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Though there are evident differences between medieval and modern notions of marriage and sexuality, there is really no way to contrast a set of beliefs labelled 'modern' with another called 'medieval'. Not only do the concepts themselves evolve through time within broad historical periods, but the way that they are understood can differ markedly from one community or individual to another. Most of the texts that are usually cited by historians as evidence of medieval thought are homilies and penitentials, theological treatises and records of legal proceedings, texts that shine with the lustre of authenticity and truth and may appear to be speaking in a unified voice but were often inspired by very particular concerns. They were also composed, almost exclusively, by an elite group of unmarried men whose job it was to defend church thought and local practice. **1** The fact that much of the extant vernacular literature of the period belies and contradicts these texts indicates that even if church policy denigrated all sexual expression when divorced from reproduction, such commandments were probably not foremost in people's minds as they went about their daily lives. I will therefore begin this chapter by looking at some of the structures within which marriage and sexuality were configured in the Middle Ages, church doctrine being one amongst them, then look at a selection of literary texts that offer typical but also surprising portraits of how that material was interpreted, undermined, twisted, and abused.

Both marriage and sexuality are terms that vary across time and space, best defined through specific cultural connotations. Though every culture and era has a system of norms and a vocabulary to signify recognized unions and sexual desire, the meanings attributed to those unions and desires can vary wildly. Western Christian marriage, both modern and medieval, is essentially a legal contract that determines or solidifies (a) gender relations (as in who gets to marry whom, who initiates what); (b) family structure (patriarchal or matriarchal, two parent or multigenerational); (c) community and religious models of governance (structured on a family model in which positions of authority and caregiving are differentiated); (d) economic exchange (as in how dowries function in alliances, truces, and the attribution of prestige); (e) inheritance law (women's rights to their dowry, primogeniture or equal division of goods); and (f) sexual behaviour (exclusively heterosexual or more inclusive, active and passive roles as gendered masculine and feminine). One is born into marriage as a pre-existing ideological system that opens and then limits one's horizons of expectations while also determining the sundry roles on offer - as caregiver, parent, hunter, and earner.

Yet marriage is particular as well as universal. Children are seen as the genetic carriers of a specific coupling, with all its attendant economic and legal rights and duties. Let us look at an exemplary medieval case - Perceval, the Welsh prototype of the universal subject from Chrétien de Troyes's Conte du graal . Born in seclusion, living alone with his mother after the deaths of his father and

brothers, he is tricked by an illusion of splendour in the forest when he glimpses his first Arthurian knights. Pursuing them as models of what he hopes to be, he is subsequently lured into taking up a quest to solve the mystery of his identity. His mother's move to the forest to raise her child was based on a contention that one can escape fate, create a new ethical system free from the linking of law, genetics, and coupling that underwrites western marriage. Her ultimately unsuccessful attempt to raise her son with no name or history in the utopian forest is a parable par excellence about the tensions that exist between the public and the private. Her example proves, if nothing else, that one could challenge custom in the twelfth century and that the contours of marriage and sexuality were hot topics for debate. Young Perceval may learn who he is from learning where he comes from, albeit from suspicious sources, but the door to his identity is never shut completely. In the cracks remaining (especially visible in the grail Continuations), medieval authors intimate that the solid wall of law and custom, all that is presumably genetic and pre-inscribed, is itself an effect of the law that it claims as instantiating. The imperative that appears to stem from the law is actually what sustains that law, more a means of closing off other options than an iteration of fact.

