

# Defending the Castle: Didactic Literature and the Containment of Female Sexuality

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For a consideration of the strategies of female containment inherent in the didactic literature of thirteenth-century France I will be focusing on three texts in particular: the mid-thirteenth-century didactic poem *Le Chastoïement des Dames* by Robert de Blois, *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme* by Philippe de Novarre, written about 1260, and Raymond Llull's *Doctrine d'Enfant*, written between 1278 and 1283.<sup>1</sup> All of these works present a codification of female duty and comportment which acts to constrain women's behaviour in both social and moral terms. The ultimate aim of this codification may, however, be read as the imposition of a specifically sexual constraint, linking with the exigencies of a contemporary cultural mentality which essentially equated female purity with chastity.<sup>2</sup>

The title of this paper, 'Defending the Castle', refers to the prevalent twelfth and thirteenth-century concept of the human body as a castle, here specifically the female body, and the image is taken from *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme* by Philippe de Novarre. Philippe advises in regard to women:

Car se on les garde bien, qu'eles ne soient requises de folie ou trovées en fol lieu ou en aise de mesfere, legiere chose est a savoir que por bones pueent passer; car chastiaus qui n'est assailliz ne traiz ne affamez, ne sera ja pris par raison. (p.49)

[For if they are well-supervised and may not therefore be accused of frivolity, or be found in foolish places, or in committing thoughtless misdeeds, it is easy to see that they may pass for good women, for a castle which is neither attacked nor besieged cannot conceivably be taken.]

The castle may not be placed in a position of jeopardy, or be allowed to attempt its own defence: woman is an object to be enclosed and guarded, a being apparently having no reliable volition or moral

constraint of her own. The reason Philippe gives for the necessity of this protection is one of female lack: 'jones fames ... sont en mout grand peril en lor jovant, car ele n'ont mie si estable sens ne si bon porposement comme ont li home' (pp.48-49) ['young women are at very grave risk in their youth, for they are in no way as sensible or as level-headed as are men']. Raymond Llull, in the *Doctrine d'Enfant*, also uses the argument of the intrinsic inferiority of woman to place her husband in authority over her, and in addition counsels: 'ordenne ta fenme mout con tu porras si que ele te soit aidant a tenir ton ordre; car mauvese fenme et desordence fet home desvoier de l'ordre de mariage' (p.77) ['keep your wife in order as well as you can so that she may be helpful to you in managing your affairs, for a bad and disobedient wife turns a man against marriage']. Here Llull places the responsibility for a control and 'ordering' of woman directly on to her husband, to the latter's own benefit.

During the thirteenth century the general inferiority of women was a prevalent and popular topos, both in religious teachings and in secular literature.<sup>3</sup> It acted both to affirm and to justify the subordination of women to male authority, just as it appears to function in this instance in Raymond Llull's *Doctrine d'Enfant* and in Philippe de Novarre's *Quatre Ages de l'Homme*.<sup>4</sup> Given that woman by definition was held to be subordinate to man, both in spiritual and physical essence and in practical, social terms, it is perhaps not remarkable that the majority of secular didactic treatises of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries would seem to be directed towards a male readership and instruction, rather than to a female one, this apparently even being the case when the subject under discussion is one of female comportment. The *Doctrine d'Enfant* addresses the moral education of both males and females, yet is directed by its author to 'son amable fiuz' ['his dear son'].<sup>5</sup> This 'son' is most probably a simple fiction, yet if this is the case, the intended readership of the treatise is opened up, not to a general audience, but to an audience of 'sons': to an intrinsically male readership.<sup>6</sup> In the same way, the earlier *De Amore* of Andreas Capellanus is implicitly directed to a male audience; addressed as it is to the (presumed) fictitious 'Walter', who then functions as a composite of Andreas's readers.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that other didactic works of a similar period are not apparently addressed specifically to men, their structure, content, and above all, tone, do imply a readership or audience envisaged as primarily male.

