edited Wauchier’s translations of the *Vies des Pères* in the late 1990’s. This collection, which is extant in ms. Bibliothèque municipale de Carpentras 473, contains the authorial prologue and self-naming passages cited above. John Jay Thompson, also

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<sup>103</sup> For a more complete description of Wauchier’s patrons and the literary scene in thirteenth-century Flanders, see Thompson, Grossel, and Collet. For the history of Philippe de Namur and his illustrious family, see Wolff.



working in the 1990's, continued Meyer's project of determining Wauchier's literary corpus in his dissertation and subsequent edition of Wauchier's *La Vie de mon seigneur saint Nicholas le beneoit confessor*. Through his thorough examination of Wauchier's saints' Lives, his authorial prologues and epilogues, his citation of his sources, the codicological history, and the order of the texts, Thompson argues that Wauchier had presented his translations to Philippe de Namur as a parallel two-volume collection of Lives of the "sainz peres" and those of the "seinz confessors" (Thompson, *From the Translator's Worktable...*, 8). He argues that the two-volume hypothesis can account for the fact that these texts get split-up in later manuscript copies, the best example of the "sainz peres" being in Carpentras 473 and that of the "seinz confessors" being in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 411 (Meyer's C<sup>2</sup>). Thompson makes a convincing argument that several previously anonymous Lives of confessor saints can be attributed to Wauchier by explaining the logic behind the ordering and structuring of his compilation. In more recent years, Molly Lynde-Recchia has edited Wauchier's *La Vie de seint Marcel de Lymoges*, one of the confessor saints attributed to Wauchier by Thompson.

Thanks to the work of these various scholars, we now attribute the following saints' Lives to Wauchier:

Li sainz peres<sup>104</sup>

1. The Life of Saint Paul of Thebes, "the Hermit"
2. The Life of Saint Anthony

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<sup>104</sup> I am abbreviating the list provided by Thompson in his dissertation (p. 8).

3. The Life of Saint Hilarion
4. The Life of Saint Malchus
5. The Life of Saint Paul the Simple
6. Books I and III of the *Dialogues* by Saint Gregory the Great
7. The *Historia monachorum* by Rufinus of Aqu'ileia
8. The *Verba seniorum* by Rufinus of Aqu'ileia

Li seinz confessors

1. The Life of Saint Martin and the Translation of Martin's body
2. The Life of Saint Briccius
3. The Life of Saint Gilles of Provence
4. The Life of Saint Martial of Limoges
5. The Life of Saint Nicholas
6. The Life of Saint Jerome
7. The Life of Saint Benedict
8. The Life of Saint Alexis

In addition to these saints' Lives, scholars also attribute the second continuation of *Perceval* to Wauchier since the author names himself in one manuscript of the text. Also, the unfinished *Histoire Ancienne jusqu'à César* is attributed to him. Finally, some speculate that Wauchier also translated the *Vie de sainte Marthe* for Philippe de Namur's nieces, Jeanne and Marguerite de Flandre (Grossel 52).

The scholars who have studied and edited Wauchier's writings make many points in common regarding his style. He, and/or his patron, seem(s) to have had a profound interest in hermits and the eremitic lifestyle. He is more a rewriter than a translator. In

his translations, he adds moralizing verse passages that condemn greed, are sometimes misogynistic, and are even critical of the clergy of his day. Sometimes, he includes Latin quotes. He often paraphrases and defines difficult Latin terminology for his audience. Like many medieval translators, he recontextualizes the texts he translates for a later courtly audience. He also adds prologues and epilogues that help us to better understand his authorial process as a translator.<sup>105</sup>

### B. Wauchier's Source and His Originality

Wauchier translates three books of Gregory's *Dialogues*. Books I and III can be found in his "sainz peres" (Carpentras 473) and book II reappears in his "seinz confessors" as *La Vie de seint Beneoit*. Wauchier, himself, names Gregory as his source in his translations of books I and III:

Mais ensivir me covient l'estoire  
Si com je le trus en saint Grigoire  
Et je sui Wauchiers de Denaing... (ms. Carpentras, BM 473, f. 52d, cited  
in Thompson, "Introduction, p. 49)

It is noteworthy that Wauchier would choose to name himself in a verse passage in which he names his source. This has the effect of putting him on the same plane as Gregory as a hagiographer while also highlighting his skill as a poet. In using the conjunction 'et' to introduce his name, Wauchier presents himself as Gregory's successor in the tradition of hagiographical compilations. Wauchier again names Gregory in the introductory lines to his translation of *La Vie de seint Beneoit*: "[U]ns

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<sup>105</sup> For a more thorough analysis of Wauchier's style, including more specific examples, see Meyer, Thompson, and Szkilnik.

hom fu de mout seinte vie, si com sei[n]z Gregoires nos raconte. Cil hom estoit Beneoiz apeléz par non, ” (Paris BnF fr. ms. 412, fol. 158 vb). Thompson, in his dissertation and his edition of *La Vie de seint Nicholas*, determines Wauchier’s sources by reestablishing the monastic *armarium* from which he worked while completing his translations. Because of Thompson’s work, we can say with much certainty that Wauchier’s translation of the *Vie de seint Beneoit de Moncassin* was based on Gregory’s *Dialogues* as found in ms. Valenciennes 175 (Thompson, “Introduction”, p. 59). Further work needs to be done to compare Wauchier’s translation to Gregory’s text as it is found in this manuscript, but that is not the intention of this project at this point.

Even preliminary comparisons between Wauchier’s translations and Gregory’s *Dialogues* reveal several major changes made by Wauchier. First, Wauchier essentially cuts up and reorders Gregory’s *Dialogues*. He translates books I and III for his “sainz peres” collection, includes book II (essentially the Life of Benedict) in his “seinz confessors”, and never translates book IV. Next, Wauchier cuts out everything that is dialogic about Gregory’s text. The *Dialogues* are presented as a conversation between Gregory’s persona and that of his disciple Pierre. The saints’ Lives written in Gregory’s texts serve as examples used by Gregory’s persona to illustrate points he is making in their theological discussion. Wauchier extracts the Lives, cuts out all of the discussion between Gregory and Pierre, and adds his own touches. Like Wauchier’s other texts, *Beneoit* contains two moralizing verse passages criticizing contemporary mores and haughty women. He also adds a short prologue, a short epilogue, and the formulaic concluding prayer that is typical of vernacular hagiography.

### C. Manuscripts

As mentioned above, Paul Meyer and John Jay Thompson have done much to establish the codicological history of Wauchier's hagiographical corpus. Thus, it is not necessary to trace the whole history of textual transmission here. Wauchier's *la Vie de seint*

*Beneoit* is preserved sixteen manuscripts :

- Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, 851, fol. 48va-59rb ; 13th century ; Provenance :  
Bibliothecae monasterii Sacti Vedasti Atrebatensis. F. 10. (Quicherat).
- Brussels, Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier, 9225 and 9229-9230, fol. 158va-166vb ;  
1<sup>st</sup> half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century ; Origin unknown (Van Den Gheyn).
- Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château (Musée Condé) 734 (456), fol. 187vb-  
196va ; 1312 ; contains the arms of the Bourbon-Condé family ; contains a  
fifteenth-century note that reads "Ce livre a esté prins de la chamber de  
Mesdamoyselles, lequel est de la lybresrie." (Calames.abes.fr)
- Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève, Coll. Comites Latentes 102, fol. 204ra-213vb;  
1320-1330; Origin unknown.
- London, British Library, Addit. 17275, fol. 238ra-245v; 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup>  
century; Origin unknown.
- London, British Library, Royal 20.D.VI, fol. 161va-171ra (C<sup>3</sup>); 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the  
thirteenth century; Northern France (Thompson, "Introduction," 66).
- Oxford, Queen's College, 305, fol. 196rb-208ra; 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century;  
Origin: France.

- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 1716, fol 75v-88 ; end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century ; Origin : Longchamps ?; Dedicated to Isabelle de France (reine d'Angleterre 1292-1358). (Calames.abes.fr).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 183 and Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 71 A 24, fol. 157r-165v ; ca. 1327 ; Executed for Charles IV (1294-1328) (bnf.fr).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 185, fol. 157r-164v ; 14<sup>th</sup> century ; Provenance and origin unavailable.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 411, fol. 208va-218vb (C<sup>2</sup>) ; 14<sup>th</sup> century ; Northern France (Thompson, "Introduction," 65-6).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 412, fol. 158va-167va (C<sup>1</sup>) ; 1285 ; Hainault (64-5).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 413, fol 261rb-268ra ; beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century ; Provenance and origin unavailable.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 13496, fol 264r-277r ; end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century ; ff. 212v and 213v are painted with the former arms of Burgundy and of Philippe le Bon, duke of Burgundy, as well as the *blason* of the S. Esprit de Dijon Hospital and a note regarding the founding of this hospital by Philippe on ff. 213 and 214. (Bnf.fr).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, fr. 23117, fol. 321rb-328vb ; beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century ; at one time belonged to the bibliothèque de S. Victor : (cote: TT 19) (Bnf.fr).

-Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Manuscrits, nouv. acq. fr. 23686, fol. 115vb-123rb ; ca. 1250 ; Origin and provenance unavailable.

Meyer and Thompson have determined that the manuscripts of the *Légendier C* (designated above with the *sigles* C<sup>1</sup>, C<sup>2</sup>, and C<sup>3</sup>) contain the oldest versions of Wauchier's "seinz confessors." Since I do not have the time needed and the space here to establish the codicological stemma, I will, following Thompson and Lynde-Recchia, use the *Légendier C* as my base text.

#### D. Establishment of the text

##### a. Choice of base manuscript

Of the three extant copies of the *Légendier C*, C<sup>1</sup> (BnF, fr. 412) contains the version of *Nicholas* that is closest to the Latin source and thus to its archetype (Thompson, "Introduction", p. 67) and also it preserves Wauchier's verse passages and Latin quotes in *Marcel de Lymoges* (Lynde-Recchia, "Introduction", p. 30). Thus, I will, like Thompson and Lynde-Recchia, use this as my base manuscript. I will use C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> for an occasional *leçon*, and indicate when I am doing so in the footnotes. At this point, I will not provide the entire list of variants given by these two manuscripts. Generally speaking, C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> resemble one another rather closely, and for this reason, Thompson believes that they both were copied from the same manuscript. The variants between C<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>/C<sub>3</sub> usually represent spelling differences, spelling mistakes, and an occasional repeated word. I opt for the *leçon* provided by C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> when they both provide the same variant and when it makes more sense within the narrative.

b. Description of the base manuscript

This manuscript is dated 1285 by the scribe and contains, in addition to saints' Lives, *Li Bestiaires ou Arriere ban de mestre Richart de Fournival* (fol. 228) and *La Response sour l'Arriere ban maistre Richart de Rurnival* (fol. 236) (Lynde-Recchia 30-31).<sup>106</sup>

Given that I am focusing on issues of ecology and sexuality in my dissertation, it is interesting to note that Wauchier's saints' Lives were copied alongside these two other texts that talk about issues of ecology and sexuality, as well. *La Vie de seint Beneoit de Moncassin* begins on folio 158va and contains one historiated initial depicting Benedict's first miracle, his repair of the broken vessel (Figure 1). C<sup>3</sup> also contains a similar historiated initial (Figure 2). C<sup>2</sup>, contains no illustration in *Beneoit*, but does contain a blank spot in the beginning of the text where there was probably supposed to be a similar historiated initial. This iconic image of Beneoit highlights another important theme of the text, liquids and miracles.

c. Toilette du texte

My goal is to provide a faithful transcription of Wauchier's text as found in C<sup>1</sup> that is edited just enough to facilitate the reading. I maintain Wauchier's spelling, and I add no words that cannot be found in the *légendier C* manuscripts. That being said, I do distinguish between u/v and i/j when I find it to be helpful.

The scribe of C<sup>1</sup> uses various abbreviations, though it must be said that he does so much less than do those of C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup>. This scribe uses (9) for the prefix con/com, (9) at

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<sup>106</sup> For a more detailed description of the manuscript, see Thompson, "Introduction," pp. 66-67; and Lynde-Recchia, "Introduction", pp. 30-31.



the ends of words for –us, nasal bars for (e)n and (e)m, and (̇) at the ends of words for –er, –ier, and –re—I resolve these in my edition, but always within brackets. I resolve (9) as either [co], [con], or [com] following the spelling of these words when not abbreviated elsewhere in the manuscript. The scribe also uses the standard abbreviations for pre, per, par, and pro. I resolve these within brackets, as well. The scribe often uses (7) for ‘et.’ When he does so, I use an ampersand (&). The scribe occasionally uses a final –x for –us in ‘Dex,’ and I have left this intact. When the scribe uses the abbreviation ml’t, I have resolved it as ‘m[u]lt.’ I have left the Roman numerals as they appear in the text.

The scribe often conjoins various prepositions as well as adds them to other parts of speech. In general, I leave prepositions together, but cut them off from other parts of speech in order to make the text more clear.

As for accents, I have added the *accent aigu* (é) to the ends of polysyllabic words, especially past participles ending in ‘e’ whether or not they are followed by ‘e’, ‘s’, or ‘z.’ I have also added it to ‘més’ when it is an adversative conjunction and not a possessive adjective. I also occasionally use the *cedilla* (ç) when a ‘c’ preceding an ‘a’, ‘o’, or ‘u’ would have a soft sound. Since the text is mostly written in prose, I have found it unnecessary to use the *tréma*.