The same could be said for sexuality: it is hard to conceive of it as a concept without reference to the ways it has been governed. The Middle Ages may not have had any inclusive term to indicate how we name and organize gender identification, desires, and norms - the word 'sexuality' did not enter the language until 1845 - but this does not mean that they lacked concepts. **2** Medieval French societies had a rich lexicon at their disposal to signify sexual tastes, many of which we probably still do not understand, and not all of these words were necessarily linked to fixed sexual identities. This might not mean that there was any more freedom to define oneself outside cultural norms in the Middle Ages, but it certainly does mean that one could perform certain sexual acts without necessarily seeing oneself as part of a larger group or category. Many who engaged in same-sex acts, for example, might never have seen themselves as 'sodomites', simply because these acts were performed actively rather than passively or did not show up in their confessors' discussions of sin. **3** Some whom we might call sadists or masochists might never have seen their behaviour as anything other than sanctioned devotional practice; and many adulterers could rightfully claim that this term did not actually encompass or define their behaviour. If they had never consented to the marriage to which they submitted, or the coupling within which they found themselves imprisoned, they could claim immunity from sin. Tristan, that master sophist, explains to the hermit in Béroul's version of the tale that he and Iseut have not sinned because they drank the love potion unknowingly. This argument allows him to skirt the mundane strictures of marriage and feudal codes and to redefine love as a fateful and fatal encounter outside social control. Though they may not have been any more successful than Perceval's mother in occasioning a complete readjustment of the symbolic order, this ardent defence proves again that such issues were ripe for discussion in the late twelfth century.

This is hardly surprising. One facet of the Gregorian reforms of the late eleventh century involved the church's attempt to wrest control of important social ceremonies like marriage from secular hands and redefine it. Over the course of the period 1100-1400, the definition of marriage evolved from being a contract between men, requiring no religious blessing or priestly presence, in which a woman was transferred (and paid for) from one family group to another, to a ceremony conducted by a priest, in which two individuals declared their willing assent to a contract before witnesses. Gratian's Decretum (c .1140) required that sexual intercourse accompany the spoken vow in order to establish the bond as legitimate; but just a decade later, Peter Lombard, in his Sentences , argued that consent alone was enough to sanction and sanctify a marriage. **4** The church's new role in presiding over the ceremony and certifying the requisite conditions established as well their right to intervene between a father and his child or a lord and his subject. They did not, however, succeed in reconfiguring marriage as an entirely voluntary, as opposed to abusive or forced, bond; nor did they succeed in refashioning it as an institution that placed love and contentment above economic concerns. Literary texts from the period provide sufficient examples of unwanted marriages (Marie de France's

Guigemar , Yonec), extramarital sex (Milon , Fresne), and rape (Roman de Renart , the grail Continuations) to claim that these matters were ever definitively settled. Gradually, however, important changes were accepted into common practice and these changes had serious repercussions. Clerical marriages were banned, though the practice continued for at least another century; sexual abuse was regulated by both secular and ecclesiastical bodies; and sexual behaviour within religious orders came under ever-closer scrutiny. Concurrently, this move to regulate sexuality had another important, though probably unintended effect: sex in all its varieties and the travesty of marriage became major themes of vernacular literature.

The attempt to control sexuality and marriage through legislation and the interpretation of scripture brought into better focus the competing systems of law and language that operated throughout this period. Canon law was composed in Latin and reflected official, orthodox positions, while the growing body of secular law had to establish its own ground of authenticity and often in a vernacular language that was necessary for daily transactions but lacked the grounding of tradition. The status of law itself was thus called into question. Was it to be seen as a prior authority that foresees all eventualities, as in religious thought, or as a response to change, a second-wave body of knowledge based on common practice and precedent? Furthermore, as St Paul argued in Romans (7.7), law can create the very transgression that it seeks to legislate:

Is the Law identical with sin? Of course not. But except through the law I should never have become acquainted with sin. For example, I should never have known what it was to covet, if the Law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' Through that commandment sin found its opportunity, and produced in me all kinds of wrong desires .

Paul's admission that law actually produces sin, that sin without law, without external correction, is not transgression - not thrilling, not guilt-producing, not productive - is another way of saying that law and transgression are conterminous. **5** Following this logic, the legislative flurry of medieval theologians might actually have produced the very sins they were condemning. St Augustine, commenting on this Pauline imagery, described in The City of God (14:26) a prelapsarian (i.e. pre-law) Eden in which Adam's penis was completely under his conscious control and could be used as any other limb, without any concurrent loss of reason or experience of pleasure. **6** Augustine concurs that it is law that institutes subjectivity and a sense of sin, but he cannot accommodate within his vision opposing laws, laws that contest law and call into question the nature of law itself. The rise of 'heresies' in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with opposing variations on those laws, indicate that no one impregnable edifice of law obtained throughout this period. Political and doctrinal differences led to interpretive differences and vernacular literary texts tend to highlight just these cracks in the foundation.

