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Shame in the Fabliaux

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I highlight the literary techniques used in fabliaux to understand the power struggles traversed by the characters. This work focuses on methods of avoiding the shame emasculation in scenes from the fabliaux *Berangier au lonc Cul*, *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, *Du Prestre crucefié* and *De la Saineresse*. A fabliau is an amusing short story in poetic form, originally performed by troubadours and *trouvères*. This form is most present in manuscript examples from the 12th to the 14th century. The stories involve simple characters, word play and idiomatic expressions. I argue that literary mechanisms are used in these texts in a conscious effort to augment the characters' shame while explicitly implicating the audience in playing the shame game and shaming themselves if they do not understand the clever wordplay of the storyteller. The use of shaming word play by troubadours is explicit rather than simply a reflection of an aspect of medieval culture.

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Introduction: Shame in the Fabliaux

At the heart of the medieval oral narrative lies a shame based culture relying on vendetta as a means to establish justice and maintain power in a marital bond (Bloch *Medieval* 244). In this thesis I will highlight the literary techniques (metaphor, metonymy, irony and pun) used in fabliaux to understand the power struggles traversed by the characters. This work will focus on methods of avoiding the shame emasculation and the transfer of shame in scenes from the fabliaux *Berangier au lonc Cul*, *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, *Du Prestre crucefié* and *De la Saineresse*[1]. This study is to be, unlike many manuals on fabliaux, a close reading of specific texts, not necessarily meant to make sweeping statements about the genre, but to highlight certain works and give them the attention they deserve as part of the canon of French literature. The broad statements that do arise are an attempt to reinforce the elements within an individual fabliau, for each one has its mirror poem. In the introduction we will explore the definition of the fabliaux and investigate the notion of shame.

A fabliau is an amusing short story in poetic form, originally performed by troubadours and *trouvères*. It is a small fable often consisting of a moral. This form is most present in manuscript examples from the 12th to the 14th century. The heritage of fabliaux is preserved from its inscription on parchment or vellum, a task funded by nobles or the emerging bourgeoisie. The stories involve simple characters, word

[1] Titles for the fabliaux vary depending on the source because the manuscript copies were not given a title until centuries later. All titles here come directly from the modern collections in which they were compiled. I keep the Old French titles provided in the primary sources except in the case of *De la Saineresse*. In *Fabliaux Érotiques*, Rossi chooses the title *La Saineresse*. I decided to use *De la Saineresse* as the title, from Noomen and van den Boogaard, in order to distinguish from the *Saineresse* character in the poem.

play and idiomatic expressions. “The meaning of ‘*fabliau*’ is, however, complicated by the derivation of the word as a diminutive of the Latin *fabula*, which in both its Latin and Old French manifestations often means little more than a tale or fiction” (Bubsy 140). A *fable* is defined by Godfrey as a “récit, tradition fictive ou mensongère ; apologue” and a *fablel* as a “conte plaisant en vers” (589). The fabliaux present the devices of orality: repetition, formulae and parataxis (Gaunt & Kay 22). “Ce sont des textes fuyants comme le poulpe, qui nous laissent le plus souvent à des frontières et qui sont fondés sur la *métis*, la ruse. Dominique Boutet a remarqué que ‘la tromperie est la base de l’écriture’” (Dufournet 15-16). To Dufournet, the fabliaux is the playful genre *par excellence* that plays with everything: characters, literary motifs, words and proverbs, rhyme and versification, moral beliefs and rules, without questioning social order, even if the humor can be biting. With the goal of forgetting problems and struggles, the genre maintains affiliations with popular culture, folklore, and with the carnavalesque tradition that transgresses religious and moral taboos, sometimes against common values, but most often in accordance with them (15).

As a group of literary works, the fabliaux often rely upon misogyny and a patriarchal organization of the world. This attitude is not unique to fabliaux but equally prevalent in the works of courtly writers from the same time period (Eichmann “Anti-Feminism” 26). Many critics regard the treatment of women as abhorrently anti-feminist as well as generally morally deficient. Critics of the 19th century, notably Bédier, try to acclaim the greatness of fabliaux as uniquely Gaulois, while conversely linking its morally ambiguous attitudes to an Indo-European

original tale (Bloch *Scandal* 2). In any case, Eichmann recognizes the common attributes accorded to women in medieval times, which "Reflect the deep-rooted, universal dogma of the Middle Ages that women are 'des êtres inférieurs et malfaisants' and this characterization, according to [Bédier], is the essence and the *raison d'être* of the genre" ("Anti-Feminism" 26). In many fabliaux, the representation of women is often reduced to their orifices (*Histoire de la virilité* 155). Women are described as having an almost uncontrollable lust and the husband's role in a relationship is of surveillance, with adultery as an expected occurrence. In *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, for example, the husband Baillet, "qui à son grand dam prit femme trop belle" (Rouger 160) must cope with a wife who, not surprisingly, has "la faiblesse de s'amouracher d'un prêtre joli" (160). The weakness displayed by Baillet's wife seems well within common custom, and she does not become a victim of shame or guilt. In fact, the male figures of fabliaux seem to be the only ones with their pride and virility at stake. Baillet, a cobbler, manages to profit from his wife's misplaced lust, but not all male protagonists in the fabliaux are so adept.

Whereas these tales may seem unabashedly anti-feminist, they do provide female characters the opportunity for autonomy, given that their husbands are less cunning than they are. In a number of fabliaux, the premise is that a man should trust his own judgment more than his wife's shrewdness. *Les Quatre Souhaits de saint Martin* spells out this moral clearly: "Par ce fabliau vous sarurez que celui-là n'est pas bien sage qui croit mieux sa femme que lui, car il en a honte et ennui" (144). Moreover, as Lacy explains:

> Until recent years, readers and critics simply took for granted the fundamental misogyny of fabliaux. However, a revisionist spirit has held several recent scholars to challenge this traditional assumption, either denying the misogynistic intent of authors altogether or […] contending that the fabliaux, while perhaps antifeminist, were no more so than other medieval genres. (68)

For our purposes, we will look at the genre through detailed scrutiny of the language of individual poems, not to examine general trends of the genre but instead to examine minute tendencies within each fabliau.

The shame of fabliaux is as integral to the genre as it was a part of Medieval life where honor was ingrained and a warrior such as Roland would rather die than ask for reinforcements. Even later in the Middle Ages, shame was part of a public show for the *Conards de Rouen*. In certain troupes, actors of this time period would play out dramatic scenes relating to wealthy families directly in front of their home. Grinberg recounts one such episode:

> A cet égard les Conards de Rouen peuvent être considérés comme des maîtres. Exécuté par les compagnons conards ou par des troupes de comédiens sur chariots, la critique se fait acerbe. Le cortège traverse la ville s'arrêtant devant les maisons des victimes et on y joue la scène scandaleuse. (236)

Performance thus served as a common means of public shaming.

Even though this fixed sense of honor and shame has changed since the Middle Ages, shame is still an element of any community, and according to many

theorists, integral to constituting community. For Robert Karen, shame is "The unseen regulator of our entire affective life" (40). It is an emotion and also a deterrent to transgressing social norms. The memory of shame regulates one's behavior. Ogien elaborates, "La honte éclate à peu près comme un rire. Mais le rire s'éteint et la honte dure" (*Pourquoi* 6). As an emotion, although the symptoms may be felt differently amongst its victims, shame is often described as a desire to disappear.

Shame is the feeling you would get if you went to prom and your father was a chaperone, dancing unrhythmically alone in the middle of a crowd. Your father's lack of shame is passed on to you vicariously, after you are recognized by the crowd. Even in the event you are not recognized, the thought persists in the fear that you may be discovered. Shame for one's family or upbringing may be common for some, whether one is wealthy or less fortunate. A teenager from an affluent family may feel ashamed of the fact that he did not pay for his own new car, while a poor teenager may feel ashamed because the car he paid for is 15 years old. Accordingly, "We can be ashamed of our likes, our dislikes, our assets, our deficits, even our genius or creativity—because of what we think such things imply about our character or because of the way they may seem to divide us from others" (Karen 42).

This emotion is directly based on the perceived critique of others, on an innate defect being exposed to the world, which differs from guilt. Distinguishing shame from guilt, Ogien argues that "la honte est liée à l'idée que nous n'avons pas été à la hauteur de nos prétentions personnelles et la culpabilité à l'idée que nous

avons commis une faute en transgressant des règles sociales ou morales impersonnelles" (*La honte* 12).

Shame is also distinguished from humiliation, although the two may co-exist. Shame lies within the realm of more consequential, serious moral faults (Miller 236) while humiliation is a more trivial matter set off by self-realization when you become aware of the gaze of others. This is equally an aspect of shame, but humiliation does not necessarily reveal an innate character flaw in those who sense it. Humiliation, for Miller is divided into two categories: humiliation (with a small h) and Humiliation (with a big H). The former describes humiliation caused by simple errors, absent-mindedness, or clumsiness which is not necessarily related to intrinsic defects acted out (Miller 133). An example of humiliation (with a small h) could be forgetting to close one's zipper before teaching, or, after a job interview, realizing one had a noticeable speck of mustard on one's face. These moments do not necessarily incite shame, and do not reflect on any integral negative image of the person unless they have a particular insecurity toward their cleanliness or perceived promiscuity. Most people, however, would simply feel humiliation in these circumstances and not shame. The latter, however, is closer to the dark feeling of shame, as Miller explains, "If the work of shaming is degradation of status, the work of humiliation […] is deflation of pretension" (157). Humiliation (with a big H) describes the condition of the villain-knight in *Berangier au lonc Cul* and the bourgeois in *De la Saineresse*, who fall short of their boast and are clearly shown as unworthy partners for their wives.

To those belonging to a shame culture, often attributed to Medieval and earlier Europe, however, the "loss of honor is total extinction of the individual that existed as a member of the group, it is a total loss of identity. Not surprisingly, loss of honor in a shame-culture is the worst that can happen" (Taylor 56). This phenomenon visibly explains Yvain's desire to regain the honor of his cousin Calogrenant in *Le Chevalier au Lion* and his reaction of insanity when he is confronted for breaking his promise to Laudine in a public setting. Equally, for one to be dishonored in one's group, one must have had status in the first place and be recognized as a member. Shaming, therefore, excludes slaves (56). In the fabliaux *Du Prestre crucefié* and *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, in which the husband takes revenge on his wife's lover, a priest, there are no explicit punishments for the wives—for perhaps the authors believed women did not belong to the shame culture group, much like slaves. The wives appear to be outside the reach of shame or shamelessness. A husband's duty was to control the passions of his wife—therefore the priests in these stories receive the brunt of punishment, effectively redirecting the shame the husband should feel onto his rival. Shame in *Du Prestre crucefié* and *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* is conferred upon the respective priests through their metaphorical or literal castration. Nonetheless, in *Berangier au lonc Cul*, the threat of exposure to public shame keeps the husband from intervening in his wife's adulterous liaison. His failure as a man would be publicly exposed should he choose to prevent his wife from taking a lover. He is therefore humiliated, with his pretention deflated, as well as being shamed by failing to recognize his wife's identity and planting the problematic kiss on her long ass. Finally, in *De la*

Saineresse, we witness the *bourgeoise* wife's mastery of metaphor; she humiliates her husband in front of the audience by proving his boast to be false, while neither inciting his recognition of this shame nor his anger or vengeance. He is further shamed as an idiot when he fails to recognize the blatant metaphor his wife has so carefully crafted. Moreover, the goal of each male protagonist in these fabliaux is to avoid being rendered effeminate and to gain control in the eternal battle of the sexes.

Accordingly, for certain revenge fabliaux, Ruwen Ogien's thoughts on psychological shame seem especially apt: "*Honte aiguë* : on envisage la destruction de tous les agents actifs ou passifs de la honte qu'on a subie" (*Pourquoi* 7). This is the clearest form of punishment toward the lovers in these fabliaux, but a lighter revenge is taken upon the women, at least in the fabliaux I will treat. This punishment is perhaps closer to Ogien's description of "*Honte sourde* : on essaie de disparaître. Si on ne peut pas, on peut toujours imaginer qu'on a disparu ou que les autres ont disparu" (*Pourquoi* 7). Perhaps the authors of these fabliaux feel no need to punish the wives beyond giving them little narrative exposure. For Jean-Paul Sartre as well, "La honte donne envie de disparaître, de se cacher et par là même, elle relie aux autres, à tous ce qui peuvent éprouver le même sentiment dans une situation similaire. La honte nous socialise, elle nous oblige à nous positionner comme des sujets, parmi des autres, nos semblables" (Gaulejac 163). It is the case, however, that this emotion cannot be forced on anyone. "De toute façon, on ne peut pas faire honte à quelqu'un : on peut tout juste essayer. Le résultat n'est pas garanti.

Tous nos efforts n'y changeront rien" (*Pourquoi* 21). The husband in *De la Saineresse*, for example, is ignorant of his own shame, further delighting his wife.

Ogien asks himself the question: "Toutes les raisons sont-elles bonnes d'avoir honte ?" and responds affirmatively, "Oui. On rit de tout. Par conséquent, rien n'empêche qu'on ait honte de tout. Pour chaque éclat de rire, il y a au moins un rieur actuel (celui qui rit) et un honteux potentiel (celui dont on rit)" (*Pourquoi* 43). It is not a question of why but when. While often predictable, fabliaux are particularly efficient at finding clever ways to propagate shame. Shame is considered a complete devaluation of oneself, manifesting outwardly as disgust and contempt. Guilt, on the other hand, is more related to actual acts committed by the guilty party, not focusing on the entire person, but simply the act. A common reaction to guilt may be anger or indignation (*La honte* 91). In the fabliaux I will treat justice as essentially shame-based. The adulterous behavior or the lack of masculinity, or ignorance displayed by the characters are not judged as a singular event, but rather as a global personal flaw exposed through the storyline.