Philippe de Novarre's treatise, *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme*, divides

man's life into the four basic categories of 'Anfance', 'Jovent', 'Moien aage', and 'Viellesece' ['Childhood', 'Youth', 'Middle-Age', 'Old Age'], and although Philippe does discuss women as an integral part of each category, this is only after he has dealt with the masculine side of life, and in much less detail.<sup>8</sup> The division between the two areas of male and female counsel is also significantly marked by the evident subjectivity of, and authorial identification with, the first; the second being treated with a contrasting objectivity and distance. Philippe begins his section on 'moien aage' (in men) with the words: 'En moien aage doit en estre quenoissanz et amesurez et resonables et soutis ...' (p.52) ['In middle-age one should be knowledgeable and moderate and reasonable and wise'], and he continues to use the pronoun *en* ('one') throughout, identifying both self and reader with the masculine subject of the discourse. Contrast the much shorter, following section on women: 'Les fames de moien aage doivent estre abstinanz, et savoir garder lor enfanz ...' (p.88) ['Middle-aged women should be abstinent and should know how to care for their children']. In this case Philippe commences by using the third person and maintains this distance, as though relaying his female counsel through an intermediary, one which is implied as distinctly masculine.

The sole moral or didactic treatise which does initially appear to be directly addressed to a female, as well as to a male, audience is the mid-thirteenth-century *Chastoiement des Dames* by Robert de Blois, which opens:

Cest livre petit priseront  
 Dames, s'amandees n'an sont.  
 Tuit et totes communement  
 Un beaul commun ensoignemant  
 Orrez, et se vos le volez  
 Retenir, toz jours en sarez  
 A Deu et au siegle plus chier;  
 Tant fait cil beaux sanz a prasier. (ll. 1-8)

[This book will be held to be of little value by those ladies who are not willing to learn from it. All those men and women among you who hear it will receive good instruction, and if you care to retain it you will for ever be of more value to God and to the world, for this good counsel is much to be

appreciated.]

The words of the poet are thus apparently directed immediately to the ears of women themselves, with no further masculine intermediation. By its inherent content, however, the poem is ultimately defined as a masculine product. Produced by a male author, the poem is designed to project and impose the requirements of male society by codifying and controlling the behaviour of its female component. Yet in addition to this expected and envisaged aim, the content and structure of the poem also acts to reflect and indulge male desire in regard to female sexuality. As pointed out by Roberta Krueger, Robert de Blois 'ultimately sets "woman" into discourse in a way that sexualizes her and makes her an object of male appropriation and pleasure. The female body becomes the figure around which the moralist "essentializes" the category of woman'.<sup>9</sup> As the poet himself objectifies and sexualizes the woman of the text, so too does she become an object for the gaze of a male readership. An element of suppression and containment is inherent in the stated aim and form of the poem as 'contenir' may be read as implying containment and restraint, as well as comportment:

Por ce voil je cortoisement  
Ensoigner les dames comant  
Eles se doivent contenir. (ll. 9-11)

[Because of this (referring to the improving nature of his counsel) I courteously wish to teach ladies how they should behave in a seemly manner.]

This aim of female restraint is, however, subverted by the poem's actual content and focus, as the poet dwells and lingers upon the very bodily parts whose sight he at first forbids:

De ce se fait dame blasmer  
Qui seut sa blanche char mostrer  
A ces de cui n'est pas privee.  
Aucune laisse desfermee  
Sa poitrine, por ce c'on voie  
Confaitement sa char blancheie;

Une autre laisse tot de gré  
 Sa char aparoir au costé;  
 Une ses jambes trop descuevre. (ll. 189-96)<sup>10</sup>

[Any lady is to be criticized who shows her white skin to those who do not have the right to see it. One leaves her bodice unfastened, so her white skin may be seen; another purposely allows her body to be seen down the side; another reveals her legs too much.]

The poem's essential contradiction is seen to reflect (and here I quote Krueger again) 'the inherent paradox of the chaste aristocratic woman', who must 'repress, contain, cover the body and bodily functions, but must also be attractive, engaging, solicitous, socially graced'.<sup>11</sup> The paradoxical message being signalled to the female readers of the treatise is certainly one of its ever-present ambiguities, yet also ambiguous is the perception and effect of this message on the part of author and male audience. The illicit pleasuring in an enumeration of female attractions:

Blanche gorge, blanc col, blanc vis  
 Blanche mains ... (ll. 203-04)

