



Of the hundred and two fables by Marie de France, half a dozen or so could be described as fabliaux if one were to justify that characterization by a consideration of the themes involved, the characters portrayed, the situations described and the spirit in which they seem to be told. As a consequence of these similarities, many critics refer to them in fact as «fabliaux», «fabliaux-like fables» or «fabliaux-like stories». Mary Lou Martin, for example, refers to fable (44) as a «fabliau-like story of a husband who finds his wife with another man...» [1]. In the same vein, Léopold Hervieux who has studied two fables from mss. b.n. 2173 (n° 61 and 103), which have not been incorporated in Marie's corpus of fables for reasons discussed subsequently, refers to these texts as «plutôt un fabliau qu'une véritable fable...» [2]. M. Ellwood Smith, also, in discussing *de lupo and scarabeo*, qualifies it as «a fabliau sort» [3]. With the exceptions, perhaps, of the compiler who inserted the two fabliaux (*La Couille Noire* and *Celui qui bota*

la Pierre) in Marie's fables [4], Nykrog himself who incorporated Marie's «fable[s] de folie» in his list of fabliaux [5], or Smith who qualifies the same fables as «clear little fabliaux...» [6], nobody really believes that these fables constitute fabliaux. But for the sake of argument, if one perceives them as «fabliaux» or «fabliaux-like» stories, since one genre must be somewhat exclusive of another, we must therefore consider them as not being fables in the Aesopic sense of the term. Our aim, here, therefore, is not so much to attempt to prove that these fables are not fabliaux, but rather that the «folie» that Marie attributes to them does not prevent them from being restricted to the classification as fables only.

Although this description («fable[s] de folie» = «fabliaux» or «fabliaux-like stories») may seem valid at first glance, it appears far less so as one examines these texts more closely. Such a categorization of them even may prove to be forced and contrived in the light of the thrust of Marie's overall work and purpose. Marie de France set out to write fables. As she stated: «Esopë apel'um cest livre» [7]. She says nothing about writing fabliaux. We would suggest that she knew very well the difference between the two, whether consciously or instinctively [8].

As everybody knows, the lines of demarcation separating medieval genres are extremely tenuous. This is especially so in genres which are contiguous to the Fabliau: the Lai, the Conte Moral, the Nouvelle Courtoise, the Exemplum, the Dit, the Débat. Last but not least one usually includes the Fable in this list [9]. The ambiguity that blurs

distinctions between these genres will be at the greatest where the fabliaux are concerned [10]. Not only do fables and fabliaux share many themes and motifs, they also take an identical form in most cases. Each uses the same metre (octosyllabic), the same rhyme pattern (aa, bb, cc, etc.). They share similar closures (epimythia), an analogous equilibrium between the components of the rhetoric of the time (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*), and so forth. It is little wonder then that Per Nykrog, in his monograph on *Les Fabliaux*, felt obliged to add six of Marie's fables to an already long list of texts commonly accepted as fabliaux. Nykrog described them as «fabliaux avant la lettre». He justifies this classification by saying that «la seule différence entre ces fables de Marie de France et les fabliaux correspondants est que la fable est beaucoup moins longue qu'un fabliau, et que par conséquent le récit en est plus sommaire et dépourvu de détails» [11].

Taken by themselves, the length of the fables [12] described as fabliaux by Nykrog, and the characteristics that derive from that length cannot, however, constitute the only determining difference between them and their analogues in the Fabliau genre. This is especially true since Marie emphatically stresses in her prologue an intent which is almost never found in the fabliaux:

Mes n'i ad fable de folie

U il n'en ait philosophie.

(23-24)

The «philosophie» to which she refers is, of course, the consistent message revealed by a careful reading of her fables [13]. One might add that the structure, tone and level of sophistication of Marie's fables cannot be easily confused with a genre characterized as «ni moral ni édifiant, provoquant au moins une fois le sourire, non courtois, pas long, consacré à très peu d'épisodes» [14].

saluo como podria tener amores con ella / e como quiera que el huuiesse
muchas vezes querido reþtar si su locura huuiera lugar / nunca la vir-
tud dela señoza permitio ser boydo. acalpecio vn dia que el fue a caça / e
truto tres pollos de papagayos. los quales crio muy domesticamente.
E con mucha diligencia demostro les a fablar en su lengua. Al vno de-
llos q dixiesse: yo vi al portero de nuestra casa echar se con mi señoza.
Al otro q dixiesse: o qua gran verguença es essa. Al tercero q dixiesse:
yo no quiero mas hablar. E esto hizo el por vengar se de su señoza:
pues no hauiá querido consentir su maldao. e assi por muchos dias los
papagayos cantauan sus cantos: e dezian de continuo lo que les hauiá
sido mostrado: e por ser la lengua en que lo dezian estraña ninguno los
podia entender. llegaron vn dia a casa de aquel hombre de pro dos indi-
anos peregrinos que yuan en roma. los quales por caridad conuido a
yantar / e por fazer les mayor fiesta despues del comer: mando traer a
la meza los papagayos / los quales como: cantassen muy bien bolgaua



le el dueño de casa con ellos: no entendiendo lo que dezian. los romeros
estaua como maravillados e tristes: huuido vergüença de cosa tan fea.
laqual por ser la señoza de tan linda criança ellos no podían en manera al-
guna creber. e preguntaro al seño de la casa si el entedia lo q las aves de-
zia: el respuso q no: saluo q el catar dellas le parecia muy dulce: mas si