The word shame in English distinguishes itself etymologically from the French equivalent *honte*. Shame comes from Indo-European origins, "kam", to cover, to shroud, to mask, to veil, to hide. In French, *honte,* from Frankish, "haunipa" signifies the reasons one would have shame. It is more concentrated on dishonor, contempt, and ridicule (*Pourquoi* 48). For Ogien, and other thinkers of shame, these definitions of shame send us back to an older conception of the subject. Shame, for the ancients was a positive guardian against evil within the collective society. As Ogien writes,

> Pour les anciens, c'était accessoirement la punition du vice, mais c'était principalement la meilleure des vertus. La vraie honte, c'était la bonne honte, c'est-à-dire cette crainte qui nous fait fuir le Mal. La honte était une 'crainte divine' : une crainte qu'on éprouve à l'idée de ne pas plaire à nos amants ; une crainte qu'on éprouve à l'idée de faire ce qu'il ne faut pas faire. (*Pourquoi* 60-61)

In the Middle Ages, shame was entrenched in every stratum of the social system. It was not unique to nobility or knights, whose relationship with shame was based on honor and dishonor. Gaulejac cites Muchembled in his treatise on humbleness: "Il existe aussi un honneur des pauvres et des humbles, relié à des notions de honte, de vengeance, de définition de soi et des siens face au regard collectif des autres" (Gaulejac 303). Shame is often regarded in terms of the gaze of others, reflecting a medieval sentiment that places less importance on the act itself than on discovery of the cheating individual in a compromising position as, for example, in the case of Yvain before he is confronted and humiliated by Laudine's servant for betraying his promise. He still thinks of Laudine, but holds his shame inside for fear of losing honor in front of his companions: "Yvain se prit à songer à sa dame et jamais ne fut tant accablé par une pareille pensée car il savait bien qu'il avait violé sa promesse et que le terme était passé. À grand-peine il tenait ses larmes. La honte lui faisait tenir" (Chrétien de Troyes 56). Yvain holds back his emotion while in the gaze of others. In the fabliaux I will treat, guilt is almost invisible, for the comedic nature of these scenes depends on placing the characters in vulnerable situations, and exposing their innate weaknesses. If lesson is given in

these works, it is forced upon the transgressors through physical torture or the threat of public shame, as in the case of *Du Prestre crucefié*, *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and *Berangier au lonc Cul*. In these tales, the victor effectively redirects any shame toward his victim (essentially a role-reversal) and regains any lost virility in the process. To Karen shame was once valued as a righteous trait for, "In the past the capacity to experience shame was valued. To be capable of shame meant to be modest, as opposed to exhibitionistic or grandiose, to have character, nobility, honor, discretion. It meant to be respectful of social standards, of the boundaries of others, of one's own limitations" (41).

Reiterating the idea that this emotion incites a desire to disappear, Karen notes that "When shame struck, it was typically a feeling akin to being caught out in the open and desperately wanting to hide—as in those clammy dreams of appearing in public without any clothes on. One moment you are a decent, acceptable, self-possessed human being, and the next you are cast into confusion, your identity in disarray" (40). These two aspects of shame: unexpectedness and a sudden longing to escape resound constantly. For example, Yvain in *Le Chevalier au Lion* is rejected by Laudine after having broken his promise and disappears into the woods until he is found naked and nurtured back to sanity. In that moment of realization, before he heads to the forest, Yvain's only desire is to be far away, "s'enfuir en une terre si sauvage qu'on ne sache plus le quérir; où n'y ait ni home ni femme qui ne connaisse rien de lui non plus que s'il était au profond d'un abîme" (Chrétien de Troyes 58). In fabliaux, it is the need to circumnavigate this emotion that drives the characters. Equally, it is the need to gain a slight advantage in the battle of the sexes that

animates the plot action. Ultimately, these fabliaux treat the most elemental and critical of human emotions for "It is the self regarding the self with the withering and unforgiving eye of contempt" (Karen 43).

In my study, following that of Lacy, I will treat fabliaux as individual texts, placing more attention on their particular literary attributes than their relation to the whole genre. The audience is guided to indications of shame in the fabliaux, which follows a rhyming couplet, by trying to guess the second rhyme at the end of the double octosyllable. If the fabliaux can be considered a "conte à rire" as Bédier argues, then it is certainly a very specific type of laughter: that of the tavern. "C'est tout de même le rire gras de la taverne, des conversations masculines" (*Histoire de la virilité* 157). It is a laughter shared between men in their attempt to reinforce their masculinity, by sharing the failures of men who could not handle their spouse or by evaluating the partial success in the battle of the sexes of those who were intelligent enough to avoid shame and receive financial gain, while still being cuckolded. This is the type of story exchanged under the influence of wine or ale.

The morals, in the fabliaux, have been given serious thought by many scholars for, as Eichmann notes, "two thirds of the fabliaux in the MR collection contain some kind of moral[2]" (*Cuckolds* 10). Some scholars, Bédier and Nykrog notably, believe the moral only to be an accessory, a literary habit or vestige. Others have noted the significance of the moral would depend on the performer's tone in delivering these final lines of the tale. Lacy, another scholar of fabliaux, "believes the morals to be more often than not recited tongue in cheek, because this procedure

[2] I cite Eichmann for *Cuckolds* because he is the writer of notes and introductions to the poems. John DuVal is the translator.

creates the distance that 'enables the reader or audience to suspend moral judgment' and allows for uninhibited laughter" (qtd. in *Cuckolds* 10).

This is not to say the fabliaux have a specific purpose outside that of entertainment and a probing of social norms. Some critics have suggested that fabliaux served as a warning to men of the outlandish behavior of their spouses, or as a way to teach the vocabulary of virility to adolescents (*Histoire de la virilité* 157). Critics have proposed that the genre may be less of a warning than a complete condemnation of women, a representation of pure misogyny. As Perfetti explains, "Others assert that fabliaux show admiration for the woman on top, who impresses us with her ingenuity, making the man, usually her husband, look ridiculous" (13). Many critics, notably in the 19th century, as well as more recently, have used the genre as evidence for studies on medieval history, taking the fabliau as textual realism, and as Nykrog says, "without literary artifice" (qtd. in Bloch *Scandal* 7). Many critics take a literal interpretation of the fabliau, claiming the authors were not capable of inventing literature. Bloch notes that, "Similarly, Philippe Ménard's reading of the fabliaux, despite occasional words of caution, is literal to the extreme. Ménard is certain, for example, that 'when the author of 'Le Vilain au buffet' tells us that the farmer had callouses on his hands... he invents nothing'" (qtd. in *Scandal* 6). For Bloch, literary criticism of fabliaux has been muted, at the expense of its being considered as a social historical genre in verse form. Bloch notes that, "The fabliau's historical status as the literary form of social history has, on the one hand, worked to deny the importance of theory for their interpretation, while on the other hand, it has (unwittingly?) contributed to the theory of the 'natural text'" (6).

I would like to explore, in greater detail than is usually afforded by larger treatises, the literary significance of some of these short works. In introductions to collected editions of fabliaux, and critical works, the tendency is to cite excerpts anecdotally from three or four of the poems in order to highlight one topic (such as misogyny) and then quickly move to the next topic (perhaps eroticism). Such studies provide a totalizing vision, and make broad statements about the genre. Even Eichmann's short essay on anti-feminism in the fabliaux cites dozens of works in order to relay his point. My study of four fabliaux focuses on shame and shame avoidance. I argue that literary mechanisms are used in these texts in a conscious effort to augment the characters' shame while explicitly implicating the audience in playing the shame game and shaming themselves if they do not understand the clever word play of the storyteller. The use of shaming word play by troubadours is explicit rather than simply a reflection of an aspect of medieval culture.

Chapter I: Analysis of *Berangier au lonc Cul*

In *Berangier au lonc Cul*, Guerin, the fabliaux author creates a narrative satirizing the exploits of an unworthy knight in order to set an example that the mixing of classes is a shameful endeavor. The humiliation and shame doted on the husband, or *vilain-chevalier*, in this fabliau is in part influenced by the extensive competition of courtly romances. The author of this fabliau chooses to use specific literary techniques, such as metaphor and irony to display the conflict between the two main characters, the noblewoman and the ignoble *vilain-chevalier*, and to impart humiliation upon the latter for his hypocrisy and his boasting. He further shames the villain-knight by degrading his status with the problematic kiss and showing his inability to control his wife. The linguistic techniques used by Guerin, including the husband's hypocritical boasting and his ridiculous display of knight-errantry are just as important in the literary code of shaming as the plot elements of the problematic kiss and the wife's taking a lover.

In *Berangier au lonc Cul* Guerin tells us the story of a knight, the son of a common usurer, who has married the daughter of a feudal lord. The feudal lord goes into debt to the usurer father, and gives his daughter as payment. The villain-knight, married to the noble daughter, decides to lead a life of luxury, preferring that life to gallivanting as a knight-errant in search of honor. When his wife reproaches him for discrediting her lineage, the villain-knight defends his honor by promising to show his prowess the following day. In the morning, he dons his suit of armor and heads off to the forest where he attaches his shield to an oak tree. Having sliced his shield in quarters with his sword and smashed his lance to bits, he returns home to

proclaim himself the greatest *chevalier* of his wife's entire noble lineage. After his next adventure to the forest, his wife notices that despite the pitiful state of his shield and lance after battle, he never seems tired nor is injured from his efforts. She decides to follow her husband on his next expedition out to the forest. On the next trip, she disguises herself in a suit of armor and heads out after her husband to see his exploits in person. When she sees him battling his own shield, she berates him for attacking his innocent weapon. The wife, disguised as the *Berangier au lonc Cul*, then proposes to fight him in battle. The only way the villain-knight can avoid battle is to kiss the *Berangier* on his (her) *lonc Cul*, hence the title of the poem. The villain-knight chooses the latter option, therefore debasing the short-lived honor he had earned from his wife. After this episode, the woman immediately returns home and calls upon an adequate knight as her lover. When the villain-knight returns home and sees his wife with her lover, he castigates her and threatens violence. The wife then threatens him with calling upon the *Berangier au lonc Cul*. This threat reduces the villain-knight to silence, as his wife amuses herself with her lover, leaving the villain-knight to witness his shame helplessly (Bubsy 123-124).

The husband in *Berangier au lonc Cul* is humiliated from the beginning by the author's recognition that his position as a noble is unearned. The author's choice of language shames the *vilain-chevalier*, or ignoble husband. The husband is considered a *chevalier* by name, "d'un chevalier qui ot pris feme, /… Et cil estoit filz d'un vilain[3]" (Rossi 242), but the reader suspects that he has purchased his position through his father's influence. He is little deserving of the title, for he is more likely

[3] The text of *Berangier au lonc Cul* is cited by page number from Rossi's edition *Fabliaux Érotiques*.

to lust after money than adventure or *dames*. The word *vilain* comes from the Latin *villa* and *vilanus* for "roturier (et non pas noble)" or "homme de basse condition, paysan" (*DMF*). Guerin describes such undeserving chevaliers as, "Li chevalier mauvais et vill / et coart issent de tel gent, / qui covoitent or et argent / plus qu'il ne font chevalrie" (244). *Convoiter* is employed here to create a juxtaposition of the *vilain-chevalier* with knights of a higher order. *Convoiter* means "désirer ardemment, amoureusement quelque chose" (*DMF*), and in this case we can see his love for money in contrast with the higher knights who desire honor and *dames*. The *vilain-chevalier* is also variously described as "Li chevaliers amoit repos" (Rossi 244), a portrayal of inactivity or immobility quite contrary to that of a noble knight. Such a critique of idleness will resurface from the villain's wife as she castigates her husband.

The *vilain-chevalier* sees little value in prizes or renown. He is therefore portrayed as "ne prisoit ne pris ne los / ne chevalierie deus auz" (244). A *pris* is detailed as a "Récompense accordée au vainqueur d'un combat chevaleresque" (*DMF*). Another definition of *pris* is the value of something whether commercial, intellectual or moral. These two definitions create an ironic wordplay when *prisoit*, or "évaluer" (*DMF*) is added, making "prisoit ne pris". This means the *vilain-chevalier* does not appreciate or 'value the value' (in keeping with the Old French pun "prisoit ne pris") of such renown, a curious observation by the author that sets up his humiliation. Accordingly, Guerin explains that the *vilain-chevalier* values chivalry as much as two cloves of garlic. Rossi elucidates in his notes on the poem that "la 'gousse d'ail' était utilisée comme terme de comparaison pour désigner une chose

dont on fait peu de cas" (245). Moreover, garlic and onions were considered lowly foods in Medieval cuisine, and "According to the botanical ideas of the time, the least noble plants were those that produced an edible bulb under ground (such as onions, garlic, and shallots)" (Grieco 309) as opposed to the higher noble foods of game. Such a reference reinforces the lowly imagery surrounding the *vilain-chevalier*. In contrast with this description of the *vilain-chevalier* as uninterested in chivalry, he will immediately seek such praise after he is accused of being an idle and cowardly knight by his wife.

The villain knight is said to "tartes amoit et flaons chauz" (246), an image completely contradictory to that of a proper knight. In fact this description places the villain knight on the same level as a commoner seeking corporeal satisfaction, far from the noble knight who seeks everything but comfort. Further denigrating the villain knight's reputation, the author says he is more willing to stuff straw (into bedding, the phrase implies), than to take arms:

> Quant la dame s'est perceüe
> que ses sires fu si mauvais,
> ainz pire de li ne fu mais
> por armes pranre ne baillier
> (mielz amast estrain enpaillier
> que manoier escu ne lance) (246)

Such an insult can be taken as a direct form of emasculation in this tale, effectively attributing unknightly acts to the villain. Likewise, one cannot overlook the phallic metaphor differentiating a lance from straw. The former is firm and penetrating,

taking on a robust quality, whereas the latter is limp and fragile. Rossi's modern translation indicates that the *vilain-chevalier* would rather "manipuler la litière" (247), than take up arms. He is also more interested in sleeping and leisure than *chevalerie* which goes along with the image of a bedding-stuffer. The *vilain-chevalier* will fulfill his destiny as an unworthy knight, taking up arms only to desecrate them as if they were pieces of straw. This image is remarkable for its ability to emasculate the *vilain-chevalier*, degrading his wield of a lance to holding shameful straw. This quote distinctly takes the noble wife's point of view when she realizes her husband is "si mauvais" (246).