I have used my own punctuation to facilitate reading, but it is worth mentioning that the scribe does frequently use punctuation.<sup>107</sup> In many cases, my punctuation coincides with the pauses added by the scribe in the manuscript. I use apostrophes when a vowel has been elided.

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<sup>107</sup> For a more complete description of the sorts of diacritical marks used by the scribe, see Thompson “Introduction,” p. 87.

I have broken the text down into chapters which I titled myself in English and into numbered paragraphs to help orient the reader. These can be found in a list following that of the proper nouns. Most of the time, these chapters correspond to the sections of the manuscript where they are signaled by alternating blue and red *lettrines*. I have indicated these lettrines by using bold-faced capitals. I should also mention that I have indicated in brackets the folio and column (a or b). When this happens mid-word, I use a hyphen (-). I have also added paragraph numbers to help orient the reader with my citations.

I capitalize the various proper nouns (people, places, and book titles) which can be found in a list, in alphabetical order, at the end of the text.

#### d. Corrections

The few corrections I make are based upon C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup>, and I always indicate them in the footnotes.

#### e. Language of the manuscript

*Beneoit*, as it is found in the *légendier C* manuscripts, is written in a Picard dialect. One of the most distinguishing features of this dialect is the elision of the letter ‘u’ in ‘qui’ and ‘que’. Thus the scribe often writes ‘qi’ and ‘qe’. I have maintained this in my transcription, and I only add apostrophes when these are combined with other words as in ‘q’il.’ Occasionally, the scribe uses ‘con’ for ‘qu’on.’ I resolve this as ‘c’on.’<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See Thompson “Introduction” (77-9) for further description of the Picardisms of this text.

E. Summary of the text

*La Vie de seint Beneoit* recounts the Life and miracles of St. Benedict, the father of Western monasticism, who lived during the dynamic times of the fall of the Roman Empire and the growth of the Catholic Church in what is now Italy. This is made clear throughout the text in its references to barbarian invaders, the destruction of buildings, the conversion of pagans, and severe famine. The text follows Beneoit's life from his childhood, to his death, and beyond. As a child, Beneoit abandons his family and school to become a hermit in a grotto. Eventually he is discovered and sought out to perform miracles and found monasteries. His miracles fall into a variety of categories: repairing broken objects, healing the sick, bringing back the dead, procuring food during times of famine, reading people's minds, predicting future events, witnessing saints' ascensions, etc. Though Beneoit was a saint and leader of men, many resented the austere lifestyle he expected of his followers, so readers continually hear about many attempts to kill him as he serves as the abbot and spiritual father of the many monasteries he founds. Despite this dislike of Beneoit, he is generally praised for his leadership and strong faith during what was a volatile time in history. Upon his death, Beneoit's followers witness his ascent into heaven, and finally one woman is healed of insanity in his grotto after his death.

Transcription of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale français 412, ff. 158v-167v

[158va]

**Ci commence la vie mon signeur seint Beneoit de Mont Cassin, confessor Nostre Signeur Jesucrist.**

**I. Prologue**

[158vb]

1. [U]ns<sup>109</sup> hom fu de mout seinte vie, si com sei[n]z Gregoires nos raconte. Cil hom estoit Beneoiz apeléz par non, qi tres s'enfance avoit en lui cuer de viellece— science & ses sens & ses meurs trespasoient son aage. Dont il avint q'il onques ne vout atoner son corage as deliz de cest siecle. Einz desprist le monde & totes les oevres qi veines estoient. Il fu néz de la province de Nurse de haute lignie & envoié a Rome a escole por letres aprendre. Més com plus crut & plus conut la grant vanité de ceste vie, il cremi qe il n'i trebuchast en aucune maniere q'il ne s'en peust retreire, & por ce quist il habit de seinte conversation q'il voloit seulement a Deu plere, si en deguerpi sa meson, & les choses son pere, & l'escole.

2. Toz ses fez fait seint Grigoire, ne sai mie, més un pou qe j'en ai appris a un de ses deciples qi le me raconterent vos en reconterai je. Li uns ot non Costentin qui mout fu seintismes hom & apres lui en s'eglisse fu abbés ; et Honorés qi l'eglisse meintint ou il conversa premierement ; et Simples qi apres lui fu tierz ; & Valentiniens qi longuement fu en l'eglisse del Latran sires & gouverneres.

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<sup>109</sup> Historiated initial 10-lines tall. See figure 1.

## II. The Miracle of the Broken and Repaired Vessel

1. Qant cil seinz hom ot deguerpi l'estude des lettres & il ot empensé aquerre les deserz lius por habiter seulement & por mener vie solitaire, sa norrice, qi mout l'amoit, l'ensivi qi faillir ne li pot & nus autres. Qant il furent venu a une meson qi Effide est apelée ou mout de seintismes homes & honestes habitent en l'eglisse mon signeur saint Pierre, la norrice mon signeur saint Beneoit emprunta un vessel de terre a femes qi la estoient voisines. Qant ele en ot fet ce q'ele en devoit fere, si le lessa seur la table tant q'il fu brisiéz en deus pieces par aventure. Seinz Be- [159ra] neoiz li bons joveceauls n'i estoit mie. Més tantost com il revint, trova il sa norrice plorant por le vessel qi brisiéz estoit. Qant li relegieus vit sa norrice plorer, il en fu mout dolenz. Si prist les pieces del vessel. Si se coucha en orissons tot plorant envers Nostre Signor. Tantost com il fu redreciéz & il ot s'orisson finée, il trova sein & entier le vessel si q'il n'i parut jointure ne trace. Lors le rendi a sa norrice, & si la conforta mout docement.

2. Ceste chose fu la endroit partout seue & coneue, car cil qi la habitoient pendirent cel vessel a l'entrée de l'eglisse : por ce qe cil qi apres vendroient seussent com seinz Benoiz fu tres s'enfance de haute merite & de seinte vie envers Nost[re] Signor ; & la pendi li vesseaus molt longuem[en]t : tresq'au tens des Longuebarz qui la terre guasterent.

### III. Beneoit's Hermitage Inside of a Rock

1. Apres ce, seinz Beneoiz, qi les loenges de cest siecle ne voloit mie aqerre et qui son cors voloit alasser & traveillier por l'amor Nostre Signor conquerre, s'enfui de sa norrice si q'ele n'en sot mot. Si s'en ala en une desertine qi ensus de la cité estoit pres de .xl. liues. Si com li seinz hom s'en fuioit en tel maniere, si encontra il un moine qi avoit non Romeins. Cil demanda a seint Beneoit ou il aloit & q'il queroit, & il li dist tote sa pensée. Qant Romeins l'oi & entendi : il li aida & conseilla de qanq'il pot & sot benignement & docement. Li bons joveceaus ala tant qu'il vint a un desert leu. Cil leus estoit Sublacus apeléz, & bien sachiez qe ce estoit une haute roche en un grant desert & qi del pié desoz issoit eue si grant dont uns lais estoit g[ra]nz & leiz desoz, & de cel lais nessoit une riviere. En cele roche se mist seinz Beneoiz en une estroite fosse por mener vie solitaire & por fere ses orissons a Nostre Signor sanz veoir la vanité de cest monde.

2. La fu il troiz anz qe onques ne li sot hom ne feme, fors tant seulement Romeinz qi a lui avoit parlé, si com je vos ai devant dit. Cil Romeins manoit iluec en une meson d'ordre ou il avoit un abbé qi Deudonéz avoit non. Totes les heures qe Romeins pooit, sembloit il de sa cheaille & le pein [159rb] c'on li donoit a mengier. Partoit il, si le portoit a seint Beneoit la ou il habitoit & encore a donc n'avoit mie voie tresq'a la fosse ou li seinz hom conversoit, car la roche estoit si haute & si droite qe nus n'i pooit monter devers icele partie. Més seinz Beneoiz avoit une mout longue corde qe Romeins li avoit aportée. Cele corde si estoit atachie a l'un des cors & li autres venoit encontreval la roche tresq'a terre el mi leu avoit une cloce atachie si qe qant Romeins venoit au pié de la

roche, & il avoit le pein lié a la corde, si sounoit la chochette : par ce, savoit seinz Beneoiz qant Romeinz estoit venuz a tote la viande q'il aporloit. Si la treioit contre mont en ceste maniere.

3. Li deables ot de ceste chose grant envie car il est mout dolenz qant il voit a nului bien fere. Por ce vint il .i. jor en som la roche. Si geta une pierre si q'il brisa la clochette qi estoit a la corde atachie, més onques por ce,<sup>110</sup> Romeins ne lessa l'oeuvre a feire aseuré q'il avoit acostumée. Tant qe ce vi[n]t a un jor qe Nostre Sires vout qe la vie seint Beneoit fust seue por doner example as ge[n]z de bien fere, & si vout qe Romeinz fust laschies de son travail & de s'uevre.

#### IV. Beneoit's Hermitage Is Discovered on Easter Sunday

1. Adonc avint qe Nostre Sires s'aparut a un prestre qi loing de la manoit. Cil prestres fesoit apareillier ses viandes a un jor de Pasques, & Nostre Sires li dist, « Tu apareilles tes bons mengiers a ton oes & tes delices. & Beneois, mes serz, muert de feim qi en cel leu arreste. »

2. Lors li noma la roche coment ele estoit apelée. Dont se leva li prestres & prist ses viandes teles com il les avoit atornées ensemble o lui & ala tant q'il vint p[ar] mons & par valées querant le seint home & par desertines q'il le trova la si com il estoit en orissons en la fosse ou il habitoit. Si tost com il s'entrevirent, il beneirent Nostre Signor. Et qant il orent ainsi, parlé ensamble, li prestres qi venuz estoit parla a sei[n]t Beneoit & si dist :

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<sup>110</sup> There is an 'i here that seems to be scratched out, and C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> give "por ce Romeins." So, I have omitted it.

« Je sai bien qu'il est Pasques. Ce est jor de leesce a moi. Qant je ai deservi qe je te voi en la face. »

3. Adont ne savoit mie [159va] Seinz Beneoiz qu'il fust la sollempnitéz de Pasques, car par ce q'il avoit si lonc te[m]pore esté en sus de gent. Si en avoit il oblié le termine.

4. Li prestres li dist encore : « Saces qu'il est hui le jor de la Resurrection Nostre Signor, & por ce ne doit l'en mie abstenir par geunes, & por ce sui je ici envoié a toi : qe nos mengons ensamble ce qe Nostre Sires nos a doné. »

5. Dont beneirent Nostre Signor, si mengierent ensemble. Apres se departi li prestres de seint Beneoit si s'en ala a s'eglise.

## V. Beneoit is Tempted by the Devil

1. En cel tens meimes avint qe li pasteur troverent le seint home la ou il habitoit en sa fosse. Et qant il le virent la en tel maniere & vest[us] de peaus, il cudierent qe ce fust une beste. Més qant il l'orent tant aprochie q'il le porent pleinement veoir el viaire, il sorent bien qe ce estoit uns hom Deu. Si le no[n]cierent as genz qi pres d'iluec manoiert. Tres cel tens avint qe genz i [co]mencierent a aler & a hanter & a aporer viandes a son cors soutenir, & il les enseñoit & doctrinoit de seintes paroles.

2. Adont avint un jor qe li seinz hom estoit seus & li deables qui volentiers tente & essaie ceus qi Nostre Signor servent le temta en ceste maniere qe je vos dirai. Un merle li comença a voleter entour le viaire : & si pries a aler de la face qe li seinz hom le prist a sa



mein s'il volt, més il ne le vout baillier. Car par le signe de la seinte croiz q'il fist encontre se, dep[ar]ti li oiseaus & tint sa voie.

3. Et tantost com il s'en fu aléz & departiz une si grant temptation de sa char prist au seint home qe onques mes si grant n'avoit eue car il avoit jadis une feme veue qe li malignes esperiz li ramena devant en sa pensée, & une si grant volentéz l'en vint por la grant beauté qu'il i avoit veue q'il ne savoit qe fere. Si fu esp[ri]s qu'a pou q'il ne deguerpisoit l'ermitage. Més par la grace del seint esperit avint que si com il estoit en cele tres grant flambe del desirrier q'il i avoit q'il revint en bone pensée. Tantost se desvesti toz nuz si com il chei de sa mere, & vint a un buisson qi toz estoit [159vb] pleins d'espines & d'orties. Si se lessa cheoir dedenz, & si se torna dedenz tant & retorna qu'il fut toz plaiéz & ortiéz & qe li san[g]<sup>111</sup> coroit de son cors de totes parz. Einsi chaça il & osta les plaies q'il avoit en sa pensée par les dolereuses plaies dont il s'estoit navréz par defors. En ceste maniere venqui il le desirrier q'il avoit & mua en douleur.