To return to the issue of the categorization of these «fable[s] de folie», one might begin by inquiring about their provenance. Although these tales have found their way into fable collections since Aesop's time, since they are anecdotal in nature, they have escaped or defied any scholarly attempt at classification up to now. Marie's collection includes five of these tales: *La Femme qui fit pendre son mari* (25), *La Femme et son* *amant* (44), *Encore la femme et son* *amant* (45), *Le Paysan et son épouse querelleuse* (94) and *La Méchante Femme et son mari* (95) [15]. These texts differ from those generally described as «true Aesopic fables» in that they portray human characters exclusively. This device prevents the reader from subconsciously attributing symbolic values to actors, actions or settings (at the most obvious level at

least). On the other hand, while an Aesopic fable may offer the reader either a narrow reading of the text as realistic narrative, it may also open onto wide-ranging interpretations from which a moral or lesson can be derived. If one takes for example a nature tale such as *L'Autour et le rossignol* (66) [16], it is a very simple story involving two characters: a hawk and a nightingale. The hawk approaches the nearby nest of a nightingale and asks her to sing. «Sire», she replies, «I could not for you are too close to me, but if you would be so kind as to move to another tree, I would sing much more beautifully; all the other birds know that» [17]. This tale obviously acts out a truism based structurally upon primary oppositions. They include levels of caste, social rank and their attributes (power and fear) established within the same species which are sanctioned and accepted by the species as a whole: «Ceo seivent tuit cist autre oisel» [18]. Such allegorical representations may include a number of relationships. This tale deals with association and opposition. Others like it may involve actions of a symbolic nature (in this case «chanter» [19]. These suggestive and allegorical configurations invite the reader to transpose them from their animal representation and to interpret them in anthropomorphic terms. Needless to say such transpositions can be modulated *ad infinitum* according to the reader's own station or function in life. Thus, the opposed pair hawk / nightingale could be seen as representations in animal form of lord—vassal / serf, man / wife or man—wife / child relationships. Many other

permutations involving other binary oppositions such as master / slave—power / fear would be possible in this situation, as long as the legitimacy of the dominant / submissive relationship is recognized by society at large. The same observation holds true of the symbolic action expressed through the hawk's indirect order: «Si li cumanda a chanter» [20]. But here, the transposition from «chanter» to «parler», for example, would need to be qualified because of its wide semantic field. It is rather the second action expressed in the nightingale's answer that gives us the most revealing modulation: «Se vus pleseit a remuër / E sur un autre fust voler / Jeo chantereie mut plus bel» [21]. The unreal condition «Se vus pleseit... Jeo chantereie...», directly engendered and dictated by the same power / fear relation of opposites we have discussed, enables the reader to translate «chanter» / «chantereie» into human experience as «to say or to speak a truth». In this case it is a truth which might incur the wrath or the spite of the powerful. In other words in abstract terms: «Fear drives hypocrisy», and everybody knows that to be so. Such is the moral of Marie's tale. The epimythium that closes it simply reinforces this lesson and satisfies those readers who want to read the fable at a literal level:

Autresi vet de mainte gent:

Ne püent pas seürement,

La u il dutent, bien parler,

Si cum la u n'estut duter.

(13-16)

According to the schema of Ellwood Smith's classification of fables, this kind of tale belongs to the group that is comprized of «Fables in which the actors, some or all, (with the setting), and the action are both symbolic» [22]. According to Smith the rest of Marie's fables belong to the second group: «[fables] in which only the actors (with the setting) are symbolic, while the action is that of typical human beings» [23]. To illustrate this second group, Smith cites fable (67), *Le Corbeau qui trouve des plumes de paon* [24], in which a crow momentarily appropriates the peacock's handsomeness (Marie translates handsomeness for the reader in the epimythium: «Wealth and honors») [25]. Since he has become a hybrid, the crow is rejected in the end by crows and peacocks alike. In this case once again, as in category 1, the moral can be derived from polarities of association and opposition (inferior / superior, crow = / peacock, natural / artificial, acceptance / rejection, etc.) [26]. These sets could be cast in proverbial [27] forms such as: «What is given by Nature cannot be altered»; «The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence», or «You can't tell a book by its cover», for example [28]. As in the other fable we examined, confirmation of this reading is given in Marie's epimythium:

Ceo peot [hoem] veer de plusurs,

Ki aveir unt e granz honurs:

Uncore vodreient plus cuillir

Ceo qu'il ne poënt retenir;

Ceo qu'il coveitent n'unt il mie,

E le lur perdent par folie.

(19-24)

These two fables may serve as representative samples of the majority of Marie's collection. In both cases, according to Smith's classification, the tales suggest at least two morals or two truths. One of them is general in nature. This moral transcends or sublimates the reality or realities of the story on the level of simple narrative. It does so through a series of intellectual games that Marie invites the reader obliquely to play. These games lead the reader to a direct equivalency or an identification on a purely conceptual or poetic level. The second moral or truth, expressed in Marie's epimythium, addresses the reader directly. It is therefore more explanatory and specific in nature. This message relates directly to the story, albeit through association or analogy. Thus it remains on a more prosaic level, a material one. Viewed in that context, the fable constitutes a true «rhetorical device» [29], based on the types of association and transposition described above. On the one hand, there is a clear polar dichotomy between what «is» and what «is like» on the tropological level.

Identification / superposition represent what «is» through metaphor.

Analogy / association represent what «seems» (or «is like») through comparison [30]. On the other hand, this dichotomy is eclipsed on the structural level because of the intemporality exemplified by those same figures. The tyranny of the present tense is unavoidable in works that offer general truths (such statements can only be uttered in the present tense denoting generalization). This intemporality must unavoidably be set against a story or text told in the past tense. In the light of Smith's descriptive categorization, Marie's ysopets should therefore follow a structure that can be represented by the following diagram:

text <——«is»——> proverb (metaphor)

past (temporal) ——> present (intemporal)

text <——«is like»——> epimythium (comparison)

As we can see, the Aesopic fable requires some sort of transposition on three levels (poetical [31], material and temporal). We must therefore ask the question whether the same constants can be found in the «fable[s] de folie» which do not fit into Smith's categories or sub-categories [32]. More specifically, can we find them in the texts which he qualifies inappropriately, in our opinion, as «clear little fabliaux, short realistic tales of human life with a tang to them»? [33].