When the noble wife finally accuses her husband of being inept, she reminds him of his *paraige* (246), or birth saying that many knights: "As armes sont hardiz et fiers, / a sejorner n'amoient rien". She rekindles the accusation of her husband as idle with the use of sejorner: an unchivalrous activity defined as "Se reposer, rester inactif, rester oisif" (DMF). Immediately the villain knight takes offense to her comment and defends his noble background, and his prowess as a knight. Guerin decides to give his vilain-chevalier a special ability to use hyperbole in his boasting as he challenges and denigrates his noble wife's entire lineage with:

> Dame, fait il, g'ai bon renon :
> n'avez nul si hardi parent
> que ge n'aie plus hardement
> et plus valor et plus proece.
> Ge sui chevaliers sanz perece (Rossi 246)

Contradicting the former representation of the *vilain-chevalier* as uninterested in the honor and renown of chivalry, here we see his claim to *bon renon*. He claims hardiness and valor, defending himself against his wife's attack on him for *perece* or a "Propension à ne pas travailler, à ne rien faire, paresse (un des sept péchés capitaux)" (*DMF)*.

Nostalgia for a fixed feudal system certainly arises in this fabliau, in which the author's treatment of the ignoble husband as a villain reflects general disdain for a rising moneyed merchant class. In the Medieval context, "Court life was being radically transformed by the influx of a breed of 'new men', the lettered *clercs* called on to deal with the burgeoning administrative duties of a bureaucratic technocracy such as the minutiae of legislation and the maximization of revenue through taxation" (Gaunt & Kay 206). Eaton demonstrates that, "the peasant class was frequently characterized in very negative terms in the fabliaux and terms from the *vilain* family are frequently used to indicate the experience of shame. Thus we find that peasants who commit the offense of seeking to rise above their station are frequently shamed" (308). Members of such a common class with the benefit of money, who sought to rise above their lot, were increasingly gaining influence in court circles, and, as demonstrated in *Berangier au lonc Cul*, were entering into marriage with noble bloodlines. As fabliaux like this one propose, villain knights should not marry into noble families because this brings dishonor upon them, "ainsi est largesce perie, / einsi dechiet enor et pris!" (Rossi 244). Inter-marrying is how great families decline in influence and shame themselves, as the poem makes explicit with, "Ainsi bons lignaiges aville / et li chastelain et li conte / declinent tuit

et vot a honte" (244). In this example, the shame is obvious considering the author uses the word *honte*, to chastise anyone who believes in the concept that money can render one noble. This poem takes its conflict out of the common sphere of male domination in the household to the broader subject of "class conflict" that leads to the eventual metaphorical emasculation of the *vilain-chevalier* (Eichmann *Cuckolds* 48). Eichmann points out that, "Guerin (w. 15-33) harangues against the mixing of classes through marriage", while, as Nykrog has explained "a bourgeois public would not have taken kindly to hearing this condemnation of mismarriages in which its own class was being maligned ('Se marient bas…,' v. 27)" (qtd. in *Cuckolds* 49). It is true, though, that Guerin is critiquing a usurer's son, an unpopular figure, and the type of nobility that would devalue its lineage in order to gain profit. Nonetheless, the author protects the members of his audience who might fall into the category of mixed nobility from open critique by setting the fabliau in Lombardy, where the inhabitants are described as cowardly (*Cuckolds* 49) as the text demonstrates, "Oiez que Guerins velt retraire / que il avint en Lombardie, / ou la gent n'est gaires hardie" (Rossi 242). The effect of distancing the audience only works for members of the audience who accept the author's challenge to follow the double entendre and word play and who therefore navigate the *engin* of the fabliaux better than the villain knight.

Responding to courtly romance, Guerin uses fabliaux as a means to mock those lacking the prowess to fulfill their societal role. In *Berangier au lonc Cul*, elements borrowed and subsequently parodied from courtly romances are clear, and these elements further shame the *vilain-chevalier* through comparison of him

with famous knights of the romantic tradition that reveals how he falls short of their prowess. The husband is shamed and humiliated by his initial disinterest in chivalry and his subsequent ridiculous display when he is faced with a real opponent.

The "chevalier" in *Berangier au lonc Cul* reveals how little he understands chivalry, in contrast with the knights of courtly romance, by failing to value love, to protect women and to show modesty. He treats his wife as a villain when he returns from feigned battle:

> et sa feme contre lui vint,
>
> au descendre li tint l'estrier.
>
> Li chevaliers la boute au pié
>
> qui ert mout fiers de grant maniere. (250)

This contrasts with how a knight should treat a *dame*. He kicks her as she is helping him off his horse as a rejection of the *topos* in courtly literature surrounding a woman taking care of the knight after battle in an exchange that leads to amorous sentiment (Grodet 92). The ignorance of courtly codes leads to the deflation of his pretension. The modifier preceding his pride, "mout fiers," sets up a hyperbolic, ironic tone in the fabliau connected with the pretension exhibited by the villain knight. He further manifests his pride when he says to his wife:

> Traiez vos tost, fait il, arriere,
>
> quar ce sachiez : n'est mie droiz
>
> qu'a si bon chevalier touchoiz
>
> com ge sui, ne si alosé.
>
> Il n'a si preuz ne si osé

En tot vostre lignaige : au meins

ne sui mie matez ne veins,

ainz ai los de chevalrie ! (250)

The way the villain husband boasts about his purported conquest provides both the evidence of his low social rank and the reason why he does not deserve the status of *chevalier* (Bubsy 126). The villain claims to not feel "matez ne veins", words that recur throughout this fabliau and represent the lack of exhaustion present in the villain knight. His unfatigued aspect becomes an indication of his hypocrisy as he is consistently described as a lover of idleness. However, here the villain knight describes himself in a positive light as *alosé*, *preuz* and *osé,* each of which can define the great chivalric qualities: deserving of honor, valiant, courageous and audacious that he puts in contrast with his noble wife's family. Not only does the villain knight boast of his greatness, but he makes sure to denigrate his wife's lineage. The *vilain-chevalier* must be shamed and humiliated because he boasts and presumes that he can act the part of a noble even though he is not one. He rebukes his wife for touching him, saying she does not deserve to touch such an admirable *chevalier*. This commentary foreshadows a later episode in which his wife takes a lover, effectively obeying her husband's command. When the wife takes a lover, who is a notable *chevalier* of noble lineage, she follows her villain husband's orders, admitting not that she is unworthy of touching him, but that he is unworthy of *her* touch. The villain husband's refusal to be touched by his wife's hand implies a falsity, for a worthy knight would be eager for the touch of a noble lady to ensure the passage of his noble blood to his progeny. The villain chevalier in *Berangier au lonc*

Cul is attempting to establish his prowess after the fact, further diminishing the believability of his actions. It is as if he is trying to falsify his resume after having already been hired for the job thanks to family connections. His undeserved status as a *chevalier* leads the wife to find a lover of appropriate status. After this, the *vilain-chevalier* is forced to recognize his subordinate position in the relationship. Moreover, Guerin uses other rhetorical strategies to illicit shame. He uses quick wordplay with, "Mien escient, plus de cent cous / s'en part en l'escu a escous" (Rossi 248). 'Escu' signifies his shield while 'escous' is a conjugation of the verb *escourre*, to shake or beat (*DMF*) which evokes the beating the *vilain-chevalier* is threatened with enduring later in the poem. This wordplay adds internal rhyme but also makes the line easier to remember for the troubadour and certainly would have aroused laughter amongst the audience for the verb's relation to the shaking that occurs in the act of sex.

Like a child or Don Quixote, the *vilain-chevalier* tries to imitate real knights that he has learned about in fiction. He is awestruck by the entrance of a real knight, much like the young Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes but has no intention to do real battle himself. Both the usurer's son and Perceval are ignorant about what a real knight is, acting as if they have never encountered one face to face. The villain knight is awestruck when he actually meets a knight in *Berangier au lonc Cul*, although it is his own wife in disguise. In the scene, the author uses the specific verb *esbhaie* and *esperdu* (Rossi 256) to describe his surprise, which reoccurs throughout the poem. The verbs are designed as a marker for the audience to see shame and humiliation in action. At each mention of the verb, the character is humiliated and taken off

guard by the events unfolding before him. The first two such mentions of the word are in reference to how the noble wife feels when she discovers the *vilain-chevalier* with his shield and lance in pieces. She feels surprised and ashamed by the revelation that her husband can achieve honor in battle, contrary to her preconceived notions of him as a lover of tarts and not chivalry. The next occurrence is after the noble wife discovers her husband has been faking his brave exploits. The poem reads, "et quant a la chose veüe / esbahie est et esperdue" (254) in two lines that clearly delineate her initial humiliation at having believed her husband's exploits were true and that subsequently drives her desire to shame him. Guerin spoofs the code of courtly literature by creating a mock hero (whether false as the *vilain-chevalier* or a transvestite in the case of the *Berangier*) and reworking other elements, transforming the quest in the forest into a romp, for example, as Eichmann explains:

> Playing at knight errantry, after all, sounds like fun, and post-Cervantian readers might easily assume that this peasant's son has steeped himself in enough chivalric literature to want to imitate it. Despite the contempt that Guerin pours on his protagonist, he does not altogether suppress the fun of riding out to the woods, banging on a shield, and coming back a hero. (*Cuckolds* 48)

When the *vilain-chevalier* first ventures out into the forest we see the author clearly satirizing the distance he covers, for a knight would hardly be able to arrive at his destination within a day. The lines ironically mock the villain knight for not having to take a break on his journey, "li chevaliers a esperon / s'en vait, tot droit en la

forest, / que onques n'i fist nul arrest" (Rossi 248). Irony comes into play because his journey is obviously too short to require a halt considering the forest was "mout pres de sa maison" (248). Hyperbole reinforces the ridiculousness of the image, probably taken straight out of a courtly romance, which describes "un bois mout grant et mout plenier" (248). The adjective *plenier*, or "Très grand, vaste, immense" (*DMF*) describes the ironic immensity of the scene.

When the *vilain-chevalier* returns from battle, his wife makes the curious observation that her husband is not disheveled in appearance or in any state of fatigue after his feat of chivalry. One day as the villain knight trots back from the woods after 'battle' with his shield full of holes and shattered to bits, his wife notices that he is curiously composed for having fought valiantly. The terms used to portray his unfatigued state curiously mimic the terms that would normally bestow honor upon a knight. The poem elaborates:

> mais il n'est navrez ne plaiez
> ne ses heaumes n'a point de mal,
> ainz est tot sain du chief aval,
> il n'est pas las ne recreüz. (Rossi 252)

In another context, these terms would be doled upon a knight to his exaltation, but here the terms are contrary to the habitual portrayal of the villain knight. Therefore the terms become markers for the shameful *borde* (252) or "propos moqueur et mensonger, tromperie" (*DMF*) the villain knight is playing out against his wife. Secondly, the assimilation of amorous sentiment to a physical wound, or *plaiez*, is a traditional motif in much Medieval literature, as, for instance, when the suffering

Yvain in *Le Chevalier au Lion* watches Laudine (Grodet 92). In the scene, after he has killed Esclados and is hiding in the castle, Yvain is described as having a "Plaie d'amour" for Laudine as he watches her in pain (Chrétien de Troyes 32). The eros of this recurrent motif is lost on the villain knight who, as we know from the descriptions at the beginning of the poem, does not accord much importance to chivalry. He is completely *sain* from head to toe, and neither feels *navrez* nor *recreüz*, terms which signify "blessé" and "épuisé, à bout de forces" (*DMF*) respectively. He shows no signs of having waged battle and therefore becomes a transparent vision of hypocrisy.

When the villain knight finally meets an adversary, *the Berangier au lonc Cul*, his true colors show. His first reaction is of surprise; *esbahiz* and *esperdu,* he drops his sword to the ground creating a metaphorical castration. Guerin writes, "Du poig li chiet l'espee nue / et trestoz li sans li foï" (Rossi 256). The sword is a penetrating weapon used by the knight to achieve glory. For the villain knight it is tool for deception that strikes holes in his defenseless shield (but still yields to brief glory before being divulged as false). When he drops, *chiet*, his naked sword, he loses all confidence as the text says he immediately loses his *foï*. *Chiet*, with the "Idée dominante d'éloignement" (*DMF*) also appropriately gives a sense of detachment from the villain knight's body and a sense of his diminishing status (*AND*).

In a satire of medieval epics and courtly romances, the game of love plays itself out in fabliaux like *Berangier au lonc Cul* through the shaming of the loser. Precisely because the villain husband insults his wife's nobility and boasts of his own, she feels challenged to defend her lineage. Her defense includes taking arms

after her reputation has been trod upon and regaining the status she deserves in much the same way as Yvain takes down Ké in *Le Chevalier au Lion*. The *Berangier* even announces the game that will lead to her possession of power in the relationship. Disguised as the *Berangier* and addressing her husband "La dame dit : 'Se Dieus me gart / vos parleroiz d'autre Bernart / quar ge vos partirai un geu" (Rossi 256). Here the idea of the fabliau as a match of verbal jousting comes into play as the wife makes her retort to the villain knight's false claim to bravery. The last two lines announce a new fate for the *vilain-chevalier*, revealing to the husband that his situation will change suddenly, because he will be proposed a game, and the money he has previously offered will not be accepted. The game or *geu* aspect of this passage invokes the rules of chivalry, where a bribe is impossible, and emphasizes the shame that the villain knight brought upon himself when he offers to bribe the *Berangier* with "avoir et deniers" (256). As to the line "d'autre Bernart", Eichmann notes that the B manuscript of *Berangier* reads "d'autre renart", commenting on the trickster nature of the husband in reference to the famous Renart of Medieval literature. In Guerin's version, however, the text is "Bernart," and does not invoke comparison with Renart on the skillfulness of the husband's inept tricks (*Cuckolds* 120). Also, Bernart can claim the husband as any other villain in a knight's armour, ineffectively living up to the status of the heroes in courtly romances. Bernart, however, could refer to the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn and would therefore infer the deceitful quality of poets, for one definition of *jongleur* is, "Tout homme qui cherche à en imposer par de fausses apparences" (*ARTFL*).