4. Et tres donc, si com il tesmoignoit a ses deciples, fu la temptation de cele volenté en lui si dontée que onques puis n'en senti rien. Donc comencierent pluseurs genz a deguerpir le siecle & alerent a lui por sa vie ensivre & sa doctrine. Qant li seinz hom fu delivréz de la te[m]ptation en tel maniere com je vos ai conté, il comença fruit a rendre a plus grant plenté d'orissons & de jeunes & de veilles—tout aussi com la terre porte mielz qant li chardon & les espines en sont ostées.

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<sup>111</sup> C<sup>1</sup> and C<sup>2</sup> give 'sans' while C<sup>3</sup> gives 'sang'. In this context, 'sang' seems to be the logical choice so I have corrected it.

## VI. The Monks Try to Poison Beneoit's Drink

1. Adont avint qe li abbés d'une abeie qi la estoit procheine fu morz & trespaséz de cest siecle. Qant il fu enseveliz & enfoiz si com costume est, tuit li frere qi en cel leu habitoient vindrent a seint Beneoit & si li proierent molt docement q'il en venist ensamble o eus & si fust lor peres & lor mestres. Il lor refusa mout, & si lor dist q'il ne porroit mie ne ne covendrait q'il menast lor mors ne lor manieres. Li frere li proierent tant & distrent q'il lor otroia. Si s'en ala ensemble o eus en lor eglise ; si les prist a chastoier & a doctriener q'il menassent seinte vie ; & apres lor blasma pluseurs choses q'il fesoient. Et puis si lor deffendi q'il n'ississent mie de la droite voie de conversation. Dont comença molt a anoier les freres. Si le pristrent entr'eus a blasmer por ce q'il ne pooient fere ore ce qu'il soloient.
  
2. Si se porpenserent q'il l'ocirroient. Lors mistrent venim mortel en son boivre qi en un seul vaissel de voirre estoit. Qant seinz Beneoiz fu assis au mengier si com il avoit a costume, l'en li aporta cel vessel devant & il fist le signe de la croiz encontre. Meintenant brisa li vesseaus & vola en pieces, & aussint fu il esqarteléz com se l'en i eust geté **[160ra]** d'une grant pierre. Li seinz hom entendi meintenant & sot qe c'estoit mortieus boivres qi ne pout mie sosfrir le signe de la croiz.
  
3. Lors se leva ne n'en fist nul samblant. Einz apela ses freres si parla a eus mout docement, & si lor dist : « Beaus freres, Dex li toz puissanz ait merci de vos. Por quoi me vousistes vos tel chose fere ? Donc ne vos disoie je ançois que vos m'amenissiez ça

dedenz qe mes meurs & les vostres ne s'acorderoient mie ? Alez si qerez pere solonc vos costumes, car moi vo[s] ne poez plus avoir en nule maniere. »

## VII. Beneoit Founds Twelve Monasteries

1. Dont se departi seinz Beneois de la si s'en rala a son leu en la roche qu'il mout amoit. Et la ou il conversoit, venoient molt de genz a lui & reperoient por les miracles qe Nostre Sires fesoit por lui & par ceus qui a lui repairoient, & par l'aide Nostre Signor fist il .xii. eglisses ou il fist de .xii. moines peres qi ensemble o lui arrestoient, & desoz chascun, mist il freres qui vesquirent par seinte ruile<sup>112</sup> : si com il meimes lor avoit ensigne & doctriné. Car tuit estoient a lui venuz en cel leu ou il habitoit por aprendre & por retenir sa doctrine & ses seintes paroles.

2. Li haut home de Rome qi relegieus estoient vindrent a lui & si li baillierent lor enfanz por norrir & por ensignier a oes Nostre Signor. Euitius qi hauz hom estoit i envoi Maurum son fil, & Theralius i envoia Placidum qi enfes estoit & de mout bones costumes.

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<sup>112</sup> C<sup>1</sup> gives 'ruile' both here and on fol. 167 ra. In a second instance on fol. 167 ra., it gives 'riule', so I follow the manuscript for each instance.

### VIII. Beneoit Delivers a Monk from a Demon

1. En une de ces eglisses qe li seinz hom avoit iluec establies & fetes avoit un moigne qi ne pooit arrester en l'eglisse qant li moine començoient lor oroisons a fere. Més tantost com il s'aclinoient por orer, il issoit de l'eglisse fors & si coumençoit aucunes choses a fere qi preut ne valoient. Ses abbés le chastia pluseurs foiz & amonesta de ce fere qe li autre frere fesoient. Més cil ne s'en vout onques amender por chose c'on li peust dire.
  
2. Qant ce vit li abbés, il prist le frere si le mena a seint Beneoit. Si li conta & dist tote ceste chose. Seinz Beneoiz chastoia mout le moine & blasma [160rb] sa folie & li dist qe tieus aferes n'estoit mie solonc Deu ne bons a maintenir. Li moines dist qu'il s'en amenderoit, & atant s'en repaira arriere.
  
3. Et quant il fu revenuz a l'abeie, a peines tint il l'amonestement del seint home .ii. jorz, car au tierz jor repera il a son usage. Li abbés le renonca a seint Beneoit, et seinz Beneoiz li remanda qu'il meismes iroit a l'abeie, & si feroit au moine amender ceste chose. Qant il fu venuz a l'abeie & les psaumes furent finées en l'abeie, li frere se couchierent en orissons si com il avoient acostumé. Seinz Beneoiz esgarda si vit que uns noirs enfes traioit fors de l'eglisse le moigne par sa vesteure qi ne pooit arrester as orissons. Dont parla sei[n]z Beneoiz tout coiemment a l'abé de l'eglisse qi Pompeiens estoit apeléz & a un sien moine qui mout estoit preudom q'il avoit ensamble o lui amené—Maurus avoit non.
  
4. Si leur dist, « Dont ne veez vos qi cil est qi cest moine tret fors de ceenz ? »

Il respondirent si distre[n]t, « Nos n'en veons mie. »

Seinz Beneoiz lor dist, « Proions Nostre Signor qe vos puissiez veoir celui qi cest moine enmeine. »

5. Qant il orent par .ii. jorz fetes lor orissons, Maurus vit coment li noirs enfes entraioit le moine, & Pompeiens qi estoit abbés de l'eglisse ne le pooit mie veoir adonc. Au tierz jor, qant l'orisson fu finée, issi seinz Beneoiz de l'eglisse, si trova le moine defors estant qi la arrestoit toz coiz ne n'i fesoit nule chose, & seinz Beneoiz le bati d'une verge por la viuté qi en son cors estoit entrée. Ne onques puis cel jor li noirs enfes ce est li deables ne li enorta tele oevre a fere einz fu li moines en orissons assiduelment ensamble o ses freres.

### **IX. God Makes Water Come up the Mountain**

1. Apres ce avint qe des .xii. eglisses qe il avoit fetes & estorées la environ son habitacle estoient les .iii. en som la hautesce de la roche, & m[u]lt estoit grief chose & traveilleuse as freres de cez .iii. eglisses de descendre au lac en la vallée por prendre eue car il avoit grant peril & grant poor a ceus qi descendoient de [160va] la monteigne.

2. Por ce s'assemblerent li frere des .iii. eglisses. Si vindrent a saint Beneoit & si li distrent, « Seinz peres mout nos est g[r]ef chose & penable de chascun jor descendre au lac por eue. Por ceste peine covendroit il que nos eglisses fussent remuées & en autre leu assises. »

3. Qant seinz Beneoiz lor oi ce dire, il les conforta mout benignement & mout docement. Et qant vint la nuit, il monta la roche ensamble o lui l'enfant qi Placidus avoit non, dont je vos ai devant parlé, que plus de genz ne le sorent & si fist s'orisson la mout docement a Nostre Signor, & q[a]nt il l'ot finée, il mist trois pierres aussint com por enseignes la ou il l'avoit fete. Puis si s'en repaira arriere qe onques rien n'en s'orent cil des trois eglisses.

4. Qant vint a le[n]demein, li frere revindrent a lui compleindre de la destrece de l'eue, & il lor dist : « Alez & si Chavez la roche deseure la ou vos troveroiz trois pierres mises ensemble. Nostre Sires est bien si puissanz qu'il puet eue fere venir en som la monteigne & vos oster del grant travail ou vos estes. »

5. Lors s'en alerent li frere au leu ou li seinz hom lor disoit. Si le troverent ja trestout moiste & ausint com suant d'eue & tantost com il l'orent chavé en decorut l'eue a si grant plenté tresq'a hui cest jor en descent ele d'en som la montagne tres q'en la vallée. Et cil en orent & ont assez qui la habitent.

## X. The Sunken Blade Miraculously Returns to Its Handle

1. Un<sup>113</sup> autre tens apres ce, avint qe uns povres de la science de cest siecle—Gotus avoit non—vint a saint Beneoit por lui rendre a sa conversation. Li seinz hom le reçut

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<sup>113</sup> C<sup>1</sup> repeats 'un' here. C<sup>2</sup> has a blank spot where this initial should be, and C<sup>3</sup> has an initial that is difficult to read from the microfilms. I have elected to omit the repetition since the sentence makes sense with only one 'un' and since the scribe of C<sup>1</sup> often repeats words when those of C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup> do not.

molt volentiers. Einsint fu cil en la meson tant qe ce vint a un jor qe seinz Beneoiz li comanda a pre[n]dre un fauchart por oster buissons & orties fors d'un leu ou il voloit un cortil fere, & cil leus estoit pres del lac qi desoz la roche estoit. Gotus comença a destruire & a oster l'espessece des buissons & des orties a son pooir, & si com il s'esforçoit en tel maniere, li fers del fauchart failli fors del manche. Si chei el lac en tel leu qe nus ne cuidast ja- [160vb] més que li fers peust estre trovés si estoit l'eue parfonde.

2. Qant Gotus vit q'il avoit ensi son fer perdu, il trest a Maurum & si li dist le domache qu'il avoit receu. Maurus li moines ala a seint Beneoit, si li mostra ceste chose & dist. Qant li seinz hom oi la parole qe Maurus li contoit, il ala au lac, si prist le manche del fauchart qe Gotus tenoit en sa mein. Si le bouta en l'eue, & maintenant revint li fers de la parfondece. Si rentra el manche si com il avoit esté devant. Lors le rendi au convers & si li dist, « Beaus frere, or ovrez si ne demenez dolor ne tristece. »

## **XI. Maurus walks on Water to Save Placidus**

1. Une autre foiz avint qe seinz Beneoiz estoit en sa ceaille & Placidus, qi estoit moines & assez enfes, issi defors a tot un vessel por puisier el lac de l'eue. Si com il s'abessoit por l'eue prendre, il n'en sot mot si fu dedenz cheus, & maintenant l'esloigna l'onde en sus de la rive bien pres l'etroit d'une archie.

2. Seinz Beneoiz, qi dedenz sa ceaille estoit, sot tantost ceste chose. Lors apela Maurum par grant haste, si li dist : « Beaus frere queur isnelement, car li enfes qi estoit

aléz au lac por de l'eue est cheus dedenz si qe les ondes l'ont ja mout ensus tret & esloignie de la rive. »

3. Or poez oir merveille : qe tantost come Maurus ot receue la beneiçon & son comandement s'en ala isnelem[en]t tresq'al lieu ou l'onde avoit l'enfant mené. Si le prist par les cheveus & repera arriere tout par deseure l'eue si seurement q'il cuidoit aler par terre. Et qant il fu revenuz a la rive, & il ot l'enfant jus mis, il regarda arriere. Dont primes aperçut il q'il avoit alé seur l'eue. Si s'en esmerveilla & espoori mout durement.

4. Lors repera a saint Beneoit & li raconta ceste chose. Seinz Beneoiz dist qe ce n'estoit mie par ses merites ; einz estoit par l'obedience qu'il avoit aemplie. Et Maurus disoit encontre qe ce estoit tant seulement par son [co]mandement, car adonc ne li sovenoit d'obedience. La ou l'eue qe seinz Beneoiz avoit estruit & fet en l'oneur Nostre Signor Jesucrist croissoient & monteplioient. Par cieus miracles & par autres, pliusieurs [161ra] genz i venoient por deguerpir la seculer vie, & si se sosmetoient a sa doctrine.<sup>114</sup>

## **XII. Florentins Tries to Kill Beneoit with Poisoned Bread**

1. Uns prestres, qi Florentins ot non, qi pres de l'eglisse habitoit ou seinz Beneoiz avoit sa congregation, fu espris envers le seint home par malice del deable. Si comença a avoir envie de ses fez & de ses oevres. Si prist a blasmer sa conversation & sa vie por ce qu'il en cuidoit retrere ceus qi le visitoient & qi por servir Nostre Signor a lui se donoient. Més qant il vit qe tout ce ne li valoit rien, il fu tant avugles de sa grant male

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<sup>114</sup> While the manuscript does not break up the text here with an initial or lettrine, I felt that the change in subject matter merited a new chapter.



aventure qu'il envoia a seint Beneoit un pein tot envenimé aussint com se ce fust par amors & por beneïçon. Li seinz hom le reçut a granz grez, & tantost sot il bien la pestilence & la male aventure qi reposté estoit el pein.