[White throat, white neck, white face, white hands ... ]

while simultaneously marking certain areas of the body as being 'off limits' is only one aspect of this sexualization of women and their bodies. The duality and ambiguity of the poem lies in the fact that it first sets up a code or frame into which ideal female behaviour may be set, then consistently destabilizes this code by focusing on those elements of behaviour which lie inevitably and incontrovertibly outside the bounds of the code. These elusive elements are in essence perceived and represented as sexual, from the glimpse of unclothed flesh (ll. 192-97) to the roving eyes which indicate a fickle heart (ll. 411-14). Whilst these may be read as objectification or voyeurism, the consistent sexualization of women and the representation of this as illicit and subversive also indicates the implicit reverse to its enjoyment: an essential fear of its uncontainability. The awareness of

a female sexuality existing outwith the codified frame imposed upon female behaviour, and even more significantly *acting* outside this frame, inevitably acts to destabilize and undermine a belief in the possibility of its ultimate confinement and control. This is forcefully indicated at the end of *Le Chastoiement des Dames*, when in place of further homilies on an ideal of modest and chaste comportment, Robert paradoxically asserts that such comportment on the part of a married woman (to whom the poem is theoretically addressed) will ensure the unwavering devotion of a lover:<sup>12</sup>

Et se vos baez a s'amor  
 Quant fait li avrez lon dongier,  
 Iert il toz liez de l'outroier.  
 S'il vos aime tant con il dist,  
 Ne laira por nul escondit  
 Qu'il ne reveigne a sa proiere. (ll. 747-52)<sup>13</sup>

[And if you yearn for his love when you have kept him at bay for a long time, he will be most happy to grant it. If he loves you as much as he says, he will allow no refusal to prevent him from returning to ask again.]

Again, Robert de Blois may be seen to undermine and subvert the edifice of a codified conduct of morality which he himself has erected. Following the poem's constant juxtaposition of ideal and undesirable conduct, the repression and expression of sexuality, its closure with an accession to illicit love suggests the fundamental inevitability of this, together with the ultimately uncontainable nature of female sexuality.

The fear of women's unregulated desire is manifested in the controlling constructs of other didactic works, where the perception of women as essentially more lustful and immoderate than men echoes the same conception of female nature represented in contemporary religious teachings.<sup>14</sup> When defining the nature of girls, in his encyclopaedic work, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus states, 'among alle <sup>o</sup>at is iloued in a wenche chastite and clenness is iloued most' ['among all that is beloved in a girl, chastity and cleanliness are most beloved'], yet later adds that a girl is 'hasty in likinge of Venus' ['quick to take a liking to love'].<sup>15</sup> The qualities perceived as natural to females thus run contrary to those perceived as

most desirable. The control and suppression of sexuality may then be seen as an imposition of social desire, a construct ultimately designed to effect a reversal of perceived nature. This imposition of a social regulation running contrary to nature appears later in *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, when Bartholomaeus suggests that although it is natural for a man to love his wife dearly, 'for special loue he amendi° hire zif sche do° amys, and take° hede of here beringe and goynge, of spekinge and lokynge, and of here passinge and azencomynge and entringe' (p.308) ['because of his special love he amends her if she does wrong, and takes heed of her comportment, of the way she speaks and looks around, and of all her comings and goings']. The later enumeration of the qualities of a 'goode wif' emphasizes the essential nature of her personal containment, with sobriety, modesty and chastity marking all her public actions and interactions.<sup>16</sup> Bartholomaeus here seems to accept that a woman may have the ability for self-containment, yet her husband is still advised to watch over her every movement. The direction and control of wifely behaviour is further translated into explicitly physical terms by the image of the 'yuel wif' ['wicked wife'], who escapes her husband bodily, 'lepinge ouer londes and contrayes' ['leaping over the countryside'], physically as well as morally uncontained and uninhibited.<sup>17</sup>

If women were accepted to have a natural propensity for 'immoderate' and unchaste behaviour, and it was even regarded as fundamental to their nature, then the strategies of control expressed in didactic texts may certainly be seen as an imposition of the social upon the natural: a necessary and expedient device to bring women into conformity with the required social ideal. It is apparent that the ideal projected as appropriate for women was explicitly other than that presented to men, as evidenced by several thirteenth-century treatises. The content and focus of Robert de Blois's didactic poem *L'Enseignement des Princes* contrasts significantly with his *Chastoiment des Dames*;<sup>18</sup> the masculine and feminine ideals expressed in the *Doctrine d'Enfant* of Raymond Llull differ distinctly in emphasis; and *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme* by Philippe de Novarre constructs a contrasting image of male and female life at all stages. In the latter treatise, the essential gender differentiation begins in childhood, particularly in regard to education as well as to general 'socialization'. Although Philippe first of all emphasizes the necessity of obedience for all children, his advice then divides according to the sex of the child in question.<sup>19</sup> The sons of rich men, he counsels,

should be taught by the most able 'maistre' available. In regard to the content of this education, Philippe states:

Li maistre as filz de riche home se doivent mout traveillier d'apanre a eus cortoisie et biau parler, et honorer la gent, et cortoisement recoiller, et eux faire apanre les estoires et les livres des autors ou il a mout de biaux diz, et de bons consaus, et de granz senz, qui lor porroient avoir grant mestier, se il les retiennent. (p.13)

[The tutors of rich men's sons should work hard to teach them courtly manners and the art of speaking well, and to honour others and to greet them courteously, and should let them learn the tales and works of those authors where there is much said of worth, both good and sensible advice, which may be of great use to them if they remember it.]

In contrast to this expansive education, the later description of that of girls stresses its essentially negative aspects, confining and limiting the female to a context of non-speech and inaction:

Tuit cil et toutes celes qui les norrissent en anfance, les doivent destroitement apanre et ansaignier qu'eles soient bien en commandement et en subjection, et que eles ne soient baudes ne abandonées de paroles ne d'euvres vileines; et que eles ne soient vilotieres ne erranz ne demendierres ne covoteuses ne larges. (p.14)

[All those men and women who care for them in childhood should take full care to make them learn that they should be perfectly obedient and deferential, and not bawdy or loose-talking or evil-doing, and that they should not roam or wander about or be acquisitive or covetous or overly generous.]

Rather than recommending a social and intellectual education, as in the case of boys, Philippe aims his advice at the provision of a specifically moral instruction, in which female expression in regard to both mind and body is circumscribed and curtailed. A basic fear of the



disruptive possibilities introduced by any concession to female freedom is consistently apparent in this section of the treatise. Women, it states, should be continually occupied, both mentally and physically, so they may have no time or opportunity to think for themselves. They should not, however, be taught to read or write: 'A fame ne doit on apanre letres ne escrire, se ce n'est especiaument por estre nonnain; car par lire et escrire de fame sont maint mal avenu' (pp.16-17) ['A woman should not be taught to read or write, unless this is with the particular aim of becoming a nun; for through the reading and writing of women many bad things have come to pass']. The essential fear in this instance is that literate women would be able to receive, and to send, secret love letters and would naturally submit to this temptation placed in their way by the devil.

The 'excesses' of women are, however, generally manifested through the female body itself, rather than displaced through the mechanics of reading or writing. Sight and the eroticized gaze form a prevalent topos, Andreas Capellanus in his *De Amore* claiming that love itself arises from 'the thought formed by the mind as a result of the thing seen'.<sup>20</sup> Later in the thirteenth century both Philippe de Novarre and Robert de Blois emphasize the importance and influence of the eyes and viewing in the protection and containment of women. Philippe advises that a woman should be physically enclosed, that she may neither see nor be seen, speak nor be spoken to.<sup>21</sup> A whole section of Robert's didactic poem is devoted to 'Ensoignemanz de son Regart' ['Advice on looking /on the use of the eyes'], and begins:

Sovant regarder ne davez  
Nul home, se vos ne l'amez  
Por droite amor; (ll. 145-47)

[You should look at no man often if you do not love him with  
a lawful love.]

Simply by looking upon a man, a woman may erroneously lead him to believe that she loves and desires him, for the roving gaze also signals the immodest and unrestrained woman:<sup>22</sup>

Ja de fomes, qui vain cuer ont,  
Li oil estauble ne seront,

Ainz torment plus menuemant  
 Qu'espavier qui l'aloë prant;  
 Ausi se fait par regarder  
 Mainte dame sovant blasmer. (ll. 163-68)<sup>23</sup>

[For women who are flighty at heart have roving eyes which turn more quickly than a hawk taking a lark. Therefore, for looking about her, many a lady may often be blamed.]