The *baiser honteux* steeped in gender confusion is a recurrent theme in Medieval literature as, for instance, in Chaucer's "Miller's Tale". The problematic kiss in Guerin's fabliau takes place in a particularly curious scene. The *Berangier* gives the villain knight a choice as to his fate, either dueling or giving the problematic kiss: with either choice a dishonorable outcome awaits. In the words of the *Berangier*, or noble wife:

> Ou ge descendrai jus a pié,
>
> Si me pranrai a estuper,
>
> Vos me venroiz el cul baisier
>
> tres el milieu, o par delez. (Rossi 256)

The terms in this scene carefully reinforce the lowly position of the villain knight. The author progressively lowers the *Berangier*'s position until the villain knight would have to be nearly lying on the ground or at least on his knees in a shameful and inferior posture in order to kiss the *Berangier*'s long ass. Guerin uses *descendrai*, *pié* and *estuper* to highlight the villain knight's compromising position. The verb *estuper* embodies a dual meaning here as it refers to both to the obtuse angle (*AND*) the *Berangier* takes in order to receive the shameful kiss and to the villain knight's mouth as he kisses the *Berangier*'s long ass, which would serve to "Boucher (un trou, une ouverture)" (*DMF*). Rossi translates *estuper* into modern French as a "position accroupie" (Rossi 257), reflecting the obtuse angle of the *Berangier*'s squat to receive the shameful kiss. In the last line of the above quotation, the author takes a mocking approach toward the choice the villain knight has been given as if he were choosing between death and dishonor. The *Berangier* gives him the choice of

kissing right in the middle or just to the side of his ass, and the villain knight places the kiss "mout pres du trou iluec endroit" (258). The references to both the position of the villain knight close to the ground and the location of the shameful kiss evoke the shame of dirtiness. Eaton suggests that "In the fabliaux there is likewise a close link between the scatological and the shameful" (101). The villain knight is further dishonored while performing the *baiser honteux* by the terms Guerin employs in these lines: "Don l'a baisié de l'orde pais, / a loi de coart hom mauvais" (Rossi 258). He is indicted, with *orde*, for performing the most vile, "Sale, repugnant" (*DMF*) of offenses, in the manner of a cowardly (*coart*), malevolent (*mauvais*) man.

The villain knight acts much like the bourgeois in *De la Saineresse*, which I will discuss in a later chapter, in that he fails to recognize the evidence, the long ass, that he is being duped by his wife. The ass is described as a "cul et du con : ce li sanble / que trestot li tenist ensanble" (Rossi 258). Such ignorance of the evidence literally in front of his face points to the fact that "Fools of course were commonly mocked and ridiculed in the Middle Ages in ceremonies of public shaming" (Eaton 309). In this fabliau, the game of love is also clearly at stake. Establishing dominance is essential in this tale which treats the ever-present battle of the sexes. The conclusion, however, is not only an epic battle to determine dominance, but also to dole out shame. *Le Berangier au lonc Cul*, or the wife, has subverted systems of control in this fabliau, and becomes the bearer of her husband's possible public shame. The choice is not so easy for the husband in *Berangier au lonc Cul*, for he must maintain an amicable relationship with his wife, to stop her from calling upon the *Berangier* to shame him once again. The concept of competition as a part of a

larger game, which is explicit in *Berangier au lonc Cul*, mimics and satirizes courtly romance:

> This overall fabliau atmosphere of gaming or wagering for financial or sexual prizes sometimes contains hints of the analogous motif of the *jeu parti*, of the hero faced with a dilemma and forced into a choice of action… [I]n the case of *Berengier au lonc cul*, to be left with no real alternative at all but to kiss his lady's arse (*"Car je vos partirai un jeu: / Ainz que vos movoiz de cest leu / […] Devant vos m'iré abaissier: / Vos me vandroiz o cu baissier"*, vv. 217-218, 225-26). (Levy 106)

Further, verbal jousting is the most important example of competition in this fabliau where each character attempts to gain control over the other through arrogant discourse and ruse in the case of the villain knight, and humiliating rhetoric and disguise, in the case of the noble wife. Finally, the stakes here are set on convincing one's partner of one's personally fulfilling vision of the narrative. The loser, if he is a man, bears the shame of being duped by his wife. However, a woman has no risk of shame in this verbal jousting match because she is neither part of the shame culture group, nor does she risk emasculation.

Eichmann's opinion is that the tale would have stopped at the battlefield with the shameful kiss, if parody of courtly romances had been Guerin's sole intention (*Cuckolds* 49). The use of rhetorical strategies that reinforce and foreshadow shame is especially important in this fabliau. Here, the octosyllable is used to its full force, certainly eliciting a response from the audience, even before the punch line has been completed:

> When the lady in *Berangier* reveals to her husband who it is who will protect her from him for the rest of her life, the octosyllable allows her to relish the triumph of her revelation: 'Berangier' she says, lingering over the last syllable because it was the end of a line (and rhyming with 'dangier'), even though his name is only half the hero's full title. Then 'Au lonc cul' comes down hard, abrupt, sudden and emphatically punctuated by the early caesura at the end of *cul*. (*Cuckolds* 5)

Perhaps the wife's motivation to find a lover is more duly related to her desire to make her husband aware of the power she wields over him, to be a witness to his humiliation as she evokes the *Berangier*'s name. Guerin insists that the noble wife delights in shaming her husband when she subsequently "fait sa volenté" (Rossi 260) with her lover. The rhyme of honte / conte, indicating shame transferred upon the *vilain-chevalier*, is repeated three times throughout the tale, and becomes the slogan for *Le Berangier*: "'ce est mesire Berangier / au lonc cul, qui vous fera honte' / Quant il oit que cele li conte" (Rossi 260). Eichmann goes on to argue that:

> The episode of the final humiliation of the husband who is forced to witness, angrily [b]ut powerlessly, the romping of his wife with the perfunctorily sketched lover, throws the tale back to the favorite locus of the fabliaux, the bedroom, and allows it to reacquire that particular essence, which belongs to the fabliau, not the courtly tale. (*Cuckolds* 49)

This final episode describes the villain knight as "mout en ot grant honte et grant ire : / onques puis ne l'osa desdire, / desconfit se sent et maté" (Rossi 260). The author employs hyperbole with *mout* and *grant* in the first line here to highlight the degree

to which the villain knight feels his shame. In the second line, the verb *oser* stands out as a particular verb that speaks to the inability of the villain knight to perform chivalrous acts since it denotes having "le courage ou l'audace de (faire quelque chose)" (*DMF*). As for the next line, *desconfit* speaks to defeat and ruin while *mater* is defined as "abattu, las" (*DMF*). The latter description appropriately harkens back to earlier portrayals of the villain knight as a lover of an unknightly rest and relaxation.

The final lines, after the *vilain-chevalier* has been thoroughly shamed, make a clear scatological reference to the shameful kiss: "A mol pastor chie lous laine" (Rossi 260). 'When the shepherd is soft, the wolf shits wool' as a moral highlights the weakness of the husband in this fabliau, with his inability to keep wolves at bay or control his herd (the domestic sphere), and it refers to the very organ for which his shameful kiss is reserved. The moral likewise relates the *vilain-chevalier* to the scatological world, the world of dirtiness. Eaton notes that "worldwide studies of ethnic humor have found that dirtiness is among the traits typically ascribed to any group that is ridiculed or mocked (97-98). In many fabliaux, "Being dirtied or muddied clearly contributed to the experience of shame" (100).

Different versions of this tale provide various interpretations of the shame (or lack of shame) experienced by the husband in his attempt to maintain dominance in his marital relationship. One anonymous version of this tale adds a scene in which the husband returns home and futilely attempts to claim victory once again, even after his humiliating display against *Le Berangier au lonc Cul*. The Guerin edition merely shows the knight coming home and protesting his wife's infidelity. Unlike the anonymous edition, "Guerin shows [the husband] going into the woods to

avenge the affront he feels is blemishing his lineage. His wife follows him because she wants to verify his prowess, the suspected lack of which is the source of scorn she holds for him" (Eichmann *Cuckolds* 48). It is important that Guerin shows the wife following her husband because she needs to verify with her own eyes the exploits of which her husband boasts. Guerin offers the final corrective, as Bubsy summarizes it, that "Un vilain ne pourra jamais devenir un véritable chevalier, et son comportement odieux autorise sa femme à chercher consolation chez quelqu'un de son propre niveau social. Trompeur trompé, couard cocu" (124).

In tales where the lover is punished for his actions, as in *Du Prestre crucefié* and *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, the wife typically disappears from the narrative, with the text no longer making reference to her presence. However, in *Berengier au lonc Cul* the *vilain-chevalier*'s noble wife plays an active role in the tale (rather than disappearing after the moment of adultery) because she is a crucial reminder of his transgression of social rank. Likewise, her skillful manipulation of language and situation in this fabliau lead to her triumph and ability to shame her husband without risk of repercussions.

Berangier au lonc Cul is a poem that explores masculinity through the ridicule of the villain chevalier. Even if the villain's shame never reaches public view (at least beyond the arc of his wife and her lover), he is heretofore trapped by the unclaimed threat to call upon *Le Berangier* that his wife may redeem at any moment. The fabliaux epitomize a genre that often castigates men who boast of their prowess, or who are witless. Those who are foolish will be punished and shamed, but even a fine free master workman or an observant cobbler can be cheated by his

wife. The difference is that the clever husband often gains his revenge by using language to his advantage, as we will see in other fabliaux.

Chapter II: Priestly Shame in Fabliaux

In his section of the introduction, "The Anti-Clericalism of the Fabliaux", Eichmann sets about to describe the bias a medieval audience would have toward a priest, and their role in fabliaux mostly as the butt of the joke. A lover or suitor in fabliaux who is a clerk or chevalier is more likely to succeed at seduction and winning the sympathies of the audience while a priest "will arouse audience antipathy" (*Cuckolds* 6). The priests present in fabliau "must be a little shocking to modern readers" (7) because celibacy was not entirely enforced in the clergy although it was strongly discouraged through "decrees and edicts" (7). In the fabliaux, "the priests are either married, have concubines, or are after other people's wives and daughters" (7). This chapter focuses on the latter category of priests, particularly in the fabliaux *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and *Du Prestre crucefié*. The use of polysemy and other linguistic and literary techniques in these fabliaux creates an environment highlighting the transfer of shame from artisan to priest. These two fabliaux also follow the rules of verbal jousting I proposed in the previous chapter. The two male protagonists in these works use language against the lecherous priests in order to gain the upper hand and erase the shame of being cuckolded. Ironically, the laymen use the priests' misappropriations of clerical language and imagery against them, specifically in the use of Latin in *Le Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and the cross in *Le Prestre Crucefié*. The laymen turn these misappropriations into metaphors of their own that lead to victory in the verbal jousting match. Before delving into the specific fabliaux, I will briefly discuss the context and view of the clergy in these poems.

In the Middle Ages, concubinage had never been supported by the church, "but the frequent interdictions against it are proof that it was a very difficult practice to stop" (7). However, "The church's attempt to prevent marriage among priests met with more overt opposition, since there was little scriptural support for required celibacy" (7). Sperry notes that in the 15th century, in some parts of Europe, notably Switzerland and Spain, parishioners went so far as to persuade priests to marry, "as a safeguard for the virtue of their wives and daughters and as a remedy for the flagitious lives of priests and prelates" (qtd. in *Cuckolds* 7). This behavior on the part of the parishioners to their priests is exactly the kind of solution for the behavior of priests in the fabliaux treated in this thesis. Rendering these imagined licentious priests more real is the evidence that in Medieval Europe church administrators were constantly trying to quell moral depravity among priests (7). These characters would have been all too familiar for a troubadour's audience, just as newspaper headlines in the 21st century peddling scandals in the clergy have become familiar to modern audiences.

Prejudice against the clergy bleeds into many fabliaux which the shaming of clergy members into suppressing such feelings (a sort of instruction by shaming), and claim to avert townspeople as to the yearnings upon which a seemingly innocent priest may act. As expressed by Colliot, "Bref le prêtre représente pour le ménage médiéval un danger social réel. Joseph Bédier dans son ouvrage célèbre sur *Les Fabliaux* avait déjà constaté la virulence des attaques portées contre les prêtres amoureux : admonestations, leçons indignées, et prédictions de cruels châtiments foisonnent dans les récits" (143). Unwed priests posed a social danger due to their

particular availability and to the alibi for intimate meetings with women provided by their office. In fabliaux, priests have a need to affirm their masculinity in situations where they are not allowed to act in such a manner. When priests demonstrate their virility, they are often shamed in vengeance and have to pay for their grievances and sins. From the canon of the fabliaux it is easy to see that the vast majority of priests are caught and punished. One study has shown that priests are never successful in cuckolding a husband who is a knight and are punished for attempted seductions two-thirds of the time (Nykrog 110).

Why do the fabliaux feature the 'prestre' as a lover? First, priests have the unique position of being unattached to a partner (except to God), and this detachment allows them a certain freedom. Secondly, their actions are hypocritical to the profession and their oath of celibacy; the licentious priest creates an open line of critique to a corrupt authority. Moreover, a priest is supposed to ignore the pleasures of this world, a temporary discomfort, in order to gain access to the higher realms. For certain orders of priests including the Franciscans, this display of penitence became an obsession. The exploits of Saint Francis of Assisi, including his strict observation of poverty, became legend and his hagiography a model.

Fabliaux develop the theme of priestly emasculation as a critique of clerical sexual hypocrisy and of religious authority. For example, in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, the priest finds himself trapped in a meat barrel, hiding from the husband, a cobbler, as he returns from the market. When the cobbler decides to sell the meat barrel, the priest becomes an object at the whim of the market. Powerless to his fate, the priest speaks Latin to alarm his brother, present at the auction. This attempt at

empowerment is effaced as the cobbler demands a higher price for the sale of his talented barrel and insists that the barrel speak or be smashed to bits. In this scene, the cobbler effectively takes the control of Latin away from the clergy, with both sign (forcing the barrel to produce a speech act) and signifier (interpreting the speech act to his profit), while setting up the priest for public humiliation. In this way, the cobbler regains authority in his relationship, symbolically emasculates the priest, and gains monetarily. The text of *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* is an anomaly among fabliaux in that it is composed not of rhyming octosyllabic couplets but of eight-line stanzas. The first four lines have five syllables each with an alternate rhyme scheme while the next four lines are decasyllabic with a caesura. The eight lines follow an *ababbccc* rhyme pattern which may indicate that they are intended to be sung, as the author declares "Par ceste chançon vous puis tesmoignier[4]" (*Recueil Général* 30).