2. Adonc avoit en costume uns corbeaus de venir a lui a heure de mengier, & si prenoit le pein qe li seinz hom li donoit de sa mein. Lors vint li corbeaus si com il soloit, & seinz Beneoiz li geta le pein devant qe li prestres li avoit envoié, & si li dist : « Je te comant el non Nostre Signor Jesucrist qe tu emportes cest pein & si le met en tel leu qe nus hom ne le puisse trover. »

3. Qant li corbeaus oi la parole del seint home, il tendi ses eles & si comença tout environ le pein a corre & si crioit mout durement en sa maniere autresint com s'il deust : « Je ne le feisse mie volent[ier]s se je osasse. »

4. Li seinz hom Deu li comanda une foiz & autre & si disoit lieue le seurement & si le giete la ou il ne puisse estre trovéz. Longuement ataria li corbeaus qe prendre ne l'osa, més en la fin, le prist il par le comandement del seint home en son bec, si s'esleva a tout, si l'emporta. Apres ce bien l'espace de .iii. heures, repera li corbiaus, & seinz Beneoiz li dona sa provende—tele com il li avoit acostumée.

5. Li seinz hom vit l'envie qe li prestres avoit vers lui & la felonie. Si en fu pl[us] dolenz por le prestre qe por lui meismes. Et qant li prestres vit q'il ne porroit seint Beneoit ocirre, il se pensa qu'il toudroit les ames a ses deciples en tel maniere q'il envoieroit devant eus .vii. damoiseles totes [161rb] nues qui par les meins s'entretendroient & karoleroient & joeroient ensemble. Einsi[n]t, trestorneroient lor

pensées & enflameroient en luxure. Qant li seinz hom vit ce, il cremi de ses jovenes freres. Si establi & mist partout prevoz & freres qi demorassent, & puis si prist ensemble o lui petit de compagnie de moines, si s'en ala & tint sa voie. Car il savoit bien qe Florences li prestres ne fesoit se por lui non a ses freres ces assauz ne ces felonies.

6. Mes tantost com il en fu partiz, l'en vengra bien Nostre Signor. Car la ou li prestres estoit en un solier & il ses leeçoit de saint Beneoit qi estoit aléz sa voie ; ne sot il mot si chei li soliers & fondi desouz lui. Ne onques la meson ne s'en remut en nule p[ar]tie. La fu Florences mors en ceste maniere. Dont le nonca Maurus maintenant qu'il le sout a saint Beneoit, qi encore n'estoit mie aléz loing de la .x. liues, & si li dist :  
« Seinz peres, retourne ! Car li prestres qui te haoit est morz. »

7. Qant seinz Beneoiz oi ceste chose, il se comença a doloser mout durement & a compleindre—je ne sai se ce fu por ce qe ses enemis estoit ocis ou por ce qe ses deciples ses leeçoit de sa mort—& por ce l'en charcha il peneance q'il li manda tel chose & qu'il estoit liéz & joieus. Por ce ne vout pas li seinz hom retourner arriere, einz s'en ala a un chastel qi Cassius estoit apeléz, qi estoit assis en la costiere d'une grant montaigne.

### **XIII. The Construction of Monte Cassino**

1. La monteigne estoit loing estendue en haut pres de .iii. liues charchies de forez & de boischage. La avoit un viez temple de paiens ou li vilein aoroient ancienement Apollin, et encore adont en i avoit grant plenté a cel tens qui la fesoient lor sacrefices.

2. La vint seinz Beneoiz, si combrisa l'ydole & destruisit l'autel. Si comanda a trenchier le bois & a abatre & en meismes le temple d'Apollin. Fist il un autre autel de saint Martin, & la ou li autieus d'Apollin estoit fist il un autel de saint Jehan. Et [co]menca a preecier & a atorner a foi les mescreanz genz qi la environ habitoient.
3. Einsi cou- **[161va]** -menca Seins Beneois a fere la meson qi Mon Cassins est apelée. Li chastiaus ot premierem[en]t a non Cassins & por la montaigne qui est desus le chastel ou ele fu fete fu ele nomée Mont Cassins.
4. Li deables, qi grant douleur en avoit & grant ire, n'en estoit mie mout liéz des oevres seint Beneoit, & por ce ne li venoit il mie devant repostement ne par songes, més par tote aperte avision & si se complegnoit si tres haut de la force qe seinz Beneoiz li fesoit qe li frere ooient bien sa voiz & ses paroles. Encore ne le peussent il veoir. Et si com seinz Beneoiz recontoit a ses freres qu'il pleinement le veoit, il estoit toz noir[s] & espris de flambes la bouche & li oel li ardoient. Et li frere ooient bien le deable parler & entendoient ses paroles, car il huc[h]oit<sup>115</sup> premiers le seint home par son non. Et qant li seinz hom, qui bien conoissoit le deable, ne le voloit respondre, li deables le començoit a laidengier.
5. Car qant il huc[h]oit « Beneoit, Beneoit », & seinz Beneoiz ne respondoit mie, li deables li disoit tantost « Maleoiz non mie, Beneoiz. Qe me demandes tu ? Et por quoi me fez tu grevance ? »

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<sup>115</sup> This is an instance of a Picard 'c' which can sometimes represent a 'ch' sound. I have added the 'h' here and elsewhere to make this evident.

Or vos conterai des estors qui furent entre le seint home & le deable, car li deables le haoit m[o]lt durement. Si li fesoit qanqu'il pooit de mal en toutes manieres.

#### **XIV. The Fire at Monte Cassino**

1. Un jor avint qe li frere fesoient les habitacles & les mesons de cele abeie qe seinz Beneoiz estoit a Mont Cassin. El mileu d'une de lor meso[n]s, si i avoit une pierre q'il voudrent oster por le leu a descombrer & por le mur fere. Il s'i assemblerent .ii. & puis .iii., més ne la porrent mover tant qe pluisors en i vindrent. Més la pierre fu aussi coie come s'ele fust en terre enracinée. Et par ce q'il ne la pooient mover par tant de genz com il i avoient assamblé, pooient il bien certainement savoir qe li deables se seoit deseure.

2. Qant il virent q'il ne la moveroie[n]t, il envoierent por seint Beneoit q'il venist la & q'il par ses orissons ostast le deable si qu'il peussent mover & lever cele [161vb] pierre. Seins Beneoiz i vint, si fist s'orisson & sa beneïçon, et tantost leverent la pierre si legierement c'onques rien ne lor greva. Dont plot au seint home qe li frere foisse[n]t la terre en cel endroit ou la pierre avoit geu & eus si firent. Qant il orent auques parfont alé, si troverent une ymage qe paie[ns] avoient faite & aorée. Cele ymage estoit de qoivre.

3. Li frere la pristrent, si le geterent par aventure en lor cuisine. Et meintena[n]t lor sembla qe feus faissist de totes parz de la meson si q'il cudierent qe li defices de la cuisine fust toz espriz & enflambéz. Si com il getoient eue por cel fu esteindre & il fesoient grant noise, seinz Beneoiz i vint, qi maintenant vit qe ce estoit fantosme[s].

4. Lors se coucha seinz Beneoiz en orissons & si apela ses freres cui li deables degaboit en tel maniere. Si lor dist q'il feissent le signe de la seinte croiz sor eus. Si esgardassent qe li edefices de la cuisine n'arroit pas. Einsint com li seinz hom comanda, si fire[n]t li frere & ni virent n'oient de la flambe qu'il lor sembloit devant q'il eussent veue.

### **XV. Beneoit Ressucitates a Young Monk**

1. Apres ce avint qe li frere fesoient la paroi de lor meson en haut si com il le covenoit fere, & seinz Beneoiz estoit en orissons dedenz l'encloistre de sa celle. Li deables li aparut, si li dist q'il alast a ses freres qi ovroient. Li seinz hom manda a ses freres mout isnelement par un message q'il se gardassent sagement car li deables les aguaitoit a cele heure. A paines ot cil qi lor nonçoit sa parole finée, qant li deables trebucha la paroi qe li frere fesoient & si ocist un joene moniot qui fiuz estoit a un bon home. Li frere furent mout dolenz por la mort de lor frere, non mie por le domache de lor oeuvre.

2. Mei[n]tenant le noncierent a seint Beneoit tot en plorant & mout grant doel demenant. Seinz Beneoiz comanda c'on li aportast l'enfant qi toz estoit & combrisiéz & morz. Li frere le mistrent en un sac, car autrement ne le porent porter, car les pierres ne li avoient mie brisiés tant seulement [162ra] les membres, einz li avoient aussint toz les os froissiéz. Dont comanda seinz Beneoiz q'il le meissent jus devant lui en sa ceaille ou il estoit acostuméz de ses orissons fere. Li frere si firent einsint, et seinz Beneoiz les en fist toz fors aler, si clost l'uis, més il lor [co]manda einçois q'il ralassent a l'oeuvre. Dont se

coucha li seins hom en orissons pl[us] ententivement q'il ne soloit fere envers Nostre Signor. Or poez vos oir chose esmerveillable : car en cele meismes heure fu li enfes seinz y heitiéz & rala a l'oevre ensamble o ses freres. Dont comença seinz Beneoiz a avoir si grant grace de Nostre Signor q'il savoit mout de choses qui a avenir estoie[n]t.

### **XVI. Some Monks Eat and Drink Against Beneoit's Rules**

1. Costume estoit adonc en la meso[n] seint Beneoit qe nus des freres n'aloit a autre parler estrange ne en autre leu, qe ja beust ne ne mengast si revenist arriere, car nus n'aloit fors qi ne revenist a la vesprée. Ceste chose estoit mout bien gardée & mout bien tenue.

2. Un jor avint qe ne sai qanz freres alere[n]t en un leu ou il demorerent plus qu'il ne cudierent, si com pluseur font encore. Li frere trestrent a la meson d'une religieuse feme & si mengierent, puis si revindrent mout tost en leur ceaille. Qant il furent revenuz, il vindrent a seint Beneoit por la beneïçon avoir si com il avoient acostumé. Li seinz hom ne lor vout mie doner ; einz dist :

« Ou mengastes vous ? »

Il respondirent & si distrent, « Nul leu. »

Seinz Beneoiz lor dist : « Por qoi mentez<sup>116</sup> vos en tel maniere ? Dont ne fustes vos a la meson a cele feme & dont n'i eustes vos teles viandes & dont n'i beustes vos tantes forz ? »

3. Q[a]nt li frere orent oi ce qe lor pere lor contoit, ensi l'ostel ou il avoient mengié, & la maniere des viandes & le nombre de lor boivre, il cheirent a ses piez & si li conurent tout ce q[u'i]l avoient fet, & regehrent, & distrent q'il trespasé avoient son coumandement. Seinz Beneoiz lor pardona & si pensa qe plus ne le feroient, si les assoust, et douna sa beneiçon.

### **XVII. A Pair of Monks Who Break their Fast on Their Way to See Beneoit**

1. [162rb] Une autre foiz avint qe uns hom mout religieux avoit en costume del leu ou il estoit manans venir en jeunes a seint Beneoit por avoir ses orissons & sa beneiçon & por veoir un sien frere qi moines estoit en la compaignie seint Beneoit—Valentiniens avoit non, dont je vos ai fait mension devant. Cil hom mut por aler la voie q'il avoit acostumée. Uns autres hom s'accompaigna a lui qi viande portoit por mengier en la voie. Si com il s'en aloient ensamble & l'eure de mengier fu aprochie, cil qi la viande avoit dist a celui qi a seint Beneoit aloit :

« Beaus frere, vien ça si mengerons qe nos ne soions trop lasséz de la longue voie par famine. »

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<sup>116</sup> C<sup>1</sup> gives 'mentes' but C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup> give 'mentez' so I have chosen to correct this to correspond with the pronoun 'vos' here.

Cil li respondi, « Amis, non ferai ; je ne mengerai mie car je suel toz tens jeuns venir a seint Beneoit, nostre pere. »

2. Qant li compeins qi la viande avoit oi ce, il se teut adont. Mesqant il ot grant piece de la voie avant alé, il recomença le preudome a amonester qu'il mengassent. Li preudom qi jeuns soloit aler n'en vout riens fere. Dont alerent grant piece ensamble tant q'il fu mout atargie ce sembla a celui qui volentiers mengast.

3. Lors troverent enmi la voie un mout beau pre, & en cel pre une mout bele fonteine qui mout estoit clere & delitable, & tieus choses si estoient mout plesanz a ceus qi estoient lasséz. Dont parla cil qi a costume avoit de parler avant au preudome son compaignon & si li dist :

« Veez ici le pre & la fontaine & leu delitable ou nos poons mengier & reposer.

Après si, irons plus heitiement nostre voie. »

4. Li preudom qi<sup>117</sup> vit le beau liu otroia a ceste tierce foiz qu'il mengeroit. Donc, mengierent ensamble seur la fonteine : & tant ala la chose qe li preudom ala a la ceaille seint Beneoit au vespre, & qant il fu devant le seint pere, il li requist s'orisson & sa beneïçon. Més seinz Beneoiz le blasma de [162va] ce q'il avoit fet en la voie & si li dist :

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<sup>117</sup> C<sub>1</sub> repeats 'qi' here, but this is not the case in C<sub>2</sub> or in C<sub>3</sub>. This must be a mistake, so I will omit the second 'qui'.