If, by «short realistic tales of human life...», Professor Smith suggests that the Fabliau is purely mimetic and therefore totally devoid of symbolic representation, his definition concurs with the view of most scholars. Most scholars agree that all attested fabliaux relate some kind of adventure [34]. That is to say that they recount a credible or fanciful event or series of events set in time and space and usually impacting real people (i.e., people with names and / or trades). However, as far as the definition of the genre is

concerned, it is not so much a sense of everyday reality which seems to matter, but rather the appearance of it [35]. Surely it is the degree of verisimilitude reflected in the tales by their accumulation of details directly linked to the social realities and daily routine which prevents the Fabliau from being elevated to a more abstract level and considered as a rhetorical device. One has only to read the six attested fabliaux depicting the adventures of adulterous, cantankerous or contrary wives, which contain themes shared with all of Marie's «fable[s] de folie» (except for *La Femme qui fit pendre son mari*), to be convinced of the validity of the restrictive limits we have just suggested and the appropriateness of their application to: *Dame Jouenne*, *Sire Hain et Dame Anieuse*, *De la Dame Escoillee*, *Do Pré Tondu*, *Li Sohaiz Desvez*, *Les Quatre Sohaiz Saint Martin* [36].

Again, although we need not concern ourselves with the on-going debate regarding the definition of the Fabliau [37], we must stress the fact that the afore-mentioned fabliaux are attested as being such by Fabliau criticism whether the definition of the genre was derived from a thematic or structural mode of evaluation and / or classification. They do appear in Bédier's and Nykrog's lists of fabliaux [38]. They certainly appear also in Jodogne's own list of fabliaux since they fit his categories of «paroles» and «actes». They comply as well with Noomen's own five criteria which he derived from the seventy or so «certified» fabliaux. Lastly, they certainly fit the Fabliau mould as described and defined by Schenck [39]. Her schema, however, although interesting, is far too broad since it would also be pertinent if it were to be applied to Marie's «fable[s] de folie». Perhaps a stylistic approach, rather than thematic or structural, would permit a more refined definition of the Fabliau [40].

To return to our main concern, the following non-exhaustive nomenclature which we have incorporated in an index at the end of this essay may serve as a preliminary summary of the sort of details referred to, and more importantly of their accumulation.

The realistic referents to which we have alluded give these tales such a pronounced air of verisimilitude that the only transpositions possible remain material and / or temporal. The occasions for such transpositions are rare [41]. That is to say that shifts may be made from the present to the past or from the past to the present. Such shifts depend on whether the moral or the practical lesson —when there is one— is placed at the beginning of the tale or at the end. As far as the Fabliau is concerned, only two types of transpositions are possible. They are either temporal and / or material. Metaphorical transpositions cannot be imputed because such kinds of association and / or opposition cannot be made in a situation where the most bizarre and unlikely kind of action is transcribed in realistic and believable setting.

Since, in our approach of these works, verisimilitude constitutes the key element required to differentiate the Fable from the Fabliau and since we perceive Marie de France's «fable[s] de folie» as true Aesopic fables, one would expect that they would conform to pattern and transcend the boundaries of reality [42].

To test this hypothesis, let us first consider *La Femme qui fit pendre son mari* [43]. As we stated, this is the only «fable de folie» whose main theme is not adultery or domination. A man dies and is buried, and his widow weeps by his grave. Near the grave a thief has been hanged. A knight, related to the victim, has cut the body down

and buried it—in itself an illegal action punishable by death. Fearing apprehension and at a loss as to what to do, the knight asks the widow for her love. After she grants his wish, he then asks her advice. She replies that they should dig up her husband and hang him on the tree that bore the thief. «It will never be noticed», she says, adding that «through the dead we should help the living who give us comfort» [44]. In this example, whereas parataxis taken alone cannot account for the lack of realistic referents throughout the text, the first statement (which is, of course, impossible in the real world where the switch of the bodies would surely be noticed), is followed by a general truth. This structure actually tips the story into allegory and consequently makes it impossible as a realistic representation [45]. For the proverb that Marie draws from her tale «the dead should help the living» [46] would have no justification if the thief had been deterred and rehanged which is the only rational solution open to the knight. To justify the «moral» Marie proposes, one must assume the substitution of the body of a stranger. In other words, an irrational act performed by rational beings allows Marie to elevate her tale to the metaphorical level. It is this elevation that makes *La Femme qui fit pendre son mari* a true Aesopic fable. It qualifies as such since we find in it the three transpositions we have seen elsewhere. This tale includes a poetical transposition (the proverb which Marie draws for us in the text), a material one (represented by the epimythium), and a temporal transposition (represented by the present of generalization).

If we examine the four remaining domination tales we see that the clearly suggested transposition from literal to metaphoric in the text is conveyed through a series of antitheses so extreme that the human protagonists lose all their human traits and take on all the attributes of wolves or sheep. And so Marie engages the reader in the same game that she plays in her animal tales, with the role reversal operating in reverse.