One obvious effect of this highlighting was that the breadth of positions available to those subject to these sometimes contradictory laws expanded. Our relatively straightforward modern sexual categories of gay, straight, transsexual, etc., give way in the Middle Ages to a wider range of overlapping positions that did not necessarily encase the subject in any one of these categories. Such positions would include approximations of desire that we might now call heterosexual, before any such term reified the supposed simplicity of that taste, or homosexual, which translates very imprecisely a variety of salacious derogations such as sodomite , bougre , erite , etc.; but other sexual categories as well emerged, including those of virgin and celibate. The Middle Ages was not a period 'before sexuality', in the sense that that implies a lack of self-realization, of subjectivity itself, and an ignorance of the joys of transgression; but neither was it a period of all-encompassing authoritarian monitoring of marital and sexual behaviour.

The category of 'virgin' is worth a discussion in itself. It appears to describe a simple lack of sexual experience, a state to which all are born, but how does it end? With the first experience of sexual

pleasure, with masturbation, orgasm, the breaking of the hymen, oral sex. **7** Virginity in the modern West lacks the potentially disruptive quality that it once had when the choice of virginity as a sexual identity could be read as an act of rebellion. Rejection of sex could mean rejection of family and privilege, even of requisite gender roles, by expressing a preference for strong emotional and even erotic ties with God over a permanent union with another human subject. While 'celibate' today implies a state of sexual inactivity set by vow, in the Middle Ages to be celibate meant only to be single and unmarried rather than chaste. **8** A clerical vow of celibacy meant a vow not to marry, not a vow to renounce sex, and required a supplemental vow of chastity to match our contemporary expectations. Virginity, as distinct from celibacy and chastity, was an option open even to married couples (as in the Vie de saint Alexis , on which see Chapter), and many married female saints and mothers would later claim a reconstructed virginity that reflected spiritual rather than physical wholeness. **9**

What gets you into any one of these sexual categories, and what makes you ineligible to remain there, can vary enormously. Sodomy, for instance, was even then hopelessly confused. To a legalistic medieval cleric it might mean engaging in any sexual practice that could never lead to procreation. Oral or anal sex, birth control, or even, if some sources are taken literally, intercourse in any position other than the missionary, regardless of the gender of the partner, and especially if the position was chosen to increase pleasure, would all be culpable. **10** A married man who had sodomitical relations with his wife was only marginally less guilty of mortal sin than a man who did it with another male; and if this married man, especially if he were noble and played the 'active' role (the penetrator), also had sex with his wife and produced the requisite children, then his extra-marital sodomitical relations would probably not even have attracted much attention. A man who has sexual relations only with men, on the other hand, and in the 'passive' position, would be referred to as a prostitute and was subject to ridicule and anathema.

These examples illustrate how the shape sexuality takes is modelled by the freedoms and restrictions imposed on it. When sexual acts escape categorization altogether or their classification is unclear, it is difficult to imagine how guilt or transgression would operate. Take, for example, acts that are categorized as sinful when performed passively and less sinful when performed actively. How, in these cases, is culpability negotiated? Which party is 'active' in a same-sex act of oral sex? Does kissing and hugging, the only vaguely sexual act alluded to in most medieval romance ('accoler e baiser') come gendered or are both parties active? Are nocturnal emissions sexual acts. **11** Women, who were generally unsupervised in their relations with other women, might have escaped censorship entirely and never questioned their own 'sexuality' when they expressed affection sexually, provided that they also accomplished their 'marital duty' and bore the requisite children.

Questions of marriage and sexuality clearly do intersect then but they do not always travel hand in hand. In a romance such as Eneas (c .1155), for example, the exiled heir of Troy and his betrothed, Lavine, follow what seems a well-trodden narrative path: incitement of heterosexual desire leads to a tumultuous courtship and ends in triumphant marriage. But romance marriages can be deceptive. Said to celebrate love, they often legitimate instead dynastic coupling whose union of bodies allegorizes political alliances, territorial claims, and grafted ethnicity. The Saracen princess topos , a favourite of romance and epic, in which the western Christian conqueror marries the 'converted' Saracen lady and founds a new world order is probably the clearest and most familiar illustration of this textual imperialism (La Prise d'Orange) but Eneas complicates it by confounding every element along the way: the birth of sexual desire arises from imitation and same-sex attraction; duty and political imperative rather than love serve as the motivational drivers. **12** The love story and the climactic marriage thus appear to spring from completely different sources and follow different trajectories, intersecting only when social and narrative pressures require closure through the resolution of conflict. This is not to say that all passionate love affairs in vernacular literature are similarly and necessarily subverted to political and propagandistic agendas, but when marriage