« Que est ce beaus freres ? Li malignes esperiz qui a toi parla en la voie par ton compaignon ne te pot mie e[n]orter qe tu feisses sa volenté a la premiere foiz, ne a la seconde, més a la tierce sormonta il a ce qu'il vout fere. »

5. Dont reconut cil ce q'il avoit fet. Si se lessa cheoir as piez saint Beneoit & comença a plorer, & a rendre sa coupe, & bien sot qe seinz Beneoiz avoit veu son mesfet, ja fust ce q'il ni eust esté en presence. Einsi savoit li seinz hom par la grace de Deu les choses aussint bien celés ou il n'estoit mie come celes ou il estoit.

### **XVIII. Beneoit's Prophecies Regarding King Thotila**

1. Adonc avint qe uns rois qi avoit non Thotila oi parler de saint Beneoit, & q'il savoit les choses qi a avenir estoient. Si se pensa q'il iroit a lui, & si esproveroit se ce estoit voirs ou non. Qant il vint pres de l'abeie, si arresta ensus & si manda a saint Beneoit qu'il venoit a lui parler de son afere.

2. Li rois avoit un serjant—Ringoz estoit apeléz. Celui fist li rois vestir de roiaus vesteures & atoner del tot en tot en sa guise ; & si li comanda q'il alast au saint home en sa persone, & ses .iii. plus privéz compaignons qi estoient de son conseil devant toz les autres : envoya il ensamble o celui a so[n] service. Li uns de cez trois compaignons avoit non Vult, & li autres Rudrich, & li tierz Blidin. Por ce, les i envoya li rois qe seinz Beneoiz cuidast qe cil ensemble o cui il aloient & qi estoit vestuz si noblement fust proprement le cors le roi. Car onques ne l'avoit veu & ensamble envoya serjanz qi portoient espées, si q'il semblast aussi bien rois de totes autres choses com de vesteures. Einsi cuidoit li rois decoivre saint Beneoit. Qant Ringgoz fu molt richement atornéz & il

ot enseble o lui ses chevaliers & sa mesnie, il ala tant q'il vint a l'abeie. Li seinz hom le vit venir de loing qi toz coiz se seoit ne ne se movoit. Qant Ringgoz li fu tant aprochiéz qe seinz Beneoiz se pensa q'il orroit bien & entenderoit sa parole, il li comença a crier & a dire :

« Beaus fiuz oste ce qe tu portes car ce n'est mie tien. »

**3.** Qant Ringgoz oi la parole il se lessa che- [162vb] oir a terre. Il ot grant poor. Por ce q'il voloit par sa folie degaber si seint home. Et tuit cil qi la estoient assemblé o lui se lessierent cheoir a terre por encliner seint Beneoit, & puis si s'en retournerent q'il ne l'oserent aprocier, & conterent au roi par grant poor, com tost li seinz hom les avoit pris & coneu tot lor afere. Lors ala li rois meismes par lui tot seul sanz compaignie la ou seinz Beneoiz seoit toz seus en sa ceaille, & tantost com il le vit ne l'osa il aprochier. Einz se mist a terre, si l'enclina. Li seinz hom li dist une foiz & autre q'il se levast, més onques li rois ne se vout lever tresq'a tant qe seinz Beneoiz meismes vint a lui qi le leva de terre, & qui mout le blasma des choses qu'il avoit fetes, & a mout petit de paroles li dist ce que a avenir li estoit en tel maniere :

« Rois tu as mout fet de maus. Or soies sages tres ceste ore en avant, & si laiester tes felonies : car pechiés est de mal fere. Saches bien qe tu iras en brief terme a Rome, & apres passeras la mer por aler en Sulie. Tu viveras encore .ix. anz en ta poeste & en ta signorie, & au disieme an morras sanz dotance. »

**4.** Qant li rois oi ce, si fu mout espoentéz en son cuer sanz mostrer samblant. Dont requist au seint home ses orissons & sa beneiçon, si s'en repeira arriere. Et bien sachiez

vos qi m'escoutez & entendez qe tres ce jor en avant ot en lui meins de cruauté & de felonie. Apres ce, ne demora gueres qe li rois en ala a Rome si com seinz Beneoiz li avoit dit. De la, s'en ala en Sulie. Si passa la mer, & puis morut il au disieme an & issi de ceste mortel vie.

### **XIX. Beneoit Propheties Natural Disasters for Rome**

**1.** Adonc avoit en l'eglisse de Tamisse un prestre qi mout estoit preudo[m] & seinz hom. Celui amoit molt sei[n]t Beneoit por ce q'il savoit bien q'il estoit de nete vie & de seinte. Cil vint a saint Beneoit q[a]nt li rois fu de lui partiz. Seinz Beneoiz li conta & dist [com]ent li rois estoit a lui venuz & [com]ent il le cuidoit decoivre. Li prestres, qi totes cez paroles ot escoutées, parla a saint Beneoit & si li dist :

« Ceste citéz fera par cest roi destruite. Si del tout en tout q'il ne fera nus qi i habite. »

**2.** Seinz Beneoiz respondi au prestre **[163ra]** & si li dist, « Rome ne sera ja desertée par paiens ne par sarrazin, més ele anoientira par tempestes & par foudres & par escollemenz de t[er]re. »

**3.** Et ceste prophetie i est maintenant veue, car les mesons i sont abatues par pluseurs leus & les eglisses destruites & li edefi i vont anoient en pluseurs manieres & ce racontent li frere saint Beneoit qi l'oient, qe seinz Beneoiz prophetiza einsint ceste chose a avenir.

## XX. Beneoit Delivers a Priest from the Devil

1. En cel tens meismes qe li rois Thotila estoit departiz de seint Beneoit—si com je vos ai devant dit & conté—i avoit un clerc en l’eglisse d’Aquinense qi estoit fors del sens par le deable qi molt grieme[n]t le tormentoit. Li prestres de l’eglisse, qi mout estoit preudom & religieux, Costances avoit non, l’avoit envoié par plusieurs seinz leus ou cors de glorieus martyrs repositoient por ce qe santé li fust rendue. Més ne pot estre q’il eust santé en nul leu ou l’en le menast por ce qe Nostre Sires voloit par lui demonstrer com grant grace il avoit donée a seint Beneoit. Il se coucha a terre, si fist ses orissons a Nostre Signor & ses proieres, tant qe li clers fu delivrés del deable & gueriz de sa male aventure. Qant li clers fu sanéz de son meschief, seinz Beneoiz li dist :

« V’a ten & si garde qe james ne menjuces de char ; & si garde qe james n’aproces a seintes ordres, car bie[n] saces se tu ordener te fesoies, qe tu maintenant seroies rencheuz es liens au deable & en la male aventure qe tu as longuement sosferte. »

2. Li clers li respondi q’il tendroit ses comandemenz en totes manieres. Lors s’en departi maintenant seinz & heitiéz & bie[n] se garda de ce qe seinz Beneoiz li avoit coumandé a garder grant tens, tant com il li souvint de la douleur q’il avoit soutenue. Més qant lonc tens fu trespaséz & ceste chose fu auques oubliée, & il vit qe li ainse de lui moroient & li meinsnez estoient essauciéz & eslevéz a seintes ordres, il ot oubliées les paroles seint Beneoit & arriere mises ; si se fist ordener a prestre & tantost li rentra li deables el cors qi ne le deguerpi onques, tresq’a tant qu’il ot l’ame del cors getée [163rb] par grant travail et par grant douleur.

### XXI. Beneoit Prophees the Future Destruction of His Monastery

1. Une autre foiz avint qe uns hauz home—Theoprobus estoit apeléz—estoit renduz en la meson seint Beneoit, & mout avoit grant fiance el sei[n]t home por ce qu'il le savoit de seinte vie. Cil Theoprobus entra un jor en la ceaille ou li seinz hom fesoit ses orissons. Si le trova mout durement plorant. Cil resgarda & si se teut grant piece por ce qu'il cuidoit qe li seinz hom deust lessier le plorer. Més il ne la lessa mie adonques tost. Theoprobus s'en esmerveilla durement car seinz Beneoiz n'avoit mie acostumé q'il se plainsist en tel maniere dementieres q'il devoit fere ses orissons. Qant il se fu esmerveilliéz assez, il ala avant & si li demanda dont ceste douleur li venoit & ceste pesance. Sei[n]z Beneoiz respondi isnelement & si li dist :

« Bea[us] frere, je ai ceste douleur por ce qe ceste abeie qe je ai fete & estorée & totes les choses que je avoie a oes mes freres apareilliés seront tresq'a brief tens destruites. Et par la volenté Nostre Signor, seront totes choses en ces parties mises es meins de paiens, & a pones ma Nostre Sires otroie & qe je & mi frere en eschapons. »

2. Qant Theoprobus oi ce, il li vi[n]t a grant merveille. Més l'abeie fu destruite apres par les Longuebars, si com nos bien meismes savons. Car la nuit meesmem[en]t qe seinz Beneoiz ot dite ceste parole, entrerent li Longubarz dedenz l'abeie & pristre[n]t qanq'il pooient trover, & abatirent les mesons & depecierent, més onques home n'i pristrent. Einsi a empli a seint Beneoit Nostre Sires ce q'il li avoit promis ce est q'il li garderoit ses freres. Ja fust ce qe ses choses fussent destruites par paiens. Et ceste chose si est semblable a l'oeuvre qe seinz Pous fist en la nef ou totes les choses perirent, & par lui orent cil qi ensemble o lui estoient sauvés les vies.

## XXII. Ylarates Tries to Steal a Flask of Wine

1. Apres ce avint qe uns enfes—Ylarates avoit non & puis fu convers en l'abeie—fu envoié a sei[n]t Beneoit par un sien signor ensamble o cui [163va] il estoit a tout deus vesseaus pleins de vin. Li vessel estoient de fust & de flascon apelé en cel language. Li enfes qi le vin portoit tote la voie se pensa q'il n'en donroit qe l'un a seint Beneoit, & l'autre repondroit en la voie si en beueroit qant il repaireroit. Einsint com il le pensa, einsint le fist, & ala tant q'il presenta a seint Beneoit l'un des flascons, ce est l'un des barilliaus, & li seinz hom le reçut a grant grace. Qant cil ot pris congié del reperier arriere, seinz Beneoiz parla a lui mout belement & si li dist :

« Beaus fuiz, garde qe tu a ce baril qe tu as repost ! James ne boives ! Més qant tu i vendras, & tu le troveras, si verse fors & respant ce qu'il a dedenz. »

2. Qant cil oi einsint parler le seint home si ot grant honte, més neqedent se departi il de seint Beneoit & ala tant q'il vint a son baril. Si se pensa q'il esproveroit se la chose estoit voire qu'il avoit oie. Lors aclina le baril & tantost en issi uns serpenz, dont cil qant il le vit, ot g[ra]nt merveille & grant poor, car par ceste chose savoit il q'il avoit mauvese oevre fete.

## XXIII. A Monk Tries to Steal Two Towels

1. Non mie granment ensus de l'abeie seint Beneoit avoit une vile ou il manoit genz assez qi par la parole, & par l'enortement seint Beneoit, & par la predication estoient tornéz a la foi Nostre Signor, & avoient deguerpi la fause crea[n]ce des ydres. En cele

vile avoit nonains qui Nostre Signor servoient, & seinz Beneoiz i envoioit mout sovent de ses freres por eles doctriner & amonester q'eles Nostre Signor servissent ententivement & l'ordre tenissent por avoir vie parmenable.

2. Adonc avi[n]t un jor qe li seinz hom en i envoia un si com il avoit acostumé. Qant li moines qi la fu envoié ot les damoiseles amonestées de bien fere, & il ot sa predication définée, eles li proierent tant q'il prist .ii. petites toailles que les li donerent. Si les mist en son sein. Meintenant q'il fu reperiéz & seinz Beneoiz le vit, il le comença ablasmer mout leidement & si li dist :

« Coment pot entrer la felonie en ton sein qe tu i as reposté ? »

Li moines s'esbahi, car [163vb] il ne savoit de qoi li seinz hom le reprenoit por ce q'il avoit en son sein oublié ce que les noneins doné li avoient.

Seinz Beneoiz li dist, « Cuides tu qe je ne fusse en presence q[a]nt tu pris les choses qe les anceles Deu te donerent & tu les meis en ton sein ? »

3. Q[a]nt li moines oi ce, il se lessa cheoir as piez seint Beneoit a terre. Si se repenti de la folie q'il avoit fete, & si geta les toailles fors de son sein c'on li avoit donées. Si fu assous del seint home.

#### **XXIV. Beneoit Knows the Thoughts of a Prideful Servant**

1. Apres ce avint qe li seinz hom me[n]goit par une vesprée, & uns moines qi estoit fuis d'un haut home tenoit devant lui la chandele a la table. Si comença mout orgueilleusement a penser & a dire en son corage & en sa pensée,

« Qui est cist devant qui je sui toz droiz a son mengier & qui je serf de tenir sa lumiere & qi sui je qi servir le doi en tel guise ? »

Si com li juvenes moines pensoit i ce, seinz Beneoiz se torna vers lui. Si le comença m[o]lt a blasmer & si li dist :

« Frere, seigne ton cuer ! Qe est ce qe tu penses ? Seignes ton cuer ! Si feras qe sages. »

2. Dont apela ses autres moines si lor comanda qe il a celui ostassent le lumiere fors de la mein, & le moine [co]manda q'il arriere se tresist de son service, & qu'il fust coiz si se reposast. Li frere demanderent a celui q'il avoit pensé, et il lor reconta tout en ordre le grant orgueil q'il avoit pensé & la felonie & la parole q'il disoit tout coiemment en sa pensée encontre le seint home, dont sorent li frere certainement qe nule chose ne pooit estre a seint Beneoit celée ne reposté car il savoit & [con]nissoit les pensées & les corages des homes.