In the second stanza of the poem the author focuses attention on the wife who is the source of the problem since the protagonist, the cobbler Baillet, "Prist trop bele fame" (24). The description of Baillet's wife relies on tropes for representing women that appear in many fabliaux. The verse sets up a synecdochical relationship with the *savetière* (cobbler's wife), explaining her physical traits as the reason for her mischievous nature rather than any deeper moral quality. Such an anthropometric view of the world has groundings in medieval thought where physical characteristics were believed to determine character. Fabliaux characters often bear physical attributes that predict their

[4] All quotes from *Recueil Général* are cited by page number.

behavior in an efficient correlation suited to the brevity of the genre. Through the verb "méchoir," which signifies a fall from grace or general misfortune the *savatière* is linked to the treacherous Eve and the fall from the Garden of Eden: "Si l'en meschéi / Qu'ele s'acointa d'un Prestre joli" (*Recueil Général* 43). Fabliaux frequently describe women as the daughter of Eve, as opposed to courtly romances where the figure of the Virgin is more pronounced (Nykrog 228). Eichmann points out that "While few fabliaux show woman as reprehensibly deficient in reason as man, she is often castigated for her unfaithfulness and her fickleness" in his attempt to destigmatize the view of women in fabliaux ("Anti-Feminism" 31). In *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, the *savatière* in this fabliau is rife with the desire to shame her husband. Consistent with the treatment of women in many fabliaux, her objectification and assimilation to the figure of Eve serves primarily to set the stage. Once the course of the fabliau is set, she disappears from the scene and makes no contribution to the verbal jousting match between the cobbler and the priest. As Eichmann writes, "the main conflict occurs between husband and lover" (31).

When the verb *s'acointer* is used to refer to the *savatière*'s liason with the priest it foreshadows the hostile combat between Baillet and the priest. The verb works much as *rencontrer* would in the same instance, either as meeting a lover or affronting a competitor. In the same line the idea of a "Prestre joli" suggests the visual beauty of the priest while ironically hinting at his corruption, for *joli* denotes the valors of courtesy and chivalry (*DMF)*. The dictionary focuses on all that gives the *joli* person or thing a positive quality. Specifically speaking of chivalry, the dictionary specifies, "Qui met en œuvre toutes ses qualités pour mériter l'amour de

sa dame" and generally "avec une valeur moralement positive" (*DMF*). Such a description of the priest contrasts with the cobbler who is *franc*, direct and sincere. The two main male characters of this tale, the cobbler and the priest, are clearly distinguished by their descriptive adjectives, which place them in categories opposite to their normal roles. A priest should be frank and sincere in his devotion to God and a cobbler should be interested in the beauty of his art. Linguistically in the text, this role reversal regresses to a more natural state, resetting the cobbler as the leader of artifice, and the priest as the purveyor of frankness, with his cries for help in Latin. This contrasted representation of the two characters appears later in the fabliaux with the addition of a description of the priest as a disenfranchised prisoner, who is at odds with the frank, or enfranchised cobbler.

Furthermore, the text creates a juxtaposition between the bonds of marriage represented by the *anel* or in modern French, the *anneau* and the bonds of marital intercourse. These links between the cobbler and his wife are broken, for "Le Prestre venoit, / Qui estoit isnel; / A la Savetière fourbissoit l'anel" (*Recueil Général* 25) bringing shame upon the cobbler. *L'anel* refers specifically to the vagina (Dufournet 358), upon which the verb *fourbir*, to furbish or polish by rubbing, acts. The act of rubbing in this case implicates the priest who will in turn be threatened by the same action while in the *lardier* because, by analogy, "fourbir quelqu'un" is to "frapper qqn, le rouer de coups, le corriger" (*DMF*). Later in the text, the priest will be threatened with being smashed into pieces by a mallet while in the *lardier*, effectively correcting the priest's malicious behavior. Any rubbing the priest had performed will be successfully turned against him in the form of symbolic

emasculation in a threat to break him to pieces, diminishing his role vis-a-vis his competitor, the cobbler.

The fabliaux author continually describes elements of the tale which will be turned on the priest. For example, explaining how the cobbler's wife and the priest take advantage of the cobbler's absence, he writes "Entr'eus deus faisoient molt de leur soulas ; / Des meilleurs morsiaus mengoient à tas" (*Recueil Général* 25). The best pieces (of meat) are at their disposal, yet later the priest is reduced to confinement in an old meat pot, "Ce viéz lardier" (27) where the objectification of the priest takes place. The author of this fabliau elegantly offers the priest all earthly delights in his campaign to denigrate such an attitude of ignorance toward church doctrine for the clergy. As well as food, the couple shares drink, "le plus fort vin n'espargnoient pas" (25) meant to invoke the joy shared but also an allusion to the blood of Christ and its use as an unbefitting sacrament to the amorous liaison[5]. In contrast, dinners with the cobbler, to the wife's displeasure, are much more basic. Even their three year old child says, "Voir, ma mère a duel qu'estes céens tant" (*Recueil Général* 25) hinting at the pain felt by the cobbler's wife at her husband's company. In Medieval French, *duel* is closer to the modern French *deuil* that refers to grief or sorrow caused by the loss of someone (*DMF*). This grief places shame upon the cobbler—a shame mitigated by the fear he inspires within the priest. The child says to her father, "Pour ce que le Prestre vous va trop doutant" (*Recueil Général* 25), elucidating the priest's fear of his competitor while foreshadowing the

[5] Nonetheless, wine had a very substantial place in the Middle Ages, as Robert Fossier notes, "Le vin est sur toutes les tables, dans toutes les chambres, dans toutes les caves" (qtd. in *Histoire de la virilité* 153).

later events of the tale. This bit of information passed on from the child tips the balance of power particularly in linguistic terms in favor of the cobbler. For, in this account, the power of word provides a manner to circumvent and to redistribute shame.

The fact that the *savetière* wants her husband to be flayed, or, metaphorically speaking, to be duped, speaks to her desire to shame him by seeing Monseigneur Lorens (the priest). When the cobbler says to his wife, "Je vois au marchié", the author takes a metonymic view of the woman, calling her "Cele, qui vousist qu'il fust escorchié" (25). The woman who would like to see him skinned, as the author describes, goes on to say, "Tost alez ; jà n'en vuiegne pié", a line for which the translations are diverse. For Dufournet and Rouger who are translating into prose, they give the most direct translation of the idiom to a modern audience. Dufournet interprets, "Partez vite et bonne chance" (93) whereas Rouger finds "Allez-y et dépêchez-vous" (160), each phrase lending to the idiomatic interpretation of the original keeping with the urgency expressed by the cobbler's wife. However, a Spanish translation by Alcaraz follows the original more strictly and reads, "Idos pronto, que no se os paren los pies" (114). What is the importance of this difference when each translation successfully relates to the wife's resolve to rid herself of her husband? The Spanish translation more fully distinguishes the connection to the body which follows the verb *eschorchier* of the previous line. The line equally sets up an infinite distance, perpetually separating the cobbler from his wife. The Spanish translation can also be seen from an ironic viewpoint, as the cobbler follows his wife's instructions exactly by never stopping his feet, when he chooses to come back

home. In any case, such a link to physical existence, with the mention of feet, ties the text to the very corporeal transfer of shame in the tale. The feeling is perfectly described by the verb *eschorchier*, or to flay in English, for this is the sensation that shame inflicts upon its sufferers. It is the feeling of being exposed, of losing one's protective covering, or in a metaphoric sense, one's skin.

Another polysemous line in this tale occurs when the priest arrives to see the *savatière* and is struck by a feeling of contentment, or *liez*. However, a word choice such as *liez* leaves the possibility of other interpretations, or at least insinuations by the author. *Liez* can also indicate a union as in a relationship or the sense of constraint and bondage as the priest will experience. It cannot be ignored that *lie* also refers to the deposits at the bottom of a wine barrel. These contradictory definitions subtly negate the priest's joyous emotion and highlight his eventual shame from losing the verbal jousting match with the cobbler.

The tale continues to exploit double entendre and clever foreshadowing of a reversal of fortune through virtuosic word play. Throughout the tale, the cobbler shows no sign of shame, despite his wife's desire, for as his wife and her lover prepare a bath, "Baillet ne fut tant ne quant honteus ; / Droit à son ostel s'en revinst tous seulz" (*Recueil Général* 26). He moves in a very frank manner without hesitation or discomfort. With his return, Baillet changes the fate of the priest from "Le Prestre asséur / Se cuida baignier" (26) to watch over his confinement in the barrel. Baillet subsequently sees Monseigneur Lorens undress and the line in Middle French leaves much to the imagination. The text reads, "Baillet par un mur / [Le] vit despoillier" (26) where *vit* signifies the simple past of the verb to see but may

indicate, especially in oral narrative, the male genitals. In the same line, *despoillier* can suggest the threat of forthcoming violence upon the priest while relating back to the skinning the cobbler's wife so desired of her husband. Equally, when Baillet asks his neighbors to hoist up the barrel containing Monseigneur Lorens onto a cart, he uses the verb *trousser*, which has an emasculating influence on the priest (*DMF*). It is not only to load up merchandise and therefore take possession of the item but can also delineate taking sexual possession of a woman or simply the act of lifting up her dress. At this moment, using this specific vocabulary, Baillet takes possession of the priest.

As the priest sees his brother and an opportunity to save himself, the fabliau author reminds his audience of Monseigneur Lorens' confinement with the use of the word *huchier*, which certainly indicates the verb *hucher*, to shout, while making reference to the noun *huchier*, or a woodworker who would have made the enclosure (or *huche*) where the priest is held captive (*DMF*). Monseigneur Lorens becomes an item of play to Baillet who says, "Lonc temps l'ai gardé ; si m'en faut jouer" (*Recueil Général* 28). Here Baillet literally indicates that he is having fun (*jouer*) with the meat barrel while metaphorically referencing his verbal jousting competition with the priest. The priest has become a peon to the cobbler with his freedom stripped bare and his life threatened. As he threatens the priest with a mallet, Baillet takes hold of his status as phallic arbiter. The text reads:

> Afin de miex vendre
>
> Prist un grant maillet,
>
> Puis a juré Dieu c'un tel rehaingnet

Donna au lardier qu'il sera froez (28)

With the mallet as a phallic symbol, Baillet has complete control over the priest, enforcing the transfer of power in the scene and threatening to smash him to bits with the same tool. The threat of breaking the priest into scattered pieces is a metaphor for castration, as Bloch notes: "We have seen how closely the representation of the body in the fabliaux is linked to the theme of fragmentation — to detached members, both male and female; to actual and metaphoric castrations; but most of all, to metaphor as castration" (*Scandal* 101). The priest is already objectified in the barrel but then must face the possibility of having his parts scattered and displaced.

Baillet calls for the admiration of all cobblers when he makes his *lardier* speak Latin. With this line, he equally regains the symbolic role of *chevalier* in the courtly world saying, "Çavetiers me doivent amer de cuer fin / Quand à mon lardier fais parler latin" (*Recueil Général* 28). The expression *cuer fin* evokes the finer points of chivalry in that a courtly and fine knight is an accomplished one and *aimer de cuer fin* is to love from the bottom of the heart (Dufournet 358). Such finesse may remind the reader of the description of the priest as *joli* in the beginning of the tale. Now it seems the cobbler is worthy of becoming an object of admiration. Equally in that line the cobbler is able to overcome his lack of formal education by "attributing the linguistic capability to the hamper." As Burrows explains, "he undermines the special value placed on Latin by the priest: far from being a privileged mark of learning, it is a skill that an inanimate object can acquire. He then further belittles the priest's Latin by claiming control of it" (74) and threatening to smash the barrel.

As the priest is released from his captivity the author maintains a final polysemy in this fabliau saying, "Bon ami li fu à cel besoing lors, / Quar d'avoir grant honte li garda son cors" (*Recueil Général* 28). First off, this line claims rightly that the priest's body was saved of all shame by his brother. Secondly, the use of the noun *cors* gives the possibility of an interpretation not only of the priest's body but more specifically his horn or penis. We must be reminded that any reference to the priest's body evokes, "the lechery of priests […] made worse by the fact that more efforts toward chastity are expected of them than of the average layman" (Eichmann "Anti-Feminism" 31).

The moral of this tale is more of an advertisement or warning against the negative effects of getting caught and less a condemnation of the act of cuckoldry in particular on the scale of sins. The moral tells us, "Par ceste chançon vous puis tesmoignier / Que du petit ueil se fait bon guetier : / *Ex oculo pueri noli tua facta tueri*" (*Recueil Général* 30). The caution, 'Watch out for what you do under the eyes of a child,' relates to how shaming necessarily involves being seen and being exposed in the public sphere. Without the young child there is neither a witness nor a public for whom the shame can be potentially revealed. In the final lines, the author points out that *joli* men should watch out, lest they be trapped in such a meat barrel. The lines warn any possible lover of the emasculating dangers of captivity which befall the priest of this tale.

The use of polysemy and other linguistic and literary techniques in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* highlight Monseigneur Lorens' confinement and release, to Baillet's economic profit; the shame of being one-upped is effectively transferred

from the cobbler to the priest. By treating the priest as a living commodity, Baillet successfully profits from the endeavor while releasing the weight of shame. However threatening this fabliau may appear, it nevertheless falls short of the violent emasculation of *Du Prestre crucefié* or *Du Prestre teint* where neither priest escapes the pitfall of shame.

In *Du Prestre crucefié*, a sculptor acts as if he is unaware his wife is cheating on him with a priest, and through his feigned innocence acquires his revenge. The sculptor comes home from the market unannounced, and his wife's lover, the priest, goes to hide in the sculptor's studio. When the sculptor enters the studio and finds the priest acting as if he is a woodcut of Jesus on the cross, the sculptor proceeds to enact his revenge by trimming the "vit" or genitalia of the sculpture / priest. The sculptor goes so far as to cry out; "Seignor, prenez mon crucefiz / Qui or endroit m'est eschapez" (*Recueil Général* 196). When the characters in the fabliaux pretend to believe their lovers' lies in order to accomplish their revenge, we witness a deceitful level of feigned ignorance where the protagonists become image-creators or metaphor machines in their own right. Here the sculptor exacts the most intense revenge by eliminating the possibility of his wife's confession, for she is petrified by fear and already submissive. The audience is given impetus to support the sculptor's revenge, despite its cruelty, through references of him as a good man, as:

.I. franc mestre de bon afère

Qui bien savoit ymages fère

Et bien entailler crucefis.