emerges as the only end to which such affairs can lead then you can be sure that the passion will be less than scalding and the biological urges more strategic than instinctive.

Other famous love stories, such as Chrétien de Troyes's Erec et Enide , feature marriage only as a narrative blip, a pseudo-climax that occurs early in the narrative and introduces more complications than it solves. Rather than serving as the ultimate sign of consummation - sexual, social, and familial - marriage paradoxically marks the first moment at which, a major obstacle having been disposed of, passionate sexual love becomes a possibility. With social stability and respectability won and virginity no longer an obstacle, marriage throws the door open to its many alternatives: loveless partnerships give way to erotic pairings (Tristan et Iseut); male enslavement of younger brides gives way to fantasy lovers (the mal mariées of Marie de France); homosocial bonding takes precedence over heterosexual pairing once the threat of sodomy charges is erased (Yvain and Gauvain in Chrétien's Chevalier au lion); magic herbs save women from unwanted sex with husbands while still guaranteeing them social status and the favour of their lovers (Chrétien de Troyes's Cligès). Marriage in these cases legitimizes, enables, and masks forms of transgressive behaviour that would otherwise remain proscribed: what nineteenth-century critics called 'courtly love' rears its head with the alluring promise of sin.

Let us look more closely at a few of Marie de France's lais , Fresne and Guigemar . Both deal with sexual error and both end with what seems to be a long-delayed marriage. **13** Fresne is the story of twin baby daughters, separated at birth by their slanderous mother. The cast-out baby has been raised by an abbess but is courted at adolescence by a wealthy local lord. When he wants to convince her to join him in his castle, he does so by warning her that her abbess/benefactor will be angry if her charge should end up pregnant (Fresne , 282-3). Passion and sexual congress clearly move at their own speed in this lai , with no mention of sin, guilt, or marriage. The domestic arrangement - lord living with concubine - does not, however, quite fit with what the local gentry expect of their overlord and they turn on him with threats. Fresne finds herself squeezed from her lover's bed by that enemy of true love, that ally of social convention - marriage. She is replaced by her sister in a wedding ceremony and demoted to serving as the couple's handmaiden until her mother, in town for the ceremony, recognizes Fresne as her own abandoned child and justice is done. The marriage is richly celebrated and establishes legitimacy in the eyes of the feudal court but what, if any, is its salutary effect on the lovers?

In Guigemar , the young noble hero suffers from his society's intolerance of anyone who lacks heterosexual desire. He is thus put through a ritual of sacrifice and identity-building that leads directly into the arms of his saviour, a lonely young woman across the sea, victim of her much older husband's jealousy. Once again, the young lovers act (lots of acoler e baiser ; 531-2) with no thought of marriage until the husband gets wind of it and Guigemar is forced to flee. Back at home, he pines for his former happiness and remains unmarried, foiling his family's plans. When finally the two lovers meet again, Guigemar fails to recognize her and both must undergo a humiliating ritual in which suitors line up to untie a knotted shirt and chastity belt that each has fashioned for the other (651-4; 741-2). A war later, and his rival dead, the lovers are reunited but no mention is made of the marriage that must inevitably follow. The narrative interest of these marriages, one might conclude, arises not from the marriage itself or the celebration surrounding it, but from the fact that it has been strictly excluded as an option from the beginning of the narrative. Deemed impossible, either by reasons of social rank and class (Fresne), or previous marriage and lack of desire (Guigemar), the reunion that is finally celebrated is presented as the only possible way to ease tensions in the community, the only appropriate way to repair the social and personal wrongs suffered by the protagonists. The restorative function of marriage as the climax of such processes of wrongdoing thus signifies reintegration into the community: marriage as social unguent, interpellating subjects into recognizable categories.