## **XXV. Flour Miraculously Appears During a Famine**

1. Une autre foiz avint qe une g[ra]nt famine vint en cele region si qe totes les genz de la contrée en estoient destreinz. Adont failli li blez en l'abeie seint Beneoit ; lor peins estoit si failliz q'il n'en i avoit qe .v. tant seulement de remanant. Li frere en estoie[n]t tuit esmaiés, ne ne savoient qe fere. Q[a]nt [164ra] seinz Beneoiz les vit por ceste chose si dolenz, il parla a eus & si lor dist :



« Por quoi estes voz si tristes en vos corages por ceste besoigne ? Sosfrez hui tant seulement & demain avroiz vos a grant plenté ce qe mestiers vos fera. »

2. Einsint passa cil jorz & la nuiz, et lendemain a la matinée troverent il devant lor portes .cc. huis de ferine molt belement atornée en sas mise, ne ne sorent onques li frere dont ele estoit venue ne par quel maniere Nostre Sires lor avoit donée & envoié. Li frere rendirent graces a Nostre Signor, & par ce apristrent il & sorent bien c'on ne devoit mie douter ne desperer qui a mestier & besoigne.

#### **XXVI. Beneoit Appears in a Vision, Giving Instructions for Building a Monastery**

1. Un autre tens apres ce avint qe uns houz hom qi en Nostre Signor avoit sa fiance mise vint a seint Beneoit & si li proia qu'il en son chastel qi estoit pres de Teracense envoiast de ses freres por establir & por fere une abeie. Seinz Beneoiz li otroia. Lors eslut de ses freres qui la en iroient, & si lor dist, & devisa li qu'eus seroit lor peres esperitue[us] (ce est abbés) & li qu'eus seroit lor prevoz por garder lor aferes. Qant il ot einsint la chose ordenée & devisée il lor dist :

« Alez vos en & bien saciez q'a ce jor vendrai je a vos & si vos enseignerai en quel leu vos feroiz le mostier & le refectoir as freres ou il mengeront & l'ostel por les ostes recevoir & les autres edefices qu'il vos covendra. »

2. Dont pristrent li frere qi aler s'en devoient sa beneïçon. Si s'en partirent & alerent tant qu'il vindrent au leu ou il aler devoient. Qant il furent venu, si comencierent a querre & a atoner lor choses par grant diligence & ce q'il sorent qe besoinz estoit a oez

la venue seint Beneoit qi jor leur avoit mis de venir. Qant vint la nuit qe li seinz hom lor avoit promis q'il vendroit a lendemein, en avision celui qu'il avoit fet de cel covent abbé & au prevost aussint, & si lor ensigna & demostra chascu[n] leu par lui ou il devoient fere & establir lor edefices. Qant li abbés & le prevos se fu- [164rb] rent esvelliéz et levéz, li uns conta a l'aut[re] l'avision q'il avoit veue, més por ce ne crurent il mie ceste chose encore. Einz atendoient la venue seint Beneoit, si com il lor avoit dit & molt s'esmervelloient por quoi il ne venoit. Et qant il virent qu'il ne vendroit mie, il repairierent a<sup>118</sup> lui toz dolenz & si distrent :

« Seinz peres, nos gardions ta venue si com tu nos avoies promis por ce qe tu nos enseignasses<sup>119</sup> & demostrasses coment & ou nous feissons nos edefices, més tu ne venis mie. »

3. Seinz Beneoiz lor respondi, « Bea[us] freres, por quoi dites vos tieus paroles ? N'alai je mie a vos einzi com je vos promis & dis ? »

Li frere respondirent, « Qant fu ce qe vos i venistes? »

Il lor dist, « Dont ne m'aparu je a vos .ii. en dormant & demostrai chascun leu & ensignai ? Alez retornez arriere & si fetes totes les habitations de l'abeie si com je les vos mostrai par vision en l'abeie. »

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<sup>118</sup> C<sub>1</sub> repeats the 'a' here. Since C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> do not, I will omit this error.

<sup>119</sup> C<sub>1</sub> gives "enseigna/sees". Since the second verb in this sentence is in the subjunctive ("demostrasses"), and since C<sub>2</sub> and C<sub>3</sub> give "enseignasses", I will do the same.

4. Qant li frere oirent ce, il le tindrent a grant merveille. Si reperierent arriere. Si firent lor oeuvre & ordenerent ensi com il avoient par avisio[n] veu. De tel force & de tel vertu estoit li seinz hom en sa pensée q'a poines li pooit estre nule chose celée, & ses paroles meesment avoient si grant force q'eles nestoient onques veines, car adés avenoient ensi com il les disoit. Dont vous poez oir & entendre un beau miracle :

### **XXVII. Beneoit Excommunicates Some Haughtily Speaking Nuns**

1. Pres de l'abeie habitoient .ii. nonains en un lor propre leu qui nées estoient de haute lignie. Uns hom religieux les servoit de ce dont elles avoient mestier, més eles ne pooient tenir lor langues envers lui qe mout sovent ne le laidengassent de paroles, tant qu'eles les commovoient mout sovent en grant ire. Qant li preudom ot mout longuement sofert cest anui & ceste lime, il s'en ala a saint Beneoit & si li conta & dist come cez dames li fesoient grant honte & grant anui par paroles. Qant li seinz hom oi ce des noneins, il lor manda par un [164va] sien frere qi lor dist :

« Beles suers destreigniez vos langues & amendez, car se vos ne le fetes je vos escumenierai. »

Les noneins ne lessierent mie por ce lor viez costumes.

Car femes tencent volentiers ;  
 Ce leur samble mout bons mestiers  
 Puisque tences ont entreprisses.  
 Eles n'en erent ja surprises.  
 Ainz liment tant qe mal lor vaut.  
 Dex qi les fist si les consaut,  
 Et nos ausint ! Car m[o]lt sovent  
 Avons a eles mal covent,  
 Voire as pluseurs, non mie a totes.

Mal font celes qi sont estoutes ,<sup>120</sup>

**2.** Si com cez .ii. noneins estoie[n]t vers lor convers qi onques por le mandeme[n]t saint Beneoit ne s'amenderent. Més mout pou apres ce avint si com Nostre Sires le volt q'eles morurent si furent enfoies en lor eglise. Qant l'en chantoit messe en cele eglise, si estoit costume qe li dyacres disoit a hautes voiz qe li escomeniéés ississent fors & si s'en alassent. La norrice a ces .ii. damoiseles, qui seinz Beneoiz avoit escomeniées par sa parole seulement se les de lor paroles ne s'amendoient, veoit q'eles de lor sepoutures s'ensissoient & aloient fors de l'eglisse tantost qe li dyacres disoit qe li escomeniéés s'en alassent. Qant ele ot ceste chose veue plusieurs foiz, il li sovint de la parole qe seinz Beneoiz lor manda dementieres q'eles estoient en vie : ce est q'il les escomenioit se eles namendoient lor vies, & lor costumes, & lor paroles. Lors s'en ala a seint Beneoit tot plorant & si li nonça ceste chose. Qant seinz Beneoiz l'oi, il li dona de sa propre mein une oubliée & si li dist :

« Alez & si le dites a vostre prestre q'il chante messe de ceste oublée, si ne seront plus escomeniéés. »

**3.** Lors s'en ala la norrice & si fist einsint com li seinz hom li avoit comandé. Tantost come la messe fu chantée por les escomeniées la ou il estoient & ce vi[n]t a l'autre foiz qe li dyacres dist qe li escomeniéés alassent fos de l'eglisse, onques puis les damoiseles ni furent veues. Par ce sot l'en bie[n] sanz doutance q'[e]les estoient assouses par le saint home.

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<sup>120</sup> This is the first of the two rhyming verse passages in this text.

### XXVIII. A Young Monk Visits His Parents without Beneoit's Permission

1. Une autre foiz avint apres ce qu'ensemble o le seint home avoit un en- [164vb] fançon qi renduz estoit moines. Si amoit mout son pere & sa mere. Adont avint qe as enfes s'en ala sanz le congié seint Beneoit & sanz sa beneiçon a la meson son pere & sa mere. En cel meismes jor q'il i vint avint q'il morut & issi de ceste vie.

2. Li peres & la mere qi mout l'amoient en furent mout dolent, si l'enfoient. L'autre jor apres avint qu'il troverent l'enfant fors de la fosse ne ne sorent qi mis l'avoit fors de la sepouture. Dont le repristrent & si le renfoient, més au tier[z]<sup>121</sup> jor le troverent il aussint come devant fors de la fosse. Dont s'en alerent a seint Beneoit a s'abeie si li conterent & distre[n]t ceste chose, & si li proierent tout em plorant q'il a l'enfant deignast rendre sa grace si qu'il peust demorer en sa sepouture. Li seinz hom lor dona a ses propres meins une oublée beneoite & sacrée si lor dist :

« Or en alez & si li metez ceste chose seu le piz par grant reverence, & puis si le remetez en sa sepouture »

3. Li peres & la mere furent einsint. Ne onqes puis li cors ne fu trovéz seur terre. Or poez oir & entendre com li seinz hom estoit de grant merite envers Nostre Signor : qe neis la terre ne voloit mie detenir le cors de son moine qui n'avoit mie sa grace.

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<sup>121</sup> C<sup>1</sup> gives 'tierc' but C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup> give 'tierz' so I have maintained that spelling.

**XXIX. A Monk, while Trying to Leave the Monastery, Encounters a Dragon**

1. Apres ce avint q'uns moines estoit en l'abeie qi son cuer avoit si torné a la vanité de cest monde q'il ne voloit en nule maniere la dedenz demorer. Seinz Beneoiz le chastioit mout & amonestoit de bien fere & de demorer por servir Nostre Signor en la compaignie de ses freres. Cil respo[n]doit au seint home qe ce ne porroit estre ne ne porroit en nule maniere l'ordre sosfrir ne la vie.

2. Une foiz avint qe seinz Beneoiz en fu mout ennuiéz si li dist par ire q'il s'en alast & tenist sa voie. Li moines se parti del seint home & tantost com il fu issuz de l'abeie, il vit enmi sa voie un grant dragon qi vers lui avoit la geule baée, dont comença li moines a crier a hautes voiz tot trambla[n]t :

« Acorez , acorez ! Car cis dragons me veut devorer & ocirre. »

3. Dont ja corurent li frere. Més de cel dragon ne virent il mie. Einz trovere[n]t [165ra] le moine si trablant et si espooriz qe por pou q'il ne perdoit la vie. Dont le pristrent, si le remenerent arriere en l'abeie a seint Beneoit. Lors promist li moines qe james n'isteroit de s'abeie & il si ne fist. Einz remest toz les jorz de sa vie en la religion. Einsint avint il par les orissons seint Beneoit de cel orible drago[n] qe li moines voloit ensui[v]re<sup>122</sup> q[a]nt il ne[n] veoit mie.

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<sup>122</sup> C<sup>1</sup> gives 'ensuire' while C<sup>2</sup> and C<sup>3</sup> give 'ensuivre' so I have corrected it here.

### XXX. Pelerins Consults Benedict For Advice about His Debt

1. Ce ne fet mie a tere q'uns siens moines, qi Pelerins estoit apeléz, contoit & disoit qe uns mout preudom estoit mout entrepris car rendre ne pooit ce q'il devoit. En cel tens adonques estoit molt mei[n]s de monoie q'il nest ore. Li preudom ne savoit qe fere, car il ne savoit ou prendre ces deniers q'il devoit. Il se pensa qu'il iroit a seint Beneoit & si li diroit sa besoigne. Lors vint au seint home a l'abeie & si li conta com il estoit maubailliz por .xii. souz qu'il devoit a un home. Li seinz hom qi la parole celui ot entendue dist q'il n'auroit .xii. soulz en nule maniere, més ne porqant le conforta il par bele parole. Si li dist :

« Va t'en & si repere a moi au tierz jor, car je n'ai hui nule chose qe je doner te doie. »

2. Li preudom se departi de la & seinz Beneoiz remest en orissons si com il avoit acostumé, & cil qi besoigneuz estoit repera au tierz jor. Tantost com il fu revenuz trova un[s] des freres de la meson seur une huze qi leenz estoit pleine de forment .xiii. soulz de cele monoie qi coroit adonques. Il vint a seint Beneoit, si li dist. Li seinz hom comanda c'on li aportast. Si les fist doner a celui qi mestier en avoit & si li dist qe les .xii. soulz en paiast si com il devoit fere & les .xii. deniers retenist a despendre. Cil l'en mercia si com il dut fere mout durement. Si repera liéz & joians arriere. Si paia sa dette.