Il n'en estoit mie aprentis,

Ainz les fesoit et bel et bien. (*Recueil Général* 194)

More specifically, a close textual interpretation of the fabliau will reveal the linguistic devices which promote honor, dishonor and subsequently shame. First of all, the descriptive language of this fabliau sets up a foreseeable conclusion for the priest, Constans, and the sculptor. The artisan is variously described as *franc*, like the cobbler in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au* lardier, a *mestre* rather than an apprentice who is good in his affairs and a *prudhomme*. Each of these characteristics lends honor to the artisan. He is the benefactor of positive language in this fabliau in all but two moments in his attempts to regain his honor through emasculation and revenge. In effect:

> Les personnages d'artisans sont nombreux et leurs descriptions sont majoritairement positives. Ils possèdent souvent des qualités semblables. Qu'il s'agisse *Du prêtre crucefie, Du prêtre qui fut mis au lardier, Du prêtre teint* ou *De sire Hain et de dame Anieuse,* les personnages masculins sont des artisans possédant honnêteté, habileté dans leur métier ou ruse. Ils correspondent au profil type de l'artisan et seront connotés positivement. (Dufour-Vachon 71)

Emasculation is produced in this poem by changing the relevant "ymages", and the sculptor becomes editor of the adulterous episode. The sculptor's jousting match with Constans circumvents the verbal level as his recreated metaphor becomes image driven. The sculptor amends with, "Si l'amenderai" (*Recueil Général* 196) his wife's infidelity to fit his own vision as the narrator of his own history. The case of *Du Prestre crucefié* is a husband's revenge on the wife's male lover and

reflects the husband's fear of symbolic emasculation or lack of authority. By emasculating the lover, the husband is able to regain phallic authority without recourse to shame and humiliation. Therefore, the priest's 'vit' becomes a synecdoche, representing the whole of his physical being, and metonymically symbolizing the priest's desire.

The sculptor gains a positive image in the fabliau except in one scene as the sculptor describes his crucifix to his dame, "vilainement / Ai en cest ymage mespris : / J'estoie yvres, ce m'est avis" (196). He describes the results of his labor as an *ymage mepris*, done *vilainement*, linking his work to the vocabulary of shame for both terms detail dishonorable actions or expect shame to result (*DMF*). However, the object he is cleverly referring to is the priest, for the text highlights the sculptor's perception with:

> Et li preudom tout esraument
>
> Le provoir tout estendu
>
> Voit si l'ai bien aperc'eu
>
> Voit la coille et le vit qui pent. (*Recueil Général* 196)

Therefore all shame accrued in making the object is transferred to the priest standing helpless against the cross. The only ignoble description of the sculptor occurs when he decides to precipitously come back from the market, as the text says, "Et atent jusques à cele heure / Qu'il cuida qu'il fussent ensamble. / De mautalent li cuers li tremble" (195). His angry heart shows his bad intentions and reveals a base side of the sculptor burning for revenge. White supports this theory in Chrétien de Troie's *Eric et Aeneid* by saying that, "Joy, associated with a gain in

honor, is also treated as the polar opposite of anger as well as sorrow, both of which are linked to shame" (143). As the only line in the poem expressing the sculptor's state of mind or emotion in the poem, we must not overlook its significance, especially when his heart is described as trembling, the same sensation the priest in captivity experiences in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*. This is significant because the sculptor's angst is related to the shame he bears for being cuckolded and that he has yet to confer upon the priest, while in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* the priest's fear of being shamed evokes a trembling heart.

The first seven lines of this fabliau are used to present an honorable artist, while the eighth and ninth declare the impropriety of his wife with, "Et sa fame seur toute rien / Avoit enamé un provoire" (*Recueil Général* 194). This line precedes any act of impropriety on the part of the wife, but clarifies any suspicions the audience may hold concerning the wife's motivations. In the third line, ".I. franc mestre de bon afère" (194), the noun *afère* can exhibit polysemous properties. It refers to the sculptor's skill at his art, but also hints at the verb *aferrer*, "Attacher avec une chaîne ; charger de fers" (DMF), seemingly setting a course for the artisan as a figure who, like Baillet from *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier,* will entrap his opponents.

There are other linguistic hints as to the fate of the priest in this fabliau when he goes to market, "Et une ymage o lui porter, / Don't il auroit ce dist, deniers" (*Recueil Général* 194). Here we see a parallel metaphor between the image of the cross bringing the sculptor monetary gain just as the priest (an image that needs amending) will bring him profit with the motif repeating later in the line, "Li fist isnelement baillier / C'onques n'en i failli denier" (197). The vocabulary of imagery

and editing defines the power of the artist in this fabliau, and may speak to another level of how the poet manipulates his audience. Another instance of parallel structure hinting at emasculation arises with the reference to the *col* or neck. In the line, "Lor a desus son col jeté / .I. crucefis par achoison" (194) and later "Si le feri desus le col / Qu'il abati en un tai mol", both events perversely reenact the shame of the passion of Christ. The sculptor carries his burden of shame as a cross on his back having (presumably) been cuckolded by his wife but immediately transferring his shame to the priest (the figure on the cross). This image is remarkable for the representation of the lecherous priest as a Christ figure and a martyr, but for the sins of whom? The priest reenacts the thrashing of Christ, although after his crucifixion, which represents another reversal of the Christ story. In the latter line the priest is subjected to a sullying by a "tai mol", or a soft mud pit in a common fabliau trop that equates physical dirtying with shame (Eaton 100). The author uses formulaic collusions here to highlight the contradictory elements of the piece in reference to standard religious iconography. A medieval audience, would have been able to identify the transgressive comedy associated with mutilated religious imagery; as Tracy elaborates, "As with much modern comedy, medieval comic literature often makes fun of horribly uncomfortable situations, crossing boundaries of propriety and justice" (295).

The sculptor viciously takes back his authority from the corruption of the Church and supersedes the typical fabliaux plot of 'domestic correction', as Tracy explains (206). Further, while the action of violence falls on the side of sculptor, the vocabulary of villainy bears metaphorically on the side of the priest with the

aforementioned reference to the cross as villainous and contemptible. The author of this fabliau places emphasis on the violence of the sculptor's actions while he emasculates the priest. The sculptor is never, however, implicated by violent vocabulary or unjustness except when he is performing the castration, as follows: "Que vit et coilles li trencha, / Que onques riens ne li lessa / Que il n'ait tout outré trenchié" (*Recueil Général* 196). In these lines we see the cutting of the body in a graphic manner, hinting at the extremity of the situation, for the author feels the need to ensure his audience of the veracity of the action, saying, "Ei ice vous di-je por voir" (196). *Voir* here gives truth, while at the same time hinting at the visual effect of the scene the audience and the sculptor's wife are witnessing. According to Tracy,

> Actual castrations in the fabliaux exceed figurative acts of punishment, focusing on pain and suffering instead of humiliation and potential humor, tapping into social anxieties about emasculation represented by historical figures like Abelard who attempts to refocus implications of his punishment but who also contributes to the sense of injustice in reciting it. (221)

In fact, castration was not an accepted practice for rendering justice in the Middle Ages as seen in the case of the life of Pierre Abélard. He was castrated following the revelation of his affair with Héloïse on the instruction of the latter's uncle. However, the two perpetrators of the castration were in turn emasculated, as well as being blinded following the legal code of *lex talionis* in front of an ecclesiastical court (Gilson 60). Therefore, the work of the sculptor must be seen in a literary context in light of the codes of an established authority. The fabliaux achieve farce through

such subversions of established codes of conduct. Although none of this discounts the fact that "The fear of castration was certainly real enough, as was the fear of torture after the institution of the inquisitorial process in the twelfth century" (Tracy 222), the issue of *Du Prestre crucefié* seems to be domination. "Both Bloch and Muscatine address the apparent purpose of castration in the fabliaux, but it is not sexual cruelty even though sex or the sex organs seem to be inextricably linked to it; it is brutality performed for power and fed by the various motivations in each tale" (222). The brutality of this work is set up through various literary techniques linking the overall text to the particular scene of emasculation.

Other lines in this fabliau expose an allusion to shame. One such moment occurs when the priest is told by the sculptor's wife to spread himself out amongst the crucifixes, implicating her in the later carving of his *vit* with, "Léens, et si vous estendez / Avoec ces autres crucefis" (*Recueil Général* 195). The priest assumes an emasculating position amongst the crosses, with the verb *etendre*, or to spread out. Later in the poem, the sculptor starts to sharpen his knife, as the text follows "Lors comença à aiguisier / Son coutel à une grant kex" (195). His knife can be seen as a phallic image penetrating the priest while becoming a precursor to the eventual castration and a supplanting of authority. Furthermore, the lines spoken by the sculptor, "Dame, dist-il, tost alumez / Une chandoile, et si venez / Léenz o moi, où j'ai afère" (196) and the narrator "Une chandoile a alumée" (196) both represent metaphors for the 'candle' that his wife lit or *alumez*, as inflaming with passion the phallus of the priest (*DMF*). These allusions to her involvement and hints at her

impropriety make the wife a necessary silent witness to the dismemberment of her lover.

Metaphor reigns in the line "En l'ouvréoir isnelement" (*Recueil Général* 196) which strikes as both a "Table de travail de l'artisan" but also in a "contexte grivois" the "sexe féminin" (*DMF*). These are references to the artisan regaining his phallic space through emasculating the priest by amending the verbal and image metaphors of the poem. He is metaphorically removing the priest from his wife's *ouvréoir* by eliminating any possible reentrance. The sculptor is equally reclaiming the space of his studio as well as his wife's *ouvréoir*.

All of this violence gains sympathy for the priest for enduring such brutality, and yet the moral of the fabliau strikes down a bit ironically giving no sympathy toward the priest, but instead following the general trend of antipathy toward the clergy discussed at the beginning of the chapter. In fact his name, Constans, is at the same time revealed and mocked in the second to last line where, "Si com fist cil prestres Constans" exhibits the priest's ironic name in the face of his actions. (*Recueil Général* 197). Particularly, *constant* as an adjective distinguishes : "Qui est ferme et fidèle (dans son comportement, dans ses convictions…) qui ne se laisse pas influencer par les circonstances" (*DMF*). And in the last line, "Qui i lessa les siens pendans" (*Recueil Général* 197) Dufournet relates in his notes that "*pendans*, qu'on peut traduire par 'pendeloques, pendentifs', désigne les parties viriles" (364). This line speaks to the ultimately dual nature of writing in this fabliau where the author's purpose is to shame while making use of available literary techniques (and therefore maintaining the strict rhyme scheme).

Throughout these two fabliaux, *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and *Du Prestre crucefié*, the use of metaphor, pun, metonymy and other linguistic techniques contribute to the overall distribution of shame throughout the poems. Emasculation, whether metaphoric or literal, in the poems, creates an environment rife with power struggle where honor is at stake, for both poems rely on the basic tenet that "Cuckolding a man is insulting because it entails a failure to treat a man in a manner befitting his status, since it implies that the man does not exert proper control over his wife" (Eaton 66). After such a dishonor in these fabliaux, the artisan regains his place through the ruse of forcing his opponent into a metaphorical battle scored on the quality of rhetorical skills and the ability to amend images. These two poems fall into a very common category of fabliaux, according to Nykrog, "Le thème du fabliaux par excellence est le thème à triangle" (60) where a readjustment of power leads to shame. Moreover, part of the joke in these two fabliaux is that the priest, especially in his inability to abstain from sex, is no Christ, even though he takes Christ's image. In both of these fabliaux, when the artisan transfers his shame to the priest, he does so in a way that highlights priestly appropriation and misuse of the word (Latin) and image (the cross) of God.

Chapter III: Analysis of *De la Saineresse*

The literary and linguistic techniques are more pronounced in this fabliau as compared to others in that the author, specifically through the voice of the wife, is much more direct and virulent in his critique of the bourgeois husband. As Nykrog notes, "Ce qui est curieux, dans cette 'allégorie' plus qu'obscène, c'est que chaque point de ce langage érotico-médical correspond à un autre emploi, courtois celui-ci, des mêmes expressions. L'amour blesse avec son 'dart', mais possède aussi la vertu de guérir le mal qu'il vient de faire" (79). The writer of the poem is, just as the *bourgeoise*, a creator of metaphor. It is a poem about the creative process of writing metaphor in general, how narration is created and misunderstood in order to manipulate, and how a character can be shamed in front of an audience (unbeknownst to him) and humiliated for his boasting failure. Much as in *La dame escoillee* and *Les Quatre Souhaits de saint Martin*, this fabliau is an address to "married men who give their wives authority over them and therefore bring shame on themselves" (Lacy 61). In *De la Saineresse*, this authority is not given willingly but lost through the ignorance and inaction of the bourgeois. The bourgeois' incapacity to understand the undertones of language and reality in this charade lead to his metaphorical emasculation and inability to control his wife's transgressions.

De la Saineresse is a tale of a bourgeois husband who foolishly boasts that it is impossible to cuckold him. The companion of his wife arrives one day, disguised as a blood-letter, and the wife obtains formal permission from her husband to retreat to the attic, alone with her lover, to perform a 'bloodletting'. The second part of the tale recounts the wife boasting to her husband about her conquest using intricate

medical and transparently sexual metaphors. As Eichmann explains, "the lady discovers the power of the sustained metaphor which brings about justice and symmetry in the deserved punishment of the husband who bragged loudly that no woman could ever deceive him" (*Cuckolds* 105). The bourgeois does not suspect any foul play, and he is cuckolded twice: first for boasting at the beginning of the poem and later for not recognizing his wife's obscene rhetoric at the end. In *De la Saineresse*, the author constructs an endless stream of metaphors in order to display the bourgeois woman's control of rhetoric.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, taking possession of another man's wife was seen in the Middle Ages as a transgression against his honor. The fact that the wife clearly details her dishonorable act to her husband without his understanding makes a mockery of his claims as incapable of being cuckolded and leaves him humiliated and dishonored in the eyes of his wife and the audience. Rhetorical devices employed in this work are present in nearly every verse, and we will examine a number of evident as well as a number of more subtle examples. The intention of this rhetoric is to shame (when the listener: the male protagonist or members of the audience, does not understand the joke) or to humiliate (when the bourgeois' pretention is deflated).