First, let us consider *La Femme et son amant* and *Encore la femme et son amant* [47]. In both cases the adulterous woman convinces her credulous husband that what he saw never occurred. The wife's «proofs» may seem completely irrational to the reader. Nevertheless, once the relation of association (reality as lie or fiction) is accepted by the husband because of the power / fear, master / slave dynamic that rules their relationship, he accepts them. And so the suspicious husband repents saying:

Chescun deit meuz creire et saber

Ceo que sa femme li dit pur veir

Que ceo que cis faus oilz veient,

Que par veüe le foleient

(29-32) (*La Femme...*)

OR

Mençunge fu quan que jeo vi.

(36) (*Encore...*)

The first text is already a proverb. But the statements taken from each of the two could be summed up: «It is better to believe one's wife than one's own eyes», a sheep-like pronouncement if there ever was one. The reader may transform that generalization to read something like: «One must not believe what one hears, but what one sees» (= «Seeing is believing») [48].

Marie extends the game even further in the epimythium of the first fable when she pushes the irrational to its limits by appearing to praise the wife's imagination and trickery:

Par cest essample nus devise

Que [mult] meuz vaut sen e quointise

E plus aïde a meinte gent

Que sis aveirs ne si parent.

(33-36) (*La Femme...*)

Putting aside Marie's disingenuous moral, one must not take her final assertion or material transposition literally. For, if one contrasts the moral to the text's redressed metaphor, the full impact of its irony comes clearly into focus. Directed at the sheep / slave / husbands of this world, if one discounts authorial coquetry, Marie mocks and shames such dominated husbands. She wants them to use «sen e quointise» [49] to reclaim their true place at the head of their families. This is Marie's real lesson.

In the last two tales «*La Méchante Femme et son mari*», and «*Le Paysan et son épouse querelleuse*» [50] irrationality is pushed to its limits once again. Two dominating and contrary wives in master / slave relationships with their respective vengeful husbands are disproportionately punished for their faults. After their ordeal, however, they still appear to have the upper hand. In the first tale the husband tells his laborers to look upstream for the body of his drowned wife for:

En sa mort ne feïst ele mie

Ceo que ne vot fere en sa vie.

(49-50)

In the second, the obstinate wife, whose tongue has been cut out and is unable to speak still manages to use sign language to express her false assertion:

Od ses deiz [li] prist a mustrer

Que forces l'aveient trenché

Et que falcs ne l'ot pas seié.

(26-28)

By depicting the totally irrational and unreal behavior of the wives, Marie insists on the gravity of the evil conduct that led to it. She consequently manages to convince the reader or the listener of the appropriateness and justice of an otherwise unlikely and disproportionate punishment. Marie's use of the irrational is expressed here through the image of the body found upstream and the obstinate sign with the hand. Its presence in the tale creates an opposition between the reader's ultimate conclusion of what might be just retribution in this case (i.e., drowning and torture) and what the reader thought of momentarily as being an unjust one. This apparent contradiction causes the reader or listener, in turn, to transpose the text metaphorically and elicit a proverb that would go something like: «Immoderation leads to self destruction», or «He who acts beyond reason must suffer the consequences», for example [52] In her epimythia, Marie reinforces her lesson. She directs it to include all contrary and dominating people whose lords are bound to avenge themselves to regain control as well as all stubborn fools who refuse to give in or to moderate their behavior so as to have the last word even when in the wrong [53]. Here again, the three transpositions (poetical, material and temporal), that we have described, make it possible to classify these two tales as true Aesopic fables.

Reviewing the five tales just described, we may conclude that in all cases a proverb or a metaphor can be derived directly from the combination of deep oppositions and / or some type of irrational element —whether it be an action (*La femme qui fit pendre...*), an action and a thought (*La femme...; Encore la femme...*), or a fact and a gesture (*La méchante femme...; Le paysan...*). Since it has already been established that the whole corpus of Marie's fables follows this same pattern, one may conclude that Marie's «fable[s] de folie» are not fabliaux at all, but, instead, true fables in the Aesopic sense of the term.

INDEX

NAMES OR TRADES

	Jouenne (vv. 1, 7, 20, 42, 46, 52, 56, 70), etc.
<i>Dame Jouenne:</i>	baillif (v. 52)
	viconte (v. 53)
	chanoingne (v. 147)
	Guillaume (v. 273)
<i>Sire Hain...:</i>	

Hain (vv. 7, 54, 67, 76, 83, 90), etc.

Anieuse (vv. 87, 172, 198, 207, 226), etc.

Symon (vv. 114, 130, 135, 142, 150, 171), etc.

Aupais (vv. 115, 278, 298, 302), etc.

Hain, Anieuse (v. 59)

Guillart (vv. 42, 44)

«Sire Hains savoit bon mestier / Quar il savoit bien rafetier /
Les coteles et les mantiaus» (vv. 7-9)

Hains, Symon, Aupais (v. 385)

Li Sohaiz Desvez:

«Ne sai pas de chascun le non» ([v. 5] the poet might not recall
the protagonists' names, but if he had, he would have surely
mentioned them)

Les quatre Sohais...:

Saint Martin (vv. 14, 50)

De la Dame Escolliee

le queu (vv. 320, 327, 343, 345, 355)

serjanz (v. 515)

Do Pré Tendu:

charbonier (v. 31)

chevalier (v. 32)

PLACES

Dame Jouenne:

Planches (v. 6)

Champagne (v. 232)

Cambray (v. 250)

Paris (v. 281)

Chastiau-Raoul (v. 140)

«L'en i fait sentiers et adreces

Et en nos blés et en nos pois

L'en nous honnist tout nos tremois» (vv. 8-10)

prés (v. 271)

Les quatre Sohaiz...:

Normandie (v. 1)

ostel (v. 33)

Douai (vv. 2, 15)

Aucerre, Soissons (v. 30)

«Fors do país...» (v. 10)

«[...] fors de la terre» (v. 11)

Li Sohaiz Desvez:

«Qu'ele ert a un marchié anel» (v. 73)

«[...] loge ne maison» (v. 76)

«Plaines estoeynt les maisons

Et les chambres et li solier» (vv. 84-85)

Laranie (v. 119)

terre, maison (v. 32)

forest (v. 59)

ostel (vv. 74, 111, 128), etc.

quisine (v. 343)

«[...] jardin lez un vivier» (v. 78)

De la Dame Escolliee:

ormel (v. 83)

perron (v. 84)

maison (v. 85)

chambre (vv. 162, 167)

mostier (v. 220)

chanpaigne (v. 278)

maistre cité (v. 305)

pont (v. 310)

ostel (v. 2)

mer (vv. 14, 19)

Flandres (v. 27)

prés (v. 80)

pont (v. 42)

marchié (v. 85)

meson (vv. 53, 171, 390)

«[...] en no leu» (v. 148)

cort (vv. 104, 168, 216), etc.

treille (v. 313)

TIME

«Quant onc espoussai ceste fole» (v. 89)

«C'est de la porée d'ersoir» (v. 125)

«Et Diex m'envoie mau jor demain» (v. 176)

un an (vv. 189, 278)

«[...] anuit toute nuit plut» (v. 65)

«Un petitelet...» (v. 91)

male nuit (v. 181)

«Le jor de demain au matin» (v. 277)

«[...] cele nuit en avant» (v. 303)

«Ce fu la voille d'un Noël» (v. 1)

«Lo premier an...» (v. 38)

«Qant li chiés de l'an fu passez» (v. 42)

«[...] antan» (v. 48)

«[...] un an» (v. 49)

«[...] premier anz...» (v. 58)

«I. jor...» (v. 79)

«[...] en un an» (v. 86)

«[...] jadis estoit» (v. 26)

«[...] un jor chacier» (v. 56)

«En la forest ont tote jor

chacié de si que après none» (vv. 59-60)

«A escons tornoit li solaus» (v. 66)

«[...] huismais traire» (v. 69)

«Li solaus s'en vait a escons» (v. 71)

«Cel jor plut et ne fist pas bel» (v. 82)

«[...] de ci au jor» (v. 134)

«[...] trois mois» (v. 397)

«[...] el demain velt movoir» (v. 404)

«La nuit s'en va, li jor apert» (v. 461)

«I. jor...» (v. 9)

«Fu bien .III. mois...» (v. 11)

«[...] I. joudi anuit» (v. 15)

Do pré Tondue:

De la Dame Escolliee:

Li Sohaiz Desvez:

«[...] .II. mois ...» (v. 58)

«[...] qant .I. po fu finez» (v. 185)

«[...] demain» (v. 190)

«La nuit...» (v. 206)

«Que l'andemain...» (v. 208)

«[...] un matin» (v. 10)

«Tost avez la jornee faite!» (v. 44)

«Huimain...» (v. 50)

Les quatre Sohais...:

FODDS-OBJETS

vecés (v. 7)

pommes (v. 14)

argent (v. 30)

linge et lange (v. 32)

«Et quatre paire d'orillers

Et cinc paire de cuevrechiés» (vv. 35-36)

pois (vv. 71, 114)

poree (vv. 75, 121)

quenouille (v. 103)

jate (v. 128)

pois ne feve (v. 119)

viande (v. 161)

braies (v. 165)

braies, braiel (v. 167)

«Se vueil poree, j'avrai pois» (v. 201)

char de bacon (v. 203)

Dame Jouenne:

tacon [de vielle vache] (vv. 204-05)

trois fers d'alesne (v. 211), etc.

«[...] deus galons / De vin...» (vv. 224-25)

marcheandise (v. 12)

siege (v. 22)

viande (v. 24)

vin (vv. 41, 42)

«Sor un coisin delez lo fu...» (26)

fumiere (v. 27)

«II més orent, char et poissons» (v. 29)

«Blanche nape, saine viande» (v. 31)

«Et lo vin a chascun morsel» (v. 34)

«Ainz n'i ot estal ne bojon» (v. 75)

«Changes, ne tables, ne repair

O l'an vandist ne gris ne vair,

Toile de lin, ne drax de laine,

Ne alun, ne bresil, ne graine» (vv. 77-80)

«Et a charretes et a charz» (v. 88), etc.

poissons (v. 145)

venoisons (v. 146)

viez vins, ferrez (v. 147)

oiseaus, patez (v. 148)

venoisson, voleille (v. 161)

«Mout par fu riche la quisine» (v. 186)

«Mout ont beüs vins et morez» (v. 187)

«[...] vin qui fu bons» (v. 193)

«[...] or et argent» (v. 207)

Li Sohaiz Desvez:

De la Dame Escolliee:

«[...] riche garnement» (v. 208)

«[...] furent fait li lit» (v. 214)

argent (v. 222)

«[...] grant avoir li offre

Dras et deniers, vaisseaus en coffre» (vv. 223-24)

palefroi (vv. 268, 292)

levriers (vv. 269, 285)

lievres (vv. 279, 283)

espee tranchant (v. 289)

palefroi, levriers (v. 297)

«[...] l'enel el doi» (v. 316)

noces (v. 319)

«Et sauxes mout assavorees» (v. 323)

savors (vv. 329, 333)

més (vv. 344, 348, 350)

vin (v. 351)

baston d'espine (v. 393), etc [...]