This is a bit trickier when dealing with same-sex partners. While most references in vernacular literature are resolutely negative, this does not mean that the Middle Ages necessarily condemned and abhorred sexual activity that did not feature a man and a woman. **14** Reproduction was the key to a church blessing and this policy is both parodied and parroted in popular texts such as the Roman de la rose , texts that flirt with sodomy while denouncing it. **15** Same-sex activity in such texts is as often grist for humour and satire as it is for denunciation. Eneas , for example, makes open reference to married men who have sex with other men and Etienne de Fougères's Livre des manières to women who do it with women. While both are derogatory, using arguments familiar to contemporary marriage debates, they are also comical, stretching metaphors to the breaking point. In Eneas , the mother of the young Lavine tells her daughter when she learns of her attraction to a Trojan that such men are always inclined to prefer 'on garcon que toy ne autre acoler' (8626-7: 'his boyfriend over cuddling with you or any other woman'). He will use you to attract his prey, she says, then demand to mount him just as he mounted you (8642-8: 's'il les pooit par toy atraire . . . bien le laira sor toy monter / s'il le repuet soz soy torner'). In the Livre des manières (c .1170) Etienne de Fougères claims, in an elaborately rhetorical passage, that women who have sex with other women:

sarqueu hurtent contre sarqueu,sanz focil escoent lor feu.Ne joent pas a piquenpance,a pleins escuz joignent sanz lance.. . .l'un[e] fet coc et l'autre polle.

(1107-24)

(they bang coffin against coffin, / and without a poker they stir up their fire. / They don't play at jousting / but join shield to shield without a lance . . . one plays the cock and the other the hen.. **16**

The fabliaux , one of the richest sources of descriptions of sexual activity and coupling, are dismissive of fools and duplicity but never quite imply that this extends to a condemnation of marriage or sex. Both are mocked mercilessly but both are also, by tale's end, subject to pious and protectionist commentary. The fabliaux might ridicule husbands as ineffectual and incompetent, and wives as conniving and duplicitous, but this does not mean that one should throw in the hat or join the nearest monastery. At fault are those protagonists who fail to maintain the requisite balance of socially defined power, men who let sexual desire blind them to the authority they should be exerting. These are men who listen too much to women, who let them have things their way, who are too old or too proud to satisfy them sexually. Their female partners, on the other hand, are declared depraved, sometimes ironically, but their being so is unavoidable, driven as they are by what medieval medicine considered excessive moistness and bodily appetites. Their cleverness in manipulating men and juggling marriage with sex, two almost antithetical concepts, earn them envy as well as disdain.

Marriages could end as well, and not always to pious protestation. In the Lais of Marie de France, women subject to abusive marriages could find other ways of evading the social scripts they had been handed. In Eliduc , the wife and girlfriend of an adulterous knight end up retiring together to a convent as a response to their lover's deception, where they offer their love to God instead of any mortal man since 'mut est fole ki humme creit' (1084: 'any woman who trusts a man is mad'). Even women who had married, born children, or lived on the value of their sexual favours, were able to give up the world and embrace sexual abstinence in the name of a higher power. Rutebeuf's Vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne offers a wonderful version in which the body that was once Marie's means of sustenance becomes the surest way of eradicating that past. Marie predicts that her sin will one day be written on her forehead (226-9: 'Mes pechiez m'iert el front escriz . . .'), but the reader understands that that has always been the case. The stains of her beauty can only be obliterated when virginity replaces and eradicates her former sin.

By the late Middle Ages, as societies recovered from plague and war, marriage was celebrated more

frequently in literature as a Christian way of life - an institution offering a nurturing, productive, and supportive framework that mirrors God's relation to man. Much of this writing was produced, however, in reaction to, or in dialogue with, the late thirteenth-century continuation of the Roman de la rose . Jean de Meun's 'Genius' might well advocate procreative sexuality but he does so without insisting upon marriage, supposedly the only arena within which such sexual relations could take place. The prologue to the Quinze Joies de mariage (c .1400) takes up this reasoning, portraying marriage as an institution based on folly and suffering:

ung homme n'a pas son bon sens, qui est en joyes et delices du monde comme de jeunesse garnie, et de sa franche voulenté et de son propre mouvement, sans necessité, trouve l'entrée d'une estroicte chartre douleureuse, plaine de larmes, de gemissemens et d'angoisses, et se boute dedens.