### XXXI. Beneoit Heals a Poisoned Man

1. Or vos conterai qe d'un sien deciple me distrent, qi la chose avoient veue. Uns hom estoit qui uns autres haoit mout durement, & tant ala la haine qe al se pensa q'il

l'ociroit. Més ne savoit en quel maniere plus covertement le peust fere. Tant se pensa non por qant & jor & nuit qe li deables li mist en corage qi volentiers [165rb] atorne tieus choses qu'il ocirroit celui par venim q'il li metroit en son boivre. Einsint le fist, més li venins not pas la force p[ar] la volenté Nostre Signor si com je cuit q'il le peust ocirre. Més ne por qant le mua il si qe li cuirs li pela toz & devint toz li cors aussi come toz liepreus. Cil fu amenéz a seint Beneoit en l'abeie. Et tantost com li seinz hom l'ot atouchié, li fu santé rendue en tel maniere qe trace ne enseigne del entoschement del venim ni fu veue.

### **XXXII. The Miracle of the Overflowing Oil**

1. En cel tens qe la grant famine fu en cele contrée, departi & dona seinz Beneoiz a toz ceus qi besoigneus estoient totes les choses qi viandes estoient en s'abeie. Ne ni remest el celier riens nule fors un pou d'uile en un vessel de voirre.
2. Adont i vint uns clers sozdiacres, Agapites avoit no[n], & si dist qu'il avoit besoigne d'un pou d'uile & c'on li feist doner se leenz en avoit point. Li seinz hom, qi tout voloit doner en terre ce q[ui]l avoit por aquerre la joie del ciel, comanda c'on li donast ce tantet d'uile qi estoit reméz en l'ampoule de voirre. Li moines qi celeriers estoit oi bien qe li seinz hom comanda, més il ne le vout fere. Qant vint apres ce un petit, seinz Beneoiz demanda au celerier s'il avoit doné ce q'il li avoit comandé a doner a celui qi mestier en avoit. Li moines li respondi q'il nules choses ne li avoit donées, car s'il li eust doné ce tant d'uile neis point n'en fust remés a oes toz les freres. Dont fu mout corrociéz seinz Beneoiz. Si [co]manda as autres moines q'il cel vessel de voirre en qui



cil tant d'uile estoit remés getassent fors de leenz par les fenestres, car il ne voloit mie qe aucune chose remansist en l'abeie par inobedience.

3. Einsint le firent. Desoz la fenestre<sup>123</sup> avoit une mout grant parfondece, car la meson estoit haut assise sour la naive roche. Li vesseaus de voirre qi contreval fu getéz seur les pierres ne brisa mie ne ne respandi mie, n'orent plus qe s'il fust assis seur bele terre pleine. Qant seinz Beneoiz vit ce, il le comanda a raporter a mont & a donner tout entier a celui qi l'avoit demandé. Si [165va] com ce fu fet, il assembla toz ses freres et si blasma devant eus le moine qi celeriers estoit de ce q'il avoit trespasé obediences, & lors l'en fist rendre sa coupe si com il sot qe ressons fu & droiture. Qant ce fu fet & cil moines ot esté einsint repris & blasmez desueure, seinz Beneoiz recomença ses orissons a fere envers Nostre Signor.

4. Li toniaus en qoi li huiles soloit estre qui vuidiéz estoit, estoit estoupéz deseure aussint com s'il i eust aucune chose. Si com seinz Beneoiz oroit, il resgarda si vit qe li estoupaus del toniel coumença a soslever parce qe li huiles croissoit, & tant qu'il comença a cheoir par deseure for[s] del tonel seur le pavement habundanm[en]t. Qant seinz Beneoiz le vit, il lessa s'orisson a ferre, & li huiles cessa de seuronder fors del toniel & de decorre sor le pavement. Dont apela son celerier, si le doctrina, & amonesta qu'il eust foi & humilité & si lessast desesp[er]ance. Et li moines s'en amenda & si en ot angoisses, car li seinz hom demostroit p[ar] miracles la haute vertu Nostre Signor q'il lor

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<sup>123</sup> C<sub>1</sub> gives 'festre' here. Since this does not make sense, and since C<sub>3</sub> gives 'fenestre', I have corrected it.

ensignoit par paroles. Ne n'estoit nus qi doutast de ses promesses, car il rendi un tonel plein d'uile por une ampoete qi pres estoit qe vuide.

### **XXXIII. The Devil Tries to Poison the Monks' Water**

1. Une autre foiz avint qe seinz Beneoiz aloit a l'eglisse mon signor seint Jehan qi ensom la montagne estoit fete & estornée. Si com il aloit tote la voie, li deables li vint a l'encontre en sa[m]blance d'un mire, si portoit en sa mein une corne. Li seinz hom li demanda ou il aloit. Li deables<sup>124</sup> li respondi q'il aloit as freres & si lor voloit doner poison car il estoit fusiciens mestres & mout savoit de medecines. Lors le trespasa li seinz hom, si ala en l'eglise orer, et tantost com il ot ses orissons fetes, il repaira mout isnelement arriere. Et li deable[s] avoit trové un viel home qi aportoit eue a oes une de lor officines. Si li entra ou cors, & lors le comença a tormenter mout durement. Et qant il l'ot abatu contre terre, li seinz hom le vit si s'aproca de lui si li dona une joée, & a cel coup en chail le deable. [165vb] Donques puis n'osa arrester el moine ne autre foie repairier.

### **XXXIV. The Murderous Zalla Ties up a Peasant**

1. Une autre foiz avint qe uns maus hom & de mauvese creance—Zalla avoit non—estoit venuz en cele contrée par le [co]mandement del roi, & en celui avoit si grant felonie & si grant cruauté q'a poines poit moines devant lui venir ne clers q'il ne les feist ocirre. Dont avint qe cil Zalla, qi mout estoit cruieus & pleins de male aventure, prist un vilein. Si le comença a lesdengier mout durement, & a tormenter, & a

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<sup>124</sup> C<sub>1</sub> gives “dable” here, but C<sub>3</sub> gives “deables”, which was clearly the intention here.

destreindre por ce q'il le voloit reembre. Li vileins dist qi mout estoit agrevéz des peines sosfrir qe lui & ses choses avoit il comandé a seint Beneoit l'ome Nostre Signor. Dont le lessa Zalla a tormenter. Si li fist les meins mout estroitement liier d'un lien, & si li demanda qi cil Beneoiz estoit cui il avoit comandées ses choses car il voloit q'il li mostrast & ensignast. Li vileins dist qe ce li feroit il volentiers & li menroit tote la droite voie.

2. Lors s'en coumença a aler, & Zalla l'ensivi tant q'il vint a l'abeie. Si troverent seint Beneoit tout seul seant a l'entrée del mostier, si lisoit en un livre. Li vileins dist a celui qi pleins estoit de grant forsenerie :

« Veez ja seint Beneoit, le bon pere de cui je avoie parlé. »

Zalla le resgarda mout cruielment. Si le cuida par paroles espoenter aussint com il solit les autres. Si li dist maintenant a hautes voiz :

« Lievé sus li eue fus. Si metent les choses a cest vilein qe tu as prises & receues ! »

3. Qant li seinz hom oi sa parole, si lessa son lire, si le resgarda & puis le vilein qi encore avoit les meins liées. Et tantost com il vit les liens dont il estoit liés, [co]mencierent a desliier par eus meismes plus tost qe nules meins d'omes ne les peussent desliier. Qant Zalla vit ce, si fu mout espoentéz. Si ot tote sa cruiauté perdue q'il se lessa cheoir a ses piez a terre. Si se comanda a lui & a ses orissons. Li seinz hom ne se leva onques de son livre por ceste chose. Einz apela ses freres, si le comanda a me-  
[166ra] ner dedenz l'eglisse por prendre la beneiço[n].

4. Qant il fu devant lui ramenéz : il li [co]mença a amonester & a dire qu'il deguerpist sa cruiauté & sa derverie. Zalla li otroia ainsi a fere, puis fu del tot en tout a la volenté seint Beneoit. Si repera arriere ne onques puis ne demanda nule chose au vilein qe seinz Beneoiz avoit deslié par son regart sanz ce q'il la touchast. Or poez vos veoir & savoir qe cil qi servent Nostre Signor veraiement & en lui ont ferme creance pueent fere a la foie miracles par lor volenté & par lor poesté meismes. Ce poez vos savoir p[ar] seint Beneoit qe la ou il seoit toz coiz refrena il la cruiauté de celui qi tant estoit granz com je vos ai dit & qi par son esgart deslia les neus des liens dont cil avoit les meins liées.

#### **XXXV. Beneoit Resuscitates a Peasant's Dead Son**

1. Or vos conterai un autre miracle qe li seinz hom fist par ses orissons por ce qe je voel qe vos sachiez coment les miracles q'il fesoit : q'il les fesoit em partie par la volenté qe Nostre Sires li avoit donée, & par la poesté, & par la grace qe il de lui avoit, et em partie par les orissons q'il fesoit a Nostre Signor, & par ses proieres. Un jor avint qe li seinz hom estoit aléz a la champaigne en labor ensemble o ses freres. Dont avint qe uns vileins avoit un sien enfa[n]t aporté tout mort tresq'a la porte de l'abeie & la demanda il ou seinz Beneoiz estoit, li bons peres. L'en li dist q'il estoit aléz as chans la ou li frere de la meson laboroient. Li vileins plouroit & demenoit grant duel por la mort de son enfant ; si lessa le cors a la porte ; si s'en corut le grant cours qerre seint Beneoit a la champaigne. A cele ore, tout droitement reperoit li seinz hom ensemble o ses freres de

laborer. Qant li vileinz le vit, qi mout estoit dolenz, il comença a haute voiz a crier & a dire :

« Rent moi mon fil ! Rent moi mon fil ! »

Li seinz hom arresta a ceste parole & si dist, « T'ai je donc ton fil tolu qi le me demandes ? »

Li vileins respondi & si dist : « Il est morz. Vien si le me resuscite ! »

Qant li seinz hom oi ce si fu molt corrociéz. Si dist, « Retorne, beaus frere, retorne ! Ce ne [166rb] poons nos pas fere. Einz font teus choses li seint apostre. Por qoi me vius tu charchier fes qe je ne puisse porter ? »

2. Li vileins, qui grant doel avoit, ne lessa mie por ceste parole ce qu'il requeroit. Einz jura q'il ne se partiroit de lui tresq'a tant q'il auroit son fil resuscité. Seinz Beneoiz li demanda & dist, « Ou est tes fiuz ? »

« Seinz hom, vois ca le cors ou il gist a la porte. »

3. Tantost co[m] seinz Beneoiz i fu venuz ensemble o ses freres, s'ajenoilla il & coucha seur le cors. Puis, si tendi il les meins vers le ciel & si dist, « Beaus Sire Dex, peres del ciel, ne pren mie garde a mes pechiéz, més a la foi de cest home qi rueve son fil resuscit[er] & si rent l'ame a cest cors p[ar] ta grant doçor & par ta grant misericorde. »

4. A peines ot il s'orisson definie qant l'ame revint el cors de l'enfant, qi se comença a mouvoir devant toz ceus qi la estoient. Lors le prist seinz Beneoiz par la mein, si le

re[n]di sein & heitié & vivant a son pere, qi molt en ot grant joie. Ce haut miracle fist Nostre Sires par les orissons del seint home.

Or vos conterai un autre miracle qe Nostre Sires fist por l'amor d'une seue seror qi mout estoit seinte feme.

### **XXXVI. Beneoit and Scolastica**

1. Seinz Beneoiz avoit une siue seror—Scolastica estoit apelée par non. A Nostre Signor s'estoit donée & atornée tres s'enfance & otroié, & por manoir en virginité & por plus entierement entendre as oevres Nostre Signor par qoi ele peust pleire a Deu, estoit ele devenue none, & avoit deguerpies totes les vanitéz de cest siecle. Cele damoisele avoit acostumé de venir chascun jor une foiz a seint Beneoit son frere, & li sei[n]z hom, qi mout en estoit liéz & qi mout l'amoit de grant maniere, venoit a li en une meson defors la porte, & parloit a li, & la doctrinoit, & mostroit seintes paroles.