The title is immediately an indication of the rhetoric that will be employed throughout the poem. As Rossi states in his brief introduction to the origins of the work: "Le titre du fabliau est fondé sur le calembour entre *sainier* 'saigner' et *saner / sener* 'faire du bien', 'être bon'" (71). The title effectively starts the poem's essential dichotomy of bleeding as a medical operation but equally as a metaphor

for satisfying the wife's sexual itch. The bourgeois husband's critical failure to understand the metaphor leads to his humiliation and his loss of honor (akin to shame) from the perspective of the audience watching the fabliau. The fact that the bourgeois cannot decipher such a clear metaphor takes his shame into the category of meta-shame, or dramatic shame (in the same classification as dramatic irony) in which the audience's knowledge of certain facts exceeds that of the bourgeois. He is certainly unaware of his own shame but this fact does not save him from public shame for having boasted that he would never be cuckolded. The bourgeois is unaware of his own humiliation, much like a comedian who is not funny, or a teacher who doesn't know what he's talking about. Miller explains the sensation to this degree, that "humiliation, rather than causing humiliation in others, is more likely to cause pity, indignation, embarrassment, or amusement; the precise emotion depends variously on how identified we are with the humiliated one or how much we think he is aware of being humiliated, that is, how much he feels humiliated" (155). In this case, the bourgeois feels none of these sensations as he is uniformly unaware of his uncomfortable position. The audience, therefore, feels a degree of amusement at the exposing of a hypocrite. If the bourgeois had never set up the precept that is wife could not cuckold him, she would have never felt the need to prove him wrong and he would not have lost his honor.

This fabliau is also a reversal of the traditional oaths or *serments*, "ou d'engagements mettant en jeu le corps du jureur. Il s'agit là d'un dévoiement, car le serment est l'un des actes qui assurent l'établissement des rapports humains, et par conséquent la possibilité de toutes les activités dans la société médiévale. […] La

femme est pratiquement exclue de cet exercice" (*Histoire de la virilité* 157). In effect, the *serment* or oath made by the *bourgeoise* at the beginning of the poem, "et en jura un serment / qu'ele le fera meçongier" (Rossi 72) seeks to refute the original boast made by the bourgeois that no woman could deceive him. The fact that the wife takes an oath underlines her appropriation of masculinity by placing her directly in the context of courtly romances where knights fight for their honor. Her arena becomes the verbal jousting match, where she can exhibit her prowess of metaphor and polysemy and for this reason she is able to overcome her husband. A woman of her skill in ruse is given privileged treatment by many authors of fabliaux, but, as a woman, she does not normally have status within the social group and for that reason is not at risk of being shamed. If she does earn status before the audience, it is because of her masculine display of verbal jousting. However, her challenge is to not take the metaphor too far because if her husband discovers her infidelity she will surely receive a violent reprimand like the woman in *L'Enfant de neige*. Indeed, her successful appropriation of the masculine role of verbal jousting indicates the degree to which her husband is emasculated. This fabliau reverses the customary use of *serment* to make a statement as to the force of this woman over her husband even if he is oblivious to the fact. As she reveals such control over her husband, she renders him a shamed figure to the audience of the fabliau.

The poem begins with, "D'un borgois vous acont la vie / qui se vanta de grant folie : / que fame nel porroit bouler" (72). The promise of humiliation in this poem arises in these lines where, just as in *Beranger au lonc Cul*, the supposed nobleman boasts of how he can control his wife and is thoroughly ridiculed by the audience

and his wife in the end. The difference in the two poems is the husband's awareness of the cuckoldry. In *De la Saineresse*, the bourgeois is repeatedly described as a *sot,* or fool, following the habit of fabliaux authors to label characters in a sort of parataxical, repetitive technique, as recounting "grant folie" (72), "je vous oi parler de folor" (76) and "Por ce tieng je celui a fol / qui jure son chief et son col" (78). These instances are either related by the narrator in the first and last quote and the wife in the second. Each line gives a direct opinion of the bourgeois as *fol* while attaching the *folie* to a certain reason.

The *Saineresse* is treated in similarly harsh terms by the author of this fabliau, even though his ruse is recognized as an honorable attribute. Contrary to the bourgeois, the *Saineresse* is recognized as insightful in at least one instance by the narrator of the poem "Cil ne fu pas fol ne bricon / ainz le salua demanois" (74), while more regularly being described as a *pautonier*, a villain or a "Coquin, vaurien, scélérat" (*DMF*). There is a duality and a contradiction here in that the *Saineresse* is described in positive as well as negative terms that certainly reflect on his / her position as a cross-dresser, in opposition to the bourgeois. The fact that the bourgeois is directly described as *fol* while the *Saineresse* is *pas fol* creates an opposition in their characters and highlights the ruse and the shame effected upon the bourgeois to his ignorance. The fact that the bourgeois is cuckolded by a *pautonier*, or a good-for-nothing villain, instead of a knight, deepens the specter of his shame, and to further imagine that his wife would prefer the company of a villain must make the audience's impression of his shame greater.

The wife's victory lies in the subtle undertones of her language, much like the subtle travesty of the blood-letter, who "sambloit plus / fame que homme la moitié" (Rossi 72) and whom she had asked to come to the house. The bourgeois should have been reluctant to accept the *Saineresse* into his house considering she was "vestu d'un chainsse deliié, / d'une guimple bien safrenee" (72). Rossi elaborates in his notes, "Les prédicateurs de l'époque conseillaient aux femmes d'éviter les guimpes jaunes et de les laisser aux juives et aux femmes publiques. Le mari aurait donc dû être sur ses gardes" (72). The husband's lack of suspicion and inability to read the physical clues revealing the blood-letter's gender predicts his inability to interpret the metaphors his wife recounts and leads to his shame. Eichmann remarks on a similar note that: "His outfit must have been of his own invention: obviously summoned by the lady who is intent on making a liar of her husband (w. 28, 29), his gaudy, loud appearance and risqué remark that he came here for her pleasure momentarily take her by surprise (*esbahie*, v. 31)" (*Cuckolds* 106). While the wife is surprised by the blood-letter's audacity, the husband displays no emotion at the presence of the unannounced visitor except gratitude, and eagerly invites the blood-letter to sit beside him. At this invitation, the blood-letter retorts with backhanded politeness, "vostre merci, / je ne sui mie trop lassee" (Rossi 74). Refusing to sit because he does not feel tired, the blood-letter indicates a reason why the bourgeois' wife is on a quest for a lover (*AND*). A virile husband would not boast about his prowess, as the bourgeois does in the beginning of the poem that his wife would never cheat on him, but would instead take action (by keeping her

occupied in the marital bed) to ensure she did not. While the bourgeois sits inactive, his wife is taken upstairs.

The *Saineresse* is described as having "posnee", a sense of arrogance or bravado and contradictorily as "mout cointe et noble" (Rossi 72). His *courtois* appearance is only on the surface or represented in his exchanges with the bourgeois. The *Saineresse* is a character who "performs the duties for which he has been called, then quickly abandons the scene by saluting the husband and leaving the lady flushed and breathless" (Eichmann *Cuckolds* 106). His brevity is evidence of his bravado but also a nod to his nature as a ruse. In fact, the *Saineresse* only speaks when the bourgeois is present, for his actions and his real nature as a *pautonier* are left for the bourgeois' wife where verbal communication is unnecessary. The role of the *Saineresse* in the end is to shame the boasting husband, but he is essentially a minor player. While the wife could almost certainly seek the company of another man outside her home, or when her husband is not present, the shame seems doubly powerful if the husband gives approval (without knowing) for the liaison. Not only is his wife able to have an *ami* but she can also have the relationship without fear of being caught nor even suspected.

The wife's immaculate control over discourse leads to her eventual triumph over her husband, and she employs her calculated language to avoid referring to the *Saineresse* as a man, or any gender at all. As Eichmann explains, "The Old French language has allowed her to relate the entire scene without one subject pronoun to identify the sex of the doctor" (*Cuckolds* 105). The wife's rhetorical reworking starts with her saying, with the entrance of the blood-letter: "Montez lasus en cel solier : /

il m'estuet de vostre mestier". *Mestier* can be understood as a professional function or duty, but is equally a euphemism for having sexual intercourse (*AND*). She continues, telling her husband that "J'ai goute es rains mout merveillouse, / et por ce que sui si goutouse" (Rossi 74). A *goute* seems to be the perfect description of a sickness that needs a bloodletting, for it equates to a, "maladie des petites articulations caractérisée par un gonflement et de vives douleurs et due à la fluxion d'humeurs âcres non évacuées" (*DMF*). Also a *goute* in the poem, and "her nudging insistence that she is *si gouteuse* (v. 38) duly reinforces our understanding that she is suffering from a purely sexual itch" (Levy 199). Further, the kidneys (*rains*) evoke a double meaning, "car les *rains* étaient la partie du corps où résidait l'appétit sexuel" (Rossi 74). Additionally, the description of the sickness or pain as *merveillouse* highlights the intensity or miraculousness of the feeling and the importance the *bourgeoise* places on it, obviously ignored by her husband.

The sexual act of this fabliau is brief as opposed to the references to sex throughout the work. In the postface to *Fabliaux Érotiques*, Bloch expounds, "A la rapidité de la description, qui est un élément stylistique du conte comique, correspond la rapidité de l'accouplement. Le guérisseur lubrique de 'La Saineresse' a trois rapports sexuels en l'espace de deux lignes seulement : 'en un lit l'avoit estendue / tant que il l'a trois foiz foutue'" (Rossi 537). The space of the fabliau is limited considering the length of the 116 line poem, but one must also consider the decorum of the work for no matter how much the characters discuss sex, the actual sex act is brief. Such a phenomenon must speak to the desire of the author to showcase the rhetorical talent of his heroine and to further shame the bourgeois in

the eyes of the audience as opposed to relying on a purely burlesque, literal account of the cheating episode.

One moment of unintended metaphor spoken by the bourgeois comes about in the lines, "ne retenez de son droit rien / de ce que vos sert en manaie" (Rossi 76). The bourgeois is making sure the *Saineresse* is fully paid for her services rendered, while the wife insists in the next lines that they have come to an agreement on payment (in the form of sex). The word *manaie* is of specific interest, delineating "to be in the power, at the mercy of" (*AND*). The word speaks to both the purported treatment given to the wife that the husband thinks has occurred but also to the actual sexual encounter in which the wife was manipulated by and therefore at the mercy of the *Saineresse*. Equally, when the narrator is describing the "poche aus ventouses a prise" (Rossi 76), the author is referring both to the operating equipment the *Saineresse* takes with him but also a more metaphoric interpretation of a *ventouse*. The word can be thought of as an "ouverture" or a "conduit" that he takes, a metaphor for the female sex he has operated on (*DMF*). An earlier reference to *ventouses* even uses the verb form to explain its usage as the *Saineresse* is introduced, "et vint menant mout grant posnee : / ventouses porte a ventouser" (Rossi 72). *Ventouser* here can be explained by the obvious interpretation as the action of taking blood, as Rossi and Eichmann translate in their editions, but the verb can be given the sense of "donner de l'air à, rafraîchir" (*DMF*). Such an interpretation can be distinguished as fittingly bawdy considering the context of the poem, and highlights a comic element of the poem that the bourgeois does not fully comprehend.

The *bourgeoise* and the blood-letter have their way with each other three times in the attic and the bourgeois insists the blood-letter be well paid for his duties. Afterwards, the wife describes the painful procedure she has gone through, which has given her a new vitality. She describes the operation metaphorically with great detail saying, "Graz cops me feroit et sovent, / morte fusse mon escïent, / s'un trop bon oingnement ne fust" (Rossi 76). The bourgeois opens discussion in an unwitting ironic manner with the line, "'Dame, mout estes afouee" (76) after the narrator describes her as out of breath. The bourgeois takes notice of the heat, *afouee*, her body is emanating, while the word can have other connotations. There are similar references in *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and *Du Prestre crucefié* where *allumer* is used to describe the state of mind of the characters. Here, *affouer* is a synonym meaning to "mettre en feu, faire du feu" (*DMF*) and representing the woman's sexual desire only recently satisfied. The wife is in a particularly excited state at this point in the narrative, sitting with her husband as she describes her treatment. Eichmann notices that "As she regains her breath, she seems to get carried away with excitement, using intensifyers (*Tant*, *molt*, *tel*, and so on) over fifteen times in the short passage, and brushing dangerously close to an unmetaphorical explanation of the ointment's origin" (*Cuckolds* 105). She is excited to cuckold and humiliate her husband for his foolish boasting.

In the beginning of her speech recounting the operation she endured, the wife says, "ja ai je esté trop traveillïe / si ne pooie ester sainïe" (Rossi 76). *Travailler* in Old French refers more to suffering, either as an "Idée d'effort en vue d'un résultat" or "Idée de torture, de souffrance, de fatigue" (*DMF*) and in modern French

a crude term for sex. In the second line quoted above, the woman is describing her torture at not being able to be bled or *sainïe*. An extreme effort to make the wife bleed is undertaken and she never actually points out directly if she is bled in the end. We have an indication that she has a wound, which would give the impression of blood finally being extracted from her body, but she does not explicitly state its apparition as she becomes involved in the description of the ointment. Whereas the male orgasm here can easily be identified in the ointment, the female orgasm could be referenced in the bleeding which does not clearly occur in the wife's description. There is a similar scene where a rape occurs in the fabliau *De la Damoisele qui sonjoit.* The heroine is not seen in a negative light when she resigns herself to take pleasure in the situation and shame her violator as unmanly when he is unable to satisfy her. Perhaps the decorum of fabliaux still did not allow female orgasm to enter into the literary discussion, as it still does not describe the actual orgasm even though in *De la Damoisele qui sonjoit* the *damoisele* says "qant home faut, se feme monte" (Rossi 86), so when the man does not satisfy her, she gets on top. The orgasm she seeks to achieve by mounting is evident, but the decorum of the fabliaux will not show her in the moment and only refers to the action indirectly, much as the male orgasm is only shown as a metaphor in *De la Saineresse*. These fabliaux, along with *Berangier au lonc Cul,* are no longer an indictment of the behavior of women as daughters of Eve, but a demonstration that a woman has the right to deceive a husband who is too idiotic to perform his role properly. In the case of *De la Saineresse*, the bourgeois' stupidity is revealed in his inability to read the narrative

his wife is describing and for being foolish enough to believe he could not be cuckolded.