(Prologue, 1-5)

(any man who enjoys youth and the joys and delights of the world and who, of his own free will and impulse and without compulsion finds a narrow and sorrowful prison cell, full of tears, anguish, and lamenting, and throws himself into it, has lost his mind.)

Two brief examples illustrate the deleterious effects that marriage is said to have on promising young men. In La Complainte Rutebeuf , the poet/narrator presents his sad plight as the direct result of having taken a wife:

Ne covient pas je vos racontecoument je me sui mis a hunte,quar bien aveiz oï le conteen queil meniereje pris ma fame darreniere,qui bele ne gente nen iere.Lors nasqui painnequi dura plus d'une semainne.

(Complainte , 1-8)

Tart sui meüz.A tart me sui aparceüzquant je sui en mes laz cheüzce premier an.

(Complainte , 46-9)

(I really shouldn't be telling you how I brought shame upon myself. You have all heard by now how I recently took a wife, a woman neither beautiful nor charming. From that came such pain that lasted more than a week . . . I came late to my senses, realizing that I had fallen into my own trap that first year.)

Adam de la Halle has a similar complaint to make at the start of his Jeu de la feuillée . Nowhere is the description of love as a force that surrounds you and inflects every other perception more clearly exposed. At the beginning of the play, Adam decides to return to his studies in Paris, leaving his young wife behind in Arras in the care of his father. His friends object that that just cannot be since he was lawfully married in the church, but Adam responds, using rape imagery that could as well have been written by a woman, that his age and powerlessness before the force of Love are to blame:

Amours me prist en itel pointou li amans .II. fois se points'il se veut contre li deffendre.Car pris fu ou premier boullon,tout droit en le varde saisonet en l'aspreche de jouvent,ou li cose a plus grant saveur,car nus n'i cache sen meilleurfors chou qui li vient a talent.

(Li jus Adam , 54-62)

(Love took hold of me just at the point when the lover is wounded twice if he wishes to defend himself against the attack. For I was taken right in the first budding of adolescence, in the most vulnerable moment of youth, when things still taste their sweetest. No one at that point is looking for

what's good for him - only what he most desires.)

The weather, the adornments of nature, the birdsong are all to blame as they colour his first glimpse of the woman he will marry. She seems 'rians, amoreuse et deugie' ('gay, loveable, and svelte') and he finds her irresistible. Only later does he realize that she is in fact 'crasse, mautaillie / triste et trenchant' (72-3: 'filthy, misshapen, ill-tempered, cantankerous'). When he decides to leave her, his friends accuse him of being 'muavles' ('fickle'), an insult usually directed to women in misogynist commentary. Adam defends himself nonetheless saying that he had better leave now: he has no further interest in her and had best clear out before she is pregnant (172-4). His friend Rikier can only explain this change of heart by blaming the woman: she was too free with her sexual favours. This argument again relies on a misogynistic market view of sexuality, in which women control the supply and thus the demand: 'Ele a fait envers vous / Trop grant marchié de ses denrees' (79-80: 'she put too many of her goods on the market'). Adam claims that husbands' and wives' sexual appetites are out of sync: while he is sick of her, she hasn't nearly had her fill. The only way he can think of to kill that desire is to put mustard on his dick (43-4: 'Pour li espanir meterai / De le moustarde seur men[vit]')!

Yet there are happy marriages, or better yet, happy unions, though we usually only hear of them at the point of their dissolution or death. Christine de Pizan's lamentations over the death of her husband remain moving (Cent Ballades); Nisus and Euryalus's perfect same-sex love in the Eneas is one of the most praised unions in medieval literature; and Tristan and Iseut remain the prototypes of a perfect, if doomed, love. The medieval period may have denigrated and ridiculed sexual pleasure but it celebrated true love as almost no other. Marriage does not spring to mind as the best place to look for it - chivalric knighthood and religious houses would surely offer more fertile grounds - but that does not mean that we can discount its importance. Many a romance heroine needs marriage in order to ensure the protection of her property and family and will often stoop to seduction, even offering her body to the hero (Blanchefleur and Laudine in Chrétien's Conte du graal and Yvain), in order to get it. Marriage is unquestionably an institution that uses you - defining and enclosing you within a set of expectations; but it is also an institution that can be used to get what you need. Wedding bells may not be what every girl dreams of in medieval literature, but the financial security, title, property and respectability it brings can open doors to new conquests. At once contested and inevitable, desired and anxiety provoking, it remains the rock upon (and against) which medieval society defined itself - the rhetorical topos you can most count on to fuel fiction by inciting conflict, settling wars, enabling and celebrating transgression. **17**