The eyes and look of the woman should be disciplined and contained for fear of the effect which her unbounded gaze may have, fundamentally acting as it does as the signal of her availability. In the *Chastoïement des Dames* as a whole, sight and the gaze function essentially to eroticize the female, as they do in perhaps a less immediately obvious way in other contemporary treatises. The directed or wandering female gaze points up her unconstrained and sexual nature, whilst the male gaze lingers upon and eroticizes the female face and body. In either case it is on the physicality of the woman herself that the focus rests. Her sight is implicitly sexual; allied as it is to her body and the potential availability and disposability of this in sexual terms. The gaze of the woman thus acts to eroticize herself and to place her as an erotically available object in the field of sexual discourse. The gaze of the male lover, projected on to the female body, also acts to objectify her and render her sexually accessible, even if initially only in his own mind. The lover in the *Chastoïement des Dames* laments:

Vostre gent cors, vostre cler vis  
 Qui tant me plaist a regarder  
 Ont mon cuer en mauvais point mis,  
 Car il ne s'an puet saouler.  
 Mes eaulz en davroie blasmer,  
 Car par aux est mes cuers traïs;  
 Tot le cors l'estuet comparer. (ll. 656-62)

[Your noble body, your bright face, which please me so much to look upon, have brought my heart to a pitiful state, for it can never be satisfied. I should blame my eyes, for it is

through them that my heart has been betrayed.]

He may only ultimately be consoled if the lady will grant him the gift of herself, which it is implied she may well do at the close of the poem.<sup>24</sup>

The second popular topos in regard to the representation of female excess and 'surplus' is that of speech. A characteristic typically attributed to women in religious and secular literature, excessive speech, again signals the outward projection of female 'nature'.<sup>25</sup> As with the unfettered gaze, unconstrained speech defies the regulation and codification of female behaviour. Robert de Blois counsels moderation in speech and also in singing, while Philippe de Novarre advises: 'mout afort a fame qu'ele parole po; car en trop parler dit on sovant folie' (p.18) ['a woman would be well advised to speak little, for in speaking too much one often says foolish things'].<sup>26</sup> The latter would appear to regard the content of female speech as necessarily foolish or wicked; an over-indulgence in talk most probably leading to an eventual loss of a woman's reputation, for through her own words she reveals herself as contradicting the required social, male-defined ideal. Women are perceived as threatened by speech, both their own, which acts to reveal their intrinsic inferiority or lack, and that of others, which may react against the implications of deviation from the ideal inherent in a woman's own words or deeds.<sup>27</sup> Philippe de Novarre states: 'Et se li faiz n'i est, si le dit on; et par le dit est creü, et vaut près d'autant comme li faiz. Mout sont fames avienies, quant eles sont blasmées, et plus quant eles mesfont' (p.50) ['And if the deed is not done, it will be said that it is, and by the saying of it it is believed, and that is worth almost as much as the deed itself. Women are much dishonoured when they are blamed, and even more so when they misbehave']. Much importance would seem to lie in the concepts of implication, belief and 'semblant' in regard to female behaviour; so much so that the perception of this behaviour is closely linked to its actuality. Both reflect upon the woman's reputation and act to establish and define her position as either positive or negative in the social network. The destructive influences of an actual deed and of its knowledge or belief are allied in this 'reputation': the social image and perception of a woman again being bound by the physical, her essential 'goodness' or 'badness' circumscribed by her body and its apparent circulation.

Again, it is the continuing reiteration of the topos of ideal versus

deviance which points up the perceived necessity for a strategy of female moral containment to be established and at least to appear to function in the social context. Given that thirteenth-century didactic literature, produced by and directed towards males, fundamentally confines and limits its appreciation and portrayal of women to the realm of the body, whether through the idealization of chastity or through a depiction of physical excess, its basic concern in relation to female conduct may be read as a bodily, physical concern. Its ultimate focus is then seen to be not purely a question of moral restraint, but through this, a physical, bodily restraint, the inherent aim being the repression and control, or at least attempted control, of female sexuality itself.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The editions of the texts referred to are as follows: *Robert de Blois: son oeuvre didactique et narrative*, ed. John Howard Fox, Thèse pour le Doctorat d'Université présentée à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Paris, Paris 1948; *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme: traité moral de Philippe de Novarre*, ed. Marcel de Fréville, Paris 1888; Raymond Llull, *Doctrina d'enfant*, ed. Armand Llinarès, Paris 1969. Llull's treatise was originally written in Catalan; the edition used here is its fourteenth-century French translation.