I. grant [charbon] (v. 5)

haranc (v. 11)

«Ploiiz, ne poison ne melant» (v. 12)

charbons (vv. 19, 33)

poisons (v. 34)

coteles, mantiaux (v. 9)

poree, pois (vv. 15, 17, 19)

char en pot (v. 22)

poisson (vv. 33, 66)

[poisson] d'eve douce (v. 37)

[poisson] de mer (v. 39)

espinoches (vv. 45, 74)

Do Pré Tendu:

poisson a areste (v. 48)

platel (v. 51)

mantel (v. 52)

«[...] raie ou chien de mer»? (v. 57)

Viande (v. 61)

Panier (v. 69)

coute (v. 93)

braies (vv. 167, 209, 225, 241, 326)

bercil (v. 204)

braioel (v. 211)

tijuel (v. 212)

toile (v. 215)

sanc (v. 221)

corbeille (vv. 314, 329, 389), etc.

herte (v. 20)

«Terres, richece, or et argent»! (v. 56)

«Tost demanderiez fusees

De chanve o de laine o de lin» (vv. 70-71)

chievre, jument (v. 83)

«[...] oil ne nariz,

Ne teste ne braz ne costé». (vv. 96-97)

Les quatre Sohais...:

The list goes on, but the graphism of the terms involved (mostly body parts), prevents us from quoting them.

INVOCATIONS-EVOCATIONS-OATHS

«[...] se Dieu me doint / Joie...» (vv. 20-21)

par Dieu (vv. 22, 48, 104, 118)

deable (v. 45)

Sainte Nativité (v. 57)

Diex (vv. 74, 112, 148, 176)

par deable (v. 81)

Dieu (vv. 82, 111, 123, 174, 186)

Dame Jouenne:

Saint Nicole (v. 90)

deables (vv. 109, 150)

si m'aïst Diex (v. 134)

au deable (vv. 186, 292)

«Més, foi que je doi Saint Jehan» (v. 190)

Saint Jehan de la Champagne (v. 232)

Ave Maria (v. 242)

«Par Nostre Dame de Cambrai» (v. 250)

Saint Martin (vv. 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 72)

Les quatre Sohais...:

«[...] de par Deu» (v. 94)

«[...] par ma foi» (v. 142)

Saint Cire (v. 35)

Nostre Dame (v. 56)

Sire Hain...:

Dieu merci! (v. 67)

Dieus (vv. 76, 245, 246, 251, 374)

Par mon chief! (v. 88)

Par Saint Apostre! (v. 108)

Saint Climent (v. 123)

Saint Leu (v. 147)

Saint Germain (v. 160)

Saint Esperis (v. 180)

Par Dieu! (vv. 182, 280)

[Saint] Martin (v. 228)

Saint Bertremieus (v. 283)

Saint Forsi (v. 286)

Bertran (v. 321)

Tristan (v. 322)

Saint Grigoire (v. 340)

Par foi! (v. 383)

Par Diu (v. 16)

Saint Jehan! (v. 85)

Saint Omer! (v. 87)

Do pré Tondue:

Dieus (vv. 108, 123, 125, 486)

«Par les sainz que on por Dieu quiert» (v. 367)

par Seint Denis (v. 378)

por Dieu merci (v. 387)

por Dé (vv. 388, 562)

«Et sor sainz le vos jurerai» (v. 543)

por Dieu (v. 499)

«Mais ele velt sor sainz jurer» (v. 594)

De la Dame Escolliee:

Li Sohaiz Desvez:

«Or l'ont li deiable endormi» (v. 60)

«Et si donrai lo denier Deu» (v. 128)

Deus (vv. 129, 181, 187)

por Deu (v. 176)

par ma foi (v. 180)

POET'S AUTHORITY

Dame Jouenne:

«Or nous verron qu'en avenra» (v. 268)

«Je vos ai conté ce flabel

Por ce qu'il fu d'un damoisele» (vv. 21-22)

Do Pré Tendu:

«Si vos recont d'un païsan» (v. 74)

«Sachiez que mout en a grant ire» (v. 90)

«Hues Piaucele, qui trova

Cest fabel, par reson prova» (vv. 1-2)

«Si le prueve par cest reclaim» (v. 5)

«Se vous me volez escouter

Je vous dirai bon helemot» (vv. 26-27)

«Que vous feroie plus lonc conte»? (v. 166)

«Que vous iroie je contant»? (v. 266)

Sire Hain...:

«[...] ce me samble» (v. 310)

«Ainz que je aie cest fabel

Finé, vous di je bien en foi» (vv. 402-03)

«Se voz fames... /

Deseur vous... /

Que ne soiez... /

Que vous... /

Mais fetes...» (vv. 404-08)

Les quatre Sohaiz...

«Un vilain ot en Normandie,

Don ne lairé que ne vos die

Un fablel...» (vv. 1-3)

«Seignor, qui les femes avez,

Et qui sor vos trop les levez,

Ques faites sor vos seignorir,

Vos ne faites que vos honir.

Oez une essample petite,

Qui por vos est issi escrite:

Bien i poez prenre essamplaire

Que vos ne devez mie faire

Du tot le bon a voz moilliers,

Que mains ne vos en tignent chiers.

Les foles devez chastoier,

Et si les faites ensaignier,

Que n'en doivent enorgueillir

Vers lor seignor ne seignorir» (vv. 1-14)

«Huimais descendrai en mon conte

De l'essample que doi conter» (vv. 18-19)

«Qu'en dirai, ce poez savoir» (v. 23)

«D'un autre essample oez la somme» (v. 400)

De la Dame Escolliee:

«D'une aventure que je sai

Que j'oï conter a Douai

Vos conterai briémant la some,

Qu'avint d'une fame et d'un home,

Ne sai pas de chascun lo non.

.....