2. Un jor avint q'ele vint si come ele avoit acostumé, & seinz Beneoiz vint a li—& ne sai qanz—ensemble o lui de ses freres. La furent tuit le jor ensemble & parlerent de [166va] seintes paroles. La seinte damoisele parla a seint Beneoit son frere & si li dist :

« Beaus frere, je te pri qe tu en tote ceste nuit ne me deguerpisses. Einz parlerons aucunes choses des celestieus joies tresq'a demain a la matinée. »

Seinz Beneoiz li respondi & dist, « Bele suer, qe est ce qe vos dites ? Dont ne savez vos bien qe je ne puis fors de ma celle demorer en nule maniere ? »

3. Adonc estoit li airs si clers & si purs, & la nuit si serie & si coie qe nue ne oscurté n'i aparoit de nule part. La seinte damoisele avoit bien oi qe ses freres li avoit escondi la demorance. Si en estoit molt triste. Ele mist ses .ii. meins ensemble seur la table, & puis si enclina son chief seur ses paumes, si fist a Nostre Signor une mout corte orisson. Et tantost com ele mist & releva son chief amont, tonnoire & espart vindrent de totes parz en l'eir si grant & si orible q'il sembloit mei[n]tenant qe foudre deust tot le monde a craventer, & une si grant habundance d'unes grosses goutes de pluie vint ensamble o cez tonnoires qe seinz Beneoiz ne si frere ne se porent mover en nule maniere d'ensemble o la damoisele. Et par les lermes qe ele avoit plorées seur la table en ses meins la ou ele avoit son chief aciné, estoit cele grant pluie venue par la proiere qe ele fet avoit a Nostre Signor. Et s'orisson avoit eu si grant force c'onques si tost ne hauça son chief com il plut, & touna, & esparti. Qant ce vit seinz Beneoiz & q'il ne porroit arriere reperrier a l'abeie, il se comença mout a compleindre. Et si dist :

« Bele suer, Nostre Sires te beneie. Qe est ce qe tu as fet ? »

Ele respondi a saint Beneoit & si li dist, « Beaus frere, je te prie & tu ne vouis oir ma proiere. Je priaï a Nostre Signor, & il m'oi & entendi. Or t'en va se tu puez, & si me deguerpiz, si repeire a t'abeie. »

4. Seinz Beneoiz ne pot issir fors de la meson. Si demora, non mie par sa volenté, el leu ou il ne voloit par sa volenté demorer. Einsint demorerent tote la nuit ensemble. Si se refirent & saoulerent de parler des esperitueus p[ar]oles. **[166vb]** Lendemein fu li airs Et

li tens rapesiéz & esclarciz. La damoisele repeira arriere a sa ceaille, & seinz Beneoiz a s'abeie.

5. Qant vint au tierz jor, & li seinz hom estoit en orissons, il leva amont ses euz en l'air. Si vit l'arme de sa sereur qi en guise de coulou estoit del cors issue, & si s'en aloit a la hautece des cieus. Li seinz hom en ot mout grant joie por ce qe ele en estoit portée en la haute gloire. Si en rendi graces a Nostre Signor, & loenges, & noncha ceste chose a ses freres. Et puis envoya mout isnelement por le cors q'il fust a l'abeie aportéz por enfoir en une sopouture qu'il meismes avoit fete a son oes aparellier. Qant li frere orent fet ce qe li seinz hom lor avoit comandé, ce est qe li seinz cors fust aportéz. Seinz Beneoiz & si frere l'enfoient mout honorablement si com il durent. Et aussi com il avoient esté d'une pensée en u[n]s Nostre Signor, & d'un cuer sanz nule devise & sanz nul departement, nient plus ne furent lor cors departiz par sepouture.

### **XXXVII. Beneoit Witnesses Saint Germein de Chaples Ascending into Heaven**

1. Apres ce avint q'en une des p[ar]ties de la contrée avoit un abbé qi Servanduz estoit apeléz. Si estoit abbés d'une abbeie qe uns hauz hom avoit fete. Cil abbés avoit acostumé de venir veoir seint Beneoit & visit[er] chascun an por oir & por entendre ses saintes paroles. Adonc avint a .i. jor q'il orent mout parlé ensemble entreus deus de sainte vie—tant q'il fu ore de couchier & de reposer, car grant piece de la nuit estoit ja trespasée. Seinz Beneoiz se coucha en un haut leu, & li abbés se coucha en une plus basse chambre, & lor deciple se couchierent en une habitacle qi tenoit a cele chambre.



2. Qant vint a mienuit & li frere dormoient, Seinz Beneoiz se leva por dire ses matines. Lors vint a la fenestre, si comença ses orissons a fere a Nostre Signor. Tantost se resgarda, si vit une si tres grant clarté respindir qe la nuit ot toutes ses teniebres perdus. Et en cele grant clarté—si com il meimes raconta & dist—vit il devant lui tout le monde. Et si com il ce regardoit a grant merveille, il vit l'ame de [167ra] Saint Germein de Chaples qe li angele emportoient es cieus. Et por ce qe li seinz hom voloit avoir tiesmoing de si haut miracle, apela il l'abé qi la gisoit une foie, & autre, & tierce, tant qe li abbés monta amont. Si vit un petit de cele lumiere & de cele gra[n]t clarté qe seinz Beneoiz avoit veue. Si co[m] il s'esbahissoit & esmervelloit. Seinz Beneoiz li conta tout en ordre [co]ment il avoit veue cele grant clarté & l'ame de l'evesqe de Chaples qe li angele emportoient.

3. Maintenant envoia au chastel de Cassin par un home qi Theoprobis estoit apeléz. Si li coumanda q'il alast a Chaples. Il trova qe li evesques estoit morz & mis em biere. Il chercha & enquist soutiument l'eure qe l'ame li estoit del cors issue, et l'en li conta & dist tote la verité & la maniere. Qant il fu reperiéz a seint Beneoit, si li conta einsint la chose. Adonc sot li amis Nostre Signor q'a cele heure droit l'avoit il veu qe li angele l'emportoient de si grant vertu—com vous m'oez dire & retreire—estoit li seinz hom.

4. Encore vos en lesse je mout de ses miracles a conter & a dire. Et bien saciez qe adonc fist il la *Ruile* & escrist qe les moines ont en lor abbeies & qu'il doivent tenir, se il seint Beneoit ne heent.

Més tant lor a fet & tant dit,  
Q'il li so[n]t trestoz contredit.

Tieus ja & non mie touz  
 Ceus qi ne sont fel ne estouz  
 Meintiegne Dex en droite voie,  
 Et les autres puist ravoier  
 Si qe Dex a merci les voie.<sup>125</sup>

Or saciez bien qe en la *Riule* qe seinz Beneoiz fist puet l'en bien trover tout si com il vesqi & ses fez , & tout si com li moine doive[n]t vivre.

### XXXVIII. Beneoit's Death

1. En meismes l'an qe li seinz hom dut fceste vie, le conta il & dist a plusieurs de ses deciples & a ceus qi ensus de lui manoiient ; dist il ques signes il verroient qant l'ame li departiroit del cors. Au sissieme jor deva[n]t ce qu'il deust morir, fist il ovrir sa sepouture. Dont li pristrent unes gries fievres par qoi il comença mout a agrever & a febloier. Et qant vint au sissime jor, il se [167rb] fist porter en l'oratoire. La s'acommenia il & reçut le cors Nostre Signor si seintement com il devoit, et la ou il le sustenoient cil qi si deciple estoient, & il avoit ses meins tendues vers le ciel, rendi il l'ame tot en fesant ses orissons, & en cel jor meismes s'aparut il a .ii. de ses freres, dont li uns estoit en sa ceaille & li autres mout loing ensus de l'abeie, car il virent qe une voie mout tres clere & resplendissanz venoit devers orient tresq'a sa ceaille, & des iluec aloit tresq'au ciel. Si com il ce esgardoient, uns mout beaus hom & mout clers leur vint devant, & si lor demanda qui cele voie estoit qu'il veoient. Il li respondire[n]t q'il ne savoient.

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<sup>125</sup> This is the second of the two rhyming-verse passages of this text.

2. Li hom lor dist, « Ce est la voie par laquele Beneoiz li amis Nostre Signor monte es cieus. »

Par ce sorent aussi bien cil qi ensus estoient de lui la mort del seint home com cil qi estoient en presence, car il virent le signe si com il lor avoit dit qant il estoit en vie par qoi il le sorent. Dont fu enfoiz seinz Beneoiz en l'eglisse seint Jehan Baptiste q'il avoit fete & edefiée en cel liu ou il avoit destruit l'autel Appollin, & si com je vos ai co[n]té arriere. Et la a fet & fet encore Nostre Sires por lui meint beau miracle qui vit & regne par tout le siecle des siecles.

Après ce grant tens qe li seinz hom fu mors & alés de ceste vie avint cest miracle qe je vos conterai, el leu ou il habita premierement.

### **XXXIX. Benoit's Post-Mortem Miracle : A Woman Is Healed in His Grotto**

1. Une feme estoit fors del sens qi par sa grant rage estoit dervée q'ele coroit par mons, & par vaus, & par bours, & par champagnes jor & nuit. Ne ne finoit onques ne ne cessoit tant q'ele estoit lassée. & la se reposoit tant solem[en]t ou la lassece la constreignoit a demorer.

2. Un jor avint q'ele coroit & aloit en tel maniere si com cele qi meins avoit de sens qe beste mue. Dont vint acorant en la fosse ou seinz Beneoiz avoit demoré en la mo[n]tagne. La entra, si se reposa tote la nuit & fu a aise. Qant vint a la matinée, ele s'en [167va] issi toute seine & toute guerie de la grant derverie qui longuement l'avoit

tenue. & refu<sup>126</sup> en tel sens com se le n'eust onques mal ne douleur sentue. Et la demora elle toz les jors de sa vie, & loa, & gracia Nostre Signor, & seint Beneoit si com elle devoit.

### **XL. Epilogue and Closing Prayer<sup>127</sup>**

1. Pluisors autres houz miracles i sont avenus qui ci ne sont mie escriz. Més ce qe vos en avez oi & entendu en conte seinz Grigoires qi mout fet bien a croire por ce la doit l'en tenir chiere, car seinz Gregoires n'en contast nule chose se verité non.

2. Or proions sei[n]t Beneoit le beneoit confessor q'il deproit a Nostre Signor q'il ait merci de nos ames au jor q'eles isteront de nos cors dolentes & esgarées, si q'eles aient par lui socors qi les fist & cria qant elles n'estoient. Ce nos otroit cil qi vit & regne par toz les siecles des siecles. Amen.

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<sup>126</sup> C<sub>1</sub> appears to say 'te fu' while C<sub>3</sub> reads 're fu.' I have chosen the latter because it makes more sense here.

<sup>127</sup> The manuscript does not provide a chapter break here, but I felt it to helpful in orienting the reader to a key point in the text.

Proper Nouns

Agapites  
Apollin  
Aquinense  
Beneoit de Nursie et de Mont Cassin (saint)  
Blidin  
Cassius  
Chaples  
Costances  
Costentin  
Deu  
Deudonéz  
Effide  
Euitius  
Servanduz  
Florentins/ Florences  
Germein (seint)  
Gotus  
Gregoires  
Honorés  
Jehan (saint)  
Jehan Baptiste (saint)  
Jesucrist  
Latran  
Longuebarz  
Martin (saint)  
Maurum/Maurus  
Mont Cassin  
Nostre Seigneur  
Nostre Sires  
Nurse  
Pasques  
Pelerins  
Pierre  
Placidus/Placidum  
Pompeiens  
Pous  
Resurrection  
Ringoiz  
Rome  
Romeins  
Rudrich  
Riule/Ruile (*The Rule of Saint Benedict*)  
Scolastica

Simplices  
Sublacus  
Sulie  
Tamisse  
Teracenense  
Theoprobus  
Theralius  
Thotila  
Valentiniens  
Vult  
Ylarates  
Zalla

Chapter Sections of *Beneoit*

- I. Prologue
- II. The Miracle of the Broken and Repaired Vessel
- III. Beneoit's Hermitage Inside of a Rock
- IV. Beneoit's Hermitage Is Discovered on Easter Sunday
- V. Beneoit is Tempted by the Devil
- VI. The Monks Try to Poison Beneoit's Drink
- VII. Beneoit Finds Twelve Monasteries
- VIII. Beneoit Delivers a Monk from a Demon
- IX. God Makes Water Come up the Mountain
- X. The Sunken Blade Miraculously Returns to Its Handle
- XI. Maurus walks on Water to Save Placidus
- XII. Florentins Tries to Kill Beneoit with Poisoned Bread
- XIII. The Construction of Monte Cassino
- XIV. The Fire at Monte Cassino
- XV. Beneoit Ressucitates a Young Monk
- XVI. Some Monks Eat and Drink Against Beneoit's Rules
- XVII. A Pair of Monks Who Break their Fast on Their Way to See Beneoit
- XVIII. Beneoit's Prophecies Regarding King Thotula
- XIX. Beneoit Propheies Natural Disasters for Rome
- XX. Beneoit Delivers a Priest from the Devil
- XXI. Beneoit Propheies the Future Destruction of His Monastery
- XXII. Ylarates Tries to Steal a Flask of Wine
- XXIII. A Monk Tries to Steal Two Towels
- XXIV. Beneoit Knows the Thoughts of a Proudful Servant
- XXV. Flour Miraculously Appears During a Famine
- XXVI. Beneoit Appears in a Vision, Giving Instructions for Building a Monastery
- XXVII. Beneoit Excommunicates Some Haughtily Speaking Nuns
- XXVIII. A Young Monk Visits His Parents without Beneoit's Permission
- XXIX. A Monk, while Trying to Leave the Monastery, Encounters a Dragon
- XXX. Pelerins Consults Benedict For Advice about His Debt
- XXXI. Beneoit Heals a Poisoned Man
- XXXII. The Miracle of the Overflowing Oil
- XXXIII. The Devil Tries to Poison the Monks' Water
- XXXIV. The Murderous Zalla Ties up a Peasant
- XXXV. Beneoit Resuscitates a Peasant's Dead Son
- XXXVI. Beneoit and Scolastica
- XXXVII. Beneoit Witnesses Saint Germein de Chaples Ascending into Heaven
- XXXVIII. Beneoit's Death
- XXXIX. Beneoit's Post-Mortem Miracle : A Woman Is Healed in His Grotto
- XL. Epilogue and Closing Prayer

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