<sup>2</sup> For information on the socially and ideologically important connection between the concepts of purity (in both physical and spiritual forms) and chastity, see in particular Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, London 1991.

<sup>3</sup> See in particular Book 3 of the *De Amore* by Andreas Capellanus, dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, which lists the undesirable qualities of women: André le Chapelain, *Traité de l'amour courtoise*, ed. Claude Buridant, Paris 1974. These 'feminine' qualities also appear markedly in Jean de Meun's continuation of *Le Roman de la Rose*, c.1269-78.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe de Novarre states: 'Après orrez le pour quoy, car Nostre Sires comenda que fame fust touz jours en comendement et en subjecion: en enfance doit ele obeïr a çaus qui la norissent, et quant ele est mariée, outréamant doit obeïr a son mari, comme a son seignor ' (p.14) ['Now hear the reason, for our Lord commanded that woman be always under command and in subjection: in childhood she should obey those who care for her, and when she is married, likewise she should obey her husband, as though he were her lord'].

<sup>5</sup> See Raymond Llull's 'Prologue', p.35.

<sup>6</sup> See Llull, Introduction, p.11, foot-note 17.

<sup>7</sup> P.G. Walsh states: 'The pretext for the composition of the treatise is to offer information and advice to a young friend called Walter, who then plays Lucilius to Andreas's Seneca. But the form of the *De Amore*, in particular the sequence of stylised dialogues in Book 1, indicates that our author's motives in composing the work are not confined to the instruction of one individual. When the same man is instructed on how to play the commoner, the nobleman and the higher nobleman in pleading his suit, 'Walter' emerges as a composite; the treatise gives advice to any potential lover who is not a serf, *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, ed. and trans. P.G. Walsh, London 1982, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Philippe de Novarre divides his treatise into four sections on the successive stages of life. These are subsequently divided into a series of numbered points, each dealing with a particular issue. The male/female split of each section is as follows: 'Anfance': points 1-20 on males, 21-32 on females; 'Jovent': 33-85 on males, 86-94 on females; 'Moien aage': 95-160 on males, 161-65 on females; 'Vielliesce': 166-81 on males, 183-87 on females. It will be noted that the emphasis on an appropriate mode of life for females is concentrated in the earlier years, when the regulation of female sexual conduct is of the most importance as regards chastity and child-bearing.

<sup>9</sup> Roberta L. Krueger, 'Constructing Sexual Identities in the High Middle Ages: the Didactic Poetry of Robert de Blois', *Paragraph* 13, 1990, 105-31 (110).

<sup>10</sup> It is to be noted that here the object of the poet's discourse is 'dames' ['ladies'], rather than 'femmes' ['women']. For a distinction between the two in contemporary lyric poetry, see Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, Chapter 3: 'Gender and Status', Cambridge 1990, pp.84-131. She sees male-authored poetry as containing three genders: 'a "masculine" subject of desire; a "feminine" gender whose readiness to sate men's desire incurs their contempt; and a third, "mixed" gender which assimilates the *domna* to "masculine" norms, while continuing to represent her desirability as female' (p.95). This distinction corresponds to that employed by Robert de Blois in the *Chastoieient*.

<sup>11</sup> Krueger, p.123.

<sup>12</sup> It is evident from 'Li Response contre l'Amant' ['Reply to the Lover'] suggested by Robert that the lady in question is married, and this forms her original argument for the refutation of her lover: 'Celui aim je que amer doi, / A cui j'ai promise ma foi, / M'amor, mon cors et mon service, / Par loiauté de Sainte Yglise' [I love him who I should love, he to whom I promised my faith, my love, my body and my service in loyalty to the Holy Church], *Chastoieient* (ll. 698-701).

<sup>13</sup> Roberta Krueger states: 'The effect of "Et se vos baez a s'amor" is to transform the entire poem from a proper manual on how to be chaste to a

cynical guide on how to maintain respectability while playing hard to get' (p.125). It may, however, be argued that the poem is more ambiguous and nuanced than either this interpretation or the conclusion of Robert de Blois himself would lead one to suppose.

<sup>14</sup> For the theological conception of feminine nature during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Jacques Dalarun, 'Regards des Clercs', in *Histoire des Femmes*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, 5 vols, Paris 1991, II, pp.31-54.