Mais tant vos os bien afichier» (vv. 1-8)

«El dormi, vos di sanz mançonge» (v. 71)

«Tot maintenant, ce sachiez bien» (v. 162)

«Et ele si fist, ce me samble» (v. 205)

«Tant que lo sot Jehanz Bediaus,

.I. rimoières de fabliaus,

Et por ce qu'il li sanbla boens,

Si l'asembla avoc les suens :

Por ce que plus n'i fist alonge,

Fenist la dame ci son conte» (vv. 209-14)

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NOTAS

[1] M. L. Martin (trans.), *The Fables of Marie de France*, Summa Publications Inc., Birmingham AL, 1984, pág. 6.

[2] L. Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes Latins*, 5 volumes, Didot, Paris, 1983-1899. II, pág. 741.

[3] M. Ellwood Smith, «A Classification for Fables, Based on the Collection of Marie de France», *Modern Philology*, 15, 1917, págs. 93-105, pág. 103.

[4] See P. Nykrog, *Les fabliaux*, Droz, Genève, 1973, págs. 12-314.

[5] P. Nykrog, *loc. cit.*, pág. 16.

[6] M. Ellwood Smith, *op. cit.*, pág. 103.

[7] Ch. Brucker (ed., and trans.), *Les Fables de Marie de France*, Ktemata, 12, Louvain, Peeters 1991, págs. 368, epilogue, v. 13. All our subsequent quotes from Marie's fables shall be taken from this edition.

[8] We use the term «*consciously*» because the earliest attested fabliau *Le Plantez* was most probably written before 1200, and it is believed most likely that Marie wrote her fables during the reign of Henry II who died in 1189. Therefore she may have known of them or even listened to them. See respectively M. L. Martin, *op. cit.*, págs. 2-4; and P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, pág. 4. In fact, according to Jürgen Beyer, «[...] the fabliau had already taken shape around the middle of the 12th century», as shown in the passage he quotes from the second branch of the Roman de Renart: «Seigneurs, oï avez maint conte / Que maint conterre vous raconte / Comment Pris ravi Elaine, / Le mal qu'il en ot et la paine; / De Tristan dont la Chievre fist, / Qui assez bellement en dist, / Et fabliaus et chançon de geste», in «The Morality of the Amoral» *The Humor of the Fabliau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Eds. T. D. Cooke and B. L. Honeycutt, Columbia mo, University of Missouri Press, 1974, págs. 15-42, pág. 16. We use the term «*Instinctively*», because it is undoubtedly these very fables, portraying unmasked protagonists in awkward situations, which she terms as «fables de folie» in her *prologus* (v. 23).

[9] See D. Boutet, *Les Fabliaux*, PUF, Paris, 1985, pág. 14. See also P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, pág. 17.

[10] The term «fable» is used at least nine times to describe attested fabliaux (see W. Noomen, «Qu'est-ce qu'un fabliau?», *Atti del XIV Congresso Internazionale di Linguistica e Filologia Romanza*, Napoli, 12-20 Aprile 1974, Ed. A. Várvaro, Naples, G. Macchiaroli, 1981, págs. 421-432, pág. 431, note 28. P. Zumthor, in his *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1972, pág. 159, even goes so far as to say that most of these afore-mentioned genres defy any kind of definition.

[11] P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, pág. 251. Etymologically speaking, the similarity between «Fable» and «Fabliau» is of course also obvious: Fable > Fablels-Fablel, a purely French derivative (P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, pág. 3), which is also found in dialectal derivations as Fabliaus-Fablel (North Eastern France), or as Fableaus-Fablel (Paris region). This close linguistic parentage suggests that the literary genre was developed by the Aesopic fable (*op. cit.*, pág. 5).

[12] The Fabliau, as a genre, need not necessarily be long. Quite a few of them are of a length similar to Marie's fables. See, for example, *De la Crote* (60 vv.), *Le Pet au Villain* by Rutebeuf (76 vv.), *Des Chevaliers, des. Il. Clers, et les Villains* (49 vv.) and *De Brunain, la Vache au Prestre* by Jean Bodel (72 vv.), in R. Eichmann and J. Duval (ed. and trans.), *The French Fabliau: B.N. MS. 837*, 2 volumes, Garland Publishing Co., New York and London, II, 1985, respectively págs. 260, 242, 192, 122. See also *Le Vilain Asnier* (51 vv.), in R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen (ed.), *Fabliaux*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1965, pág. 4.

[13] Messages of wisdom whose protean nature is surely emphasised here (see Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, pág. 51, note 8).

[14] Considering Nykrog's own list of fabliaux (which differs somewhat from Bédier's), Omer Jodogne infers the following statement which sheds a new light on what a Fabliau is and is not. See O. Jodogne, «Le Fabliau», *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental*, XIII, Ed. L. Génicot, Turnhout, Brepols, 1975, págs. 5-29, pág. 13. See also P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, págs. 311-324; J. Bédier, *Les Fabliaux, études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du Moyen Age*, Champion, Paris, 1969, págs. 436-440.

[15] Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, respectively págs. 134, 194, 196, 344, 346.

[16] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, págs. 256.

[17] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, vv. 7-12 (my translation).

[18] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, v. 12. Marie even explains and clarifies this relation in *L'Aigle, L'autour et les colombes* (62): «Li egles est des oiseus reis \ Pur ceo qu'il est pruz e curteis, \ Li osturs est sis senescaus, \ Que n'esteit mie del tut leiaus» (*loc. cit.*, pág. 246, vv. 1-3).

[19] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, pág. 256, v. 6.

[20] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, v. 6.

[21] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, vv. 9-11.

[22] M. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, pág. 95.

[23] M. E. Smith *loc. cit.*, pág. 95.

[24] Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, págs. 256-257.

[25] Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, v. 20.

[26] See H. Gumbrecht who also notes the deep contrasts in Marie's protagonists, especially as far as their social status is concerned, in *Marie de France: Aesop*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 1973, págs. 37-38.