Following the idea of torture that the wife has endured, she describes herself as being martyrized and *demartelee*, figuratively pounded with a hammer. This torture leads to wounds on her body that she describes as, "si m'a après ointes mes plaies, / qui mout par erent granz et laies" (Rossi 78). The *DMF* defines a *plaie* as having another meaning by analogy as the "sex féminin, vulve" furthering her metaphor from a surgical to a sexual level. In the following line she describes her wounds as great and ugly. These wounds resound in the same way as the wife's *goute* which she describes as a throbbing pain but which explicitly implies a sexual itch. But why describe these wounds as *laies* or in modern French, *laides*? Perhaps it is a reminder that the sexual parts are of grotesque nature, and that nudity is a shameful act for as Levron says, "La honte de la nudité est un souvenir évident de la Genèse" (58). In the same way as the wound is described as ugly, the *tuiel*, or male equivilant, is described as being covered "d'une pel mout noire et hideuse" (Rossi 78). The ugliness of these parts serve as unrecognized moments of shame placed upon the bourgeois as he continues to misunderstand the analogy being described to him by his wife. He does not understand the connection between suffering and love, for pain is both the origin and the consequence of love, making a *plaie* the focal point of love (Grodet 92). On these 'wounds' a special ointment was applied, described as *savoreuse*. This special ointment came, not so metaphorically, from a pipe or *tuiel*, clearly representing the male phallus. The use of such an ointment is common in Medieval courtly literature as in *Yvain* or *Cligès*. An ointment is used in

these two poems as a means to cure one of the heroes or heroines, respectively Yvain and Fénice, in order to return them to their lovers. It was, however, love that was the cause of their calamity in the first place. Similarly in *De la Saineresse*, the wife is in need of an ointment after enduring a 'beating', much like Fénice of *Cligès*. The author is well aware of the significance of such recurrent references and uses the audience's recognition as a means to further the mockery he lays upon the bourgeois. As Levy notes, summing up the entire episode:

> After this brilliantly obscene metamorphosis into an heroic surgical operation of the full coital act of penetration, vigorous intercourse and ejaculation, medical reality has become so interwoven with the fiction of deceit that the deluded husband can do nothing but heartily approve of his wife's treatment: '*Bon oingnement avez eü!*' (vv. 99) In this fabliau, which opens with a rash denial of deception, all is falsehood and mockery: physician, gender, illness, cure, terminology itself. (224)

The bourgeois is so ignorant of his wife's transgression that he does not feel shame and the whole fabliau is devoted to his mockery. The tale becomes a lesson to those who think they are too intelligent for their wives to cuckold them:

> Mais il n'est pas en cest païs
> cil qui tant soit de sens epris
> qui mie se peüest guetier
> que fame nel puist engingnier,
> quant cele qui ot mal es rains
> boula son seignor premerains ! (Rossi 78)

In these final lines, the narrator confirms the metaphor running throughout the poem in clearer terms, saying that she whose kidneys hurt will be the first to cheat on her husband.

The only direct mention of shame in this fabliau is in a negative construction with "cel nule honte n'a / de la lecherie essaucier" (78) for the wife has no shame in describing her exploits because she wants to bask in her debauchery at her husband's expense. White points out that, "One way of making a man angry was to force him to take notice of the shameful injuries that he or his friends had suffered" (148). His wife does not go far enough to elicit anger in her husband, but she toes the line, quickly concluding after she has perhaps gone too far in her description for, "The realization that she may have gone too far probably accounts for her abrupt ending of the allegory with a succinct conclusion" (Eichmann *Cuckolds* 105).

This fabliau recounts the metaphoric emasculation of the bourgeois in the eyes of his wife and the audience and their participation in the game of verbal jousting. His invitation of the *Saineresse* into the home and his acceptance of their retreating to the private space of the bedchamber / attic as well as his boasting justify his shaming. As Ariès explains, "Le lit apparaît ainsi comme le lieu même de la vulnérabilité, le lieu où l'identité est aisément occultée, le lieu de graves transgressions, prétendues ou réelles, fût-ce celle de la parole, comme si, émise de nuit, elle ne pouvait être source que de malheur" (*Histoire de la vie privée* 328-329). In all the bourgeois pays for his missteps in judgment (boasting and incorrectly reading the metaphoric signals of the poem) through dishonor from the audience and his wife. But why would the wife abstain from revealing her love affair to

further shame her husband? For fear of physical reprimand, given that she had no imaginary protection from a chevalier as did the wife in *Berangier au lonc Cul*. The wife's lover in *De la Saineresse* is only a *pautonier*, a good for nothing villain. Perhaps the fabliaux propose another type of language possible between men and women, like that in *De la Saineresse*. The competition between the sexes resembles a knight's tournament in courtly romances and in this fabliau the force of language becomes the crux of the struggle. The husband's lack of comprehension in this work contributes to his shaming and his being cuckolded.

Conclusion

In this thesis we have discussed the linguistic mechanisms by which shame has been transferred to the various characters of the fabliaux *Berangier au lonc Cul*, *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier*, *Du Prestre crucefié* and *De la Saineresse*. In *Berangier au lonc Cul* we saw the use of metaphor and parody of courtly romance. In *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* and *Du Prestre crucefié* we tracked the emasculating language conferred on the respective priests, and their metaphorical or literal castration. Finally, in *De la Saineresse* we observed the *bourgeoise* wife's masterful display of metaphor as a means to shame her husband to reproach him for his boastful manner. In the fabliaux here we can see that a "shame culture ethos clearly dominates" (Eaton 335). The clever characters are honored while the ignorant and passive characters are shamed.

After analyzing these various accounts, it is evident that while shame is a common aspect in each of the poems, the linguistic methods to transfer shame are often different. In any situation or literature, "Shame has its obvious role in the socialization of honorable people and in maintaining social control. In the sagas, the norms of honor, the norms of proper behavior, in fact, are as often expressed negatively in terms of shame avoidance as they are positively in terms of honor acquisition" (Miller 119). Some fabliaux, such as *Berangier au lonc Cul* and *Du Prestre crucefié* are more explicit about the displacement of shame. In those poems the villain knight and the priest are clearly shamed and cognizant of this emotion. *De la Saineresse*, on the contrary, is more implicit about how shame is conferred onto the *bourgeois*, because he never realizes that he has been disgraced. Shame is

conveyed through an audience's view of the ignorant bourgeois and the narrator's occasional backhanded portrayal with terms such as *fol*.

Honor and shame occur in two realms in the fabliaux we have discussed: on the battlefield and in the bedroom. The battlefield and the bedroom essentially become one space in these works, for one's husband or wife (along with their lover) is the supreme competitor. Ultimately, the game of love is the enduring shame game. In an environment where men of any social standing, especially those of the upper classes, were particularly interested in maintaining their public honor, shame is visibly an important aspect of social life in Medieval Europe. Such honor was achieved in part through the private domain. Therefore, "Le devoir premier du chef de maison était de surveiller, de corriger, de tuer s'il le fallait sa femme, ses sœurs, ses filles, les veuves et les filles orphelines de ses frères, de ses cousins et de ses vassaux" (*Histoire de la vie privée* 88). The outward image of the gynoecium, or separate apartment where women resided in aristocratic circles, reflected the honor of the master's house. This is certainly a time period when men were obsessed with adultery, attempting to protect their harem from "tous les regards épiant, les envieux guettant la rencontre des amants" (93). In this respect, men of the nobility were constantly occupied with the the females in their household. This is not only the case of nobles but of all men in that time: "Ainsi le XIe siècle, ou plutôt l'esprit des hommes de ce temps, est-il travaillé par l'obsession de l'adultère féminin, fondée sur la réelle perméabilité de la maisonnée ou ses cloisons internes" (151). Certainly the fabliaux episodes containing adulterous plots would teach an audience about love and shame. The tales would give instruction on how not to act, in cases of

characters who show idiocy and boastfulness (such as the bourgeois in *De la Saineresse* and the villain knight in *Berangier au lonc Cul*) and how to be clever in order to avoid shame. Theories have been presented that render fabliaux a warning to men of the outlandish behavior of their spouses, or that "Ces fabliaux ont aussi une valeur pédagogique certaine: ils sont source d'information sans doute entre un adulte et un adolescent, et servent à apprendre aussi la rhétorique virile" (*Histoire de la virilité* 157).

In the end, my goal was to apply Lacy's theorem of analysis from his book *Reading Fabliaux* where he insists on the careful reading of the genre in order to discuss critical elements of individual texts (xiii). He goes on to say that, "scholars have most often responded to the need to say something applicable to the entire genre, something concerning fabliau publics, for example, or fabliau parody, or women in the fabliaux. The results, unfortunately, tend to lose sight of the individual fabliau in a forest of generalizations about *the* fabliaux" (xiii). This by no means suggests that I have avoided the work of other scholars, but I have tried to narrow my study to the specific poems at hand. Furthermore, their scholarship provided a base of ideas through which I could understand more fully the single poems. Shame as a subject can respond as a critical tool to many or all of the fabliaux, but I chose it instead to delve into a line-by-line analysis of the shaming linguistic techniques in particular fabliaux.

In this study we highlighted the literary techniques used in fabliaux to transfer shame. But to what end? Why focus on shame and emasculation in these poems and the ways in which they are disseminated? Perhaps the chosen fabliaux

create audience reflection or are used as a pedagogical tool. Perhaps because it is an integral emotion of Medieval life and a particularly useful tool in many literary works. More likely, the fabliaux authors themselves were masters of rhetoric and shamers who saw their relationship with the audience as tenuous. The troubadours invited their audience to attempt to decipher the double entendre and metaphor of the poems and the audience had to accept the risk of feeling shame should they fail to understand the joke. The troubadours' only option in this verbal jousting match, in order to gain the most sway with the largest number of audience members was to cuckold the listener rhetorically with polysemy, metaphor and irony in order to consistently shame the "other" or those not represented in their audience. For, "Il n'y a pas dans les fabliaux de héros avec lequel puisse s'identifier le lecteur" (*Histoire de la virilité* 157). There is no hero to identify with because the troubadour did his best to appropriate shame in far off places, "que il avint en Lombardie, / ou la gent n'est gaires hardie" (Rossi 242), at least to members of the audience who followed the rhetoric. Humor in these poems is accomplished by drawing members of the audience into the shame game and daring them to understand the punch-line. The work of the fabliaux author was, then, to act as if he were upholding dominant traditions by slapping on a moral that may have had little to do with the overriding narrative of the poem and would more than likely have been recited tongue in cheek (xxii). The audience may have had the same experience in listening as the shamed characters in the poems themselves: "qu'ils s'émerveillent comme de grands enfants" (Bédier 273) at the narrative ruse that has distracted their attention. The audience members may have been left mocked, unbeknownst to them, by the tale

they have listened to, like the bourgeois in *De la Saineresse*, while insisting the poet (or bloodletter) be paid well and "ne retenez de son droit rien" (Rossi 76).

The linguistic struggle of fabliaux characters can also be understood as a tournament, where points are gained in front of a live audience for each display of shame inducing, duping linguistic mechanism. Sexual punning and overt metaphor are important techniques in the fabliaux because they provide an outlet for the repressed women in *De la Saineresse* and *Berangier au lonc Cul* to assert dominance over their idiotic or ignoble husbands without risking physical reprimand. These techniques are equally important for the vengeful husbands in *Du Prestre crucefié* and *Du Prestre qui fu mis au lardier* for they provide an opportunity to redistribute the shame of being cuckolded toward their priestly adversary. The victorious characters in these fabliaux often represent the weak or wronged who get their revenge through dexterity in language use.

The aspect of game and tournament applies not only to the characters in fabliaux but to the poets of the genre. The fabliaux authors were much like Renart or the Signifying Monkey as referenced by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. As actors, the better the troubadours performed, the more likely they were to be likened to the devil, for the devil himself was considered the best actor and deceiver (Soule 94). These troubadours and trouvères were so effective at their art of mockery that they were hired to praise their patron and ridicule their patron's enemies. At the height of troubadour fame, nobles decided to become renowned poets, perhaps to better control discourse for themselves (Fauriel xiii-xiv). This *imitatio* by nobles of the more humble troubadours and trouvères is the greatest compliment these poets

could have received, even as they continued to mock openly people of higher social rank (at least the ones they were paid to mock). Nonetheless, if "The art of the troubadours bespoke above all an aristocratic culture bent upon the heightening of sentiment and taste" (Rosenberg 1), then the fabliaux was a genre that satirized these conventions. Fabliaux poets, who were troubadours in the greater sense, normally upholding the dominant paradigm prescribed by their patron, were still able to create another critical level of comedy while recounting a fabliau, much as one makes fun of a policeman behind his back, if only briefly (Gates 54). Control of narration is an important component in these fabliaux, where "talking double" is an enfranchising feat. Throughout the height of their popularity in Europe, troubadours came to develop different levels of poetic style relating to an audience's comprehension: *trobar clus*, only accessible to a limited audience; *trobar leu*, accessible to any audience; and *trobar ric*, which uses elaborate wordplay and manipulates rhyme (Rosenberg 3). I argue that in the fabliaux we have covered, the authors use a variety of signifying levels in order to distribute shame with a light touch, to achieve critique from afar. Fabliaux characters as well as their authors are performing, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes with reference to a resistant nineteenth and twentieth-century African American verbal dexterity aimed at mocking masters and whites without drawing punishment, a version of "double talk" that incorporates "metaphorical substitution" and "pun" (75) to persuade by indirect verbal means (54). Through careful wordplay, these fabliaux authors represent part of a genre that satirizes courtly romance and the conventions of storytelling for privileged and noble audiences—while maintaining an alibi. The

authors as much as the characters they depict are rhetorical masters who are able to sway an audience with punning verse and cunning action.

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