About the Author

William Burgwinkle is Reader in Medieval French and Occitan at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He published Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature with Cambridge University Press in 2004 and is currently finishing a co-authored book (with Cary Howie) on hagiography and pornography.

Notes

1 C. McCarthy (ed.), Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: a Sourcebook (London and New York, Routledge, 2004), provides a good selection of sources and also illustrates their failure to reach unanimous or monologic conclusions. The works of J. A. Brundage are essential, especially Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago University Press, 1987).

2 Petit Robert , ed. A. Rey (Paris, Société du Nouveau Littré, 1969), p. 1643.

3 Many penitentials and homilies actually counsel priests not to mention sodomy as a category of sin, for fear it might alert people to forbidden pleasure they might otherwise have missed. A study of

insults from the period would indicate, however, that people were indeed classified by behaviour into sexual compartments, though such compartments were not necessarily exclusive or permanent.

4 Gratian, Decretum, DD. 1-20: The Treatise on Laws , trans. A. Thompson, J. Gordley, intro. K. Christensen (Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1993). See also J. A. Brundage, Sex, Law, and Marriage in the Middle Ages (Aldershot, Variorum, 1993).

5 See A. Badiou, Saint Paul: la fondation de l'universalisme (Paris, PUF, 1997).

6 St Augustine, The City of God , intro. E. Gilson (New York, Image Books, 1958), book xiv, chapters 18-25.

7 For further discussion, and different perspectives, see R. H. Bloch, Medieval Misogyny (Chicago University Press, 1991) and D. Elliot, Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock (Princeton University Press, 1993).

8 See R. M. Karras, Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others (New York and London, Routledge, 2005), p. 29.

9 See Karras, Sexuality , p. 48; also J. Wogan-Browne, Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150-1300: Virginity and its Authorizations (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 47-8. Saints Paula and Elizabeth both provide examples of mothers moving beyond their families into a second state of virginity, incompatible with children and marriage.

10 See J. A. Brundage, 'Let me Count the Ways: Canonists and Theologians Contemplate Coital Positions', Journal of Medieval History , 10 (1984), 81-93; and 'Sex and Canon Law', in V. L. Bullough and J. A. Brundage (eds.), Handbook of Medieval Sexuality (New York, Garland, 2000), pp. 33-50.

11 Elliot, Spiritual Marriage .

12 See S. Kinoshita, Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

13 'Error' is another possible translation for the medieval French word pechie , though it is usually translated as 'sin', i.e. transgression against divine law. See Lacroix and Walter's note 25 in Béroul's Tristan , p. 87.

14 See, for further discussion, W. Burgwinkle, Sodomy, Masculinity and Law in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and the anthology of essays edited by C. Freccero and L. O. Fradenburg, Premodern Sexualities (New York and London, Routledge, 1996).

15 The famous diatribe of Genius in Jean de Meun's continuation of the romance has its roots in the eleventh-century clerical writings of Alan of Lille. See S. Gaunt, 'Bel Acueil and the Improper Allegory of the Roman de la Rose ', New Medieval Literatures , 2 (1998), 65-93.

16 Translation based on R. L. A. Clark's in F. Canadé Sautman and P. Sheingorn (eds.), Same Sex Love and Desire among Women in the Middle Ages (New York, St Martin's Press, 2001), p. 166.

17 For a more historical approach to this topic, see Karras, Sexuality ; J. Baldwin, The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200 (Chicago University Press, 1994); J. Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (Chicago University Press, 1980); J. Murray and K. Eisenbichler (eds.), Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West (Toronto

University Press, 1996).