<sup>15</sup> *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of 'Bartholomaeus Anglicus: De Proprietatibus Rerum'*, 3 vols, Oxford 1975, I, pp.301, 302. R. James Long dates the composition of *De Proprietatibus Rerum* to between 1230 and 1250: *Bartholomaeus Anglicus on the Properties of Soul and Body*, Toronto 1979, p.5. The Middle English translation used here 'was completed at Berkeley, Gloucestershire, in February 1398/9 by John Trevisa (c.1340-1402)', *On the Properties of Things*, p.xi.

<sup>16</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus, p.309.

<sup>17</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus, p.309.

<sup>18</sup> Both the *Chastoiement* and the *Enseignement* are included in the Fox edition of the *Robert de Blois* text given earlier. See Roberta Krueger's article for the inherent differences and varying emphases of these two poems.

<sup>19</sup> Philippe de Novarre counsels that children should take example from the Christ-child, 'et especiaument a sa glorieuse mere, qui fu toz jors dès anfance plainne de la très plus grant humilité et obediencie de douçor et de pitié qui onques fust en enfant, après Nostre Seignor Jhesu Crist' (p.4) ['and especially from his glorious mother, who from infancy was always full of the deepest humility and obedience, gentleness and compassion, more than ever was any other child save our Lord Jesus Christ'].

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Capellanus continues: 'When a man sees a girl ripe for love and fashioned to his liking, he at once begins to desire her inwardly, and whenever subsequently he thinks about her, he burns with love for her more each time, until he reaches the stage of more detailed reflection', *Andreas Capellanus* (p.35).

<sup>21</sup> Fame ne doit estre vilotièr ne erranz; car, quant ele l'est, ele voit et est veüe, et plus aisièment peut on parler a lei, et ele as genz' ['A woman should not roam or wander, for when she does she sees and is seen, people may more easily speak to her and she to people'], Philippe de Novarre (p.15).

<sup>22</sup> Robert de Blois, ll. 151-59. The persistence of this attitude is revealed by its appearance in the fifteenth-century lyric poem 'La Belle Dame sans Mercy' by Alain Chartier. The lady here refutes the lover's suggestion that

she has implicitly promised him her love through her regard: 'Il a grant fain de vivre en deuil / Et fait de son cuer lasche garde, / Qui contre un tout seul regard d'ueil / Sa paix et sa joye ne garde. / Se moy ou aultre vous regarde, / Les yeulx sont faiz pour regarder' (ll. 233-38) ['He has a great desire to live in sorrow, and keeps a careless guard on his heart, who against a single glance does not guard his peace and his joy. If I or another should look at you, eyes are made for looking'], *The Poetical Works of Alain Chartier*, ed. J.C. Laidlaw, Cambridge 1974.

<sup>23</sup> By his initial use of the term 'femmes' the poet here suggests that the immodest behaviour which accompanies a 'vain cuer' is an intrinsic part of 'womanly' nature. The hawking image (ll. 165-66) also suggests the sexually predatory nature of the woman's gaze. Although she is inherently superior to the 'femme', the reputation of the 'dame' may become tainted by analogy with the former through their shared femininity. See also my note 10.

<sup>24</sup> See *Chastoïement*, ll. 642-46 and ll. 676-83. The *Chastoïement* may thus be seen to conclude with the topos common to many courtly love poems: the lover pining for love may only be saved by the lady's granting of his desires.

<sup>25</sup> For religious and popular stereotypes of women see *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires, Oxford 1992.

<sup>26</sup> For Robert's counsel see the sections of the *Chastoïement* on 'De Vantance' (p.138); 'Chastoïement de Tancier' (pp.140-41); and 'De Chanter par Raison' (pp.146-47).

<sup>27</sup> 'Fame ne doit estre abandonée ne baude de mauveise parole ne de vilainne oeuvre; car se ele parole vilainnement, on li respont tel chose, soit voirs ou mançoige, dont ele sera par aventure correcie et avilenie toute sa vie' ['A woman should not be loose-talking, or brazen with words, or badly behaved, for if she speaks bawdily, either rightly or wrongly she will incur such a response that she may well be angered and demeaned by it all her life'], Philippe de Novarre (p.14).