[27] See B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard up, 1965. Fables can often be reduced to «what we call a proverb and what the ancient Semitic writers called a likeness», in B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus. op. cit.* pág. xx. Proverbs are so central to the fables that they are often added after the epimythium. See J. Bastin (ed.), 2 volumes, *Recueil Général des Isopets*, Champion, Paris, 1929-30, I, págs. 113-81; II, págs. 385-420.

[28] In the same vein, Morawski gives the following proverbs: «Li abis ne fait pas le religieux (mais la conscience» [1053, pág. 39]). «Nature ne puet mentir» (1327, pág. 48). «Tel voit la chose en l'ostel son voisin qui ne la voudroit ou sien» (2376, pág. 86), in J. Morawski, *Proverbes Français Antérieurs au XVe Siècle*, Champion, Paris, 1925.

[29] See B. E. Perry, *op. cit.*, pág. xxii; M. L. Martin, *op. cit.*, pág. 23.

[30] See G. Genette, *Figures III*, Seuil, Paris, 1972, págs. 21-40.

[31] Here, cause and effect mesh so that the reader is, in fact, confronted with a metaphor whose tendency is metonymic in nature.

[32] Smith's third category concerns «those [fables] in which only the action is symbolic while the actors consist of typical human beings» (M. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, pág. 95). None of Marie's fables really fit this description and it clearly does not fit the category of the «fable[s] de folie» whose action is far from being symbolic.

[33] M. E. Smith, *loc. cit.*, pág. 103.

[34] O. Jodogne defines the Fabliau as «un conte en vers où, sur un ton trivial, sont narrées une ou plusieurs aventures plaisantes ou exemplaires, l'un et l'autre ou l'un ou l'autre» (*op. cit.*, pág. 23). For R. Dubuis, the Fabliau is «le récit, nécessairement en vers, d'une aventure jugée par l'auteur digne d'être racontée en raison de son caractère comique ou de sa valeur exemplaire», in R. Dubuis, *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au moyen âge*, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, Grenoble, 1973, pág. 189. For R. Guiette, it is «une oeuvre narrative courte, en vers, puisque telle était la mode, mais surtout conçue dans le style réaliste», in R. Guiette, «Fabliaux», *Forme et Seneffiance*, Droz, Genève, 1978, págs. 61-77, pág. 70. Siringo repeats what Guiette had to say in the same vein: «Le style [du fabliau] aussi est réaliste, en ce qu'il refuse "systématiquement toute référence symbolique"», in C. Siringo, «Pour une morphologie du fabliau», *Francofonía*, 9.17, fall 1989, págs. 21-66, pág. 23. For Bédier, beside being «des contes à rire en vers» (J. Bédier, *op. cit.*, pág. 30), a Fabliau «prend ses héros au début de l'unique aventure qui les met en scène...» (J. Bédier, *loc. cit.*, pág. 32). Nykrog concurs with Bédier when he suggests that: «[...] il [the Fabliau] doit en principe se borner à raconter un seul incident et ses conséquences immédiates» (P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, pág. 15). Boutet sums up these views very well when he says: «Les fabliaux [...] ne donnent jamais dans le symbolisme: leur domaine est celui de la pure anecdote» (D. Boutet, *op. cit.*, pág. 6). Etc...

[35] R. Guiette, in his important essay on the fabliaux stresses this very fact: «Dans le cas des fabliaux, il n'y aurait, à proprement parler, pas de vérité, mais seulement une vraisemblance d'aspect, tout le récit étant du domaine des apparences...» (R. Guiette, *op. cit.*, pág. 92).

[36] A. Langfors (ed.), «Le Dit de Dame Jouenne, Version inédite du Fabliau du Pré Tondu», *Romania*, 45, 1917-18, págs. 99-107. W. Noomen, and N. Van den Boogaard (ed.), *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, 6 volumes, Assen Netherlands, Van Gorcum, 1983-1990 (*Sire Hain et Dame Anieuse*, II, 1984, págs. 16-26; *Les Quatre Sohaiz Saint Martin*, IV, 1988, págs. 211-216. A. de Montaignon, and G. Raynaud (ed.), *Recueil Général et Complet des Fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe Siècles*, 6 volumes, Librairie des Bibliophiles, Paris, 1872-1890 (*De la Dame Escoillee*, VI, 1890, págs. 95-116; *Do Pré Tondu*, IV, 1880, págs. 154-57; *Li Sohaiz Desvez*, V, 1883, págs. 184-191).

[37] See pág. 2.

[38] J. Bédier, *op. cit.*, págs. 436-440; P. Nykrog, *op. cit.*, págs. 311-324.

[39] O. Jodogne, *op. cit.*, págs. 18-21; W. Noomen, «Qu'est-ce qu'un fabliau?», *op. cit.*, pág. 427; M. J. Schenck, «Functions and Roles In the Fabliau», *Comparative Literature*, 30, 1976, págs. 22-34, pág. 34.

[40] See D. Boutet, *op. cit.*, págs. 27-28; and R. O'Gorman, *Les Braies au Cordelier: Anonymous Fabliau of the Thirteenth Century*, Summa Publications, Birmingham Al., 1983, pág. 9.

[41] There is no temporal transposition in *Do Pré Tondu*. The whole text is in the past tense. The tale starts just as a true Aesopic fable would with a symbolic action whose protagonists are inanimate objects —a piece of coal and the sea—. But it is followed by two more tales as examples or comparisons. These are recounted in the past tense, with no moral or practical lesson given, and none which can really be derived because of the specificity of those comparisons.

[42] Here, let us quote Smith's definition of the fable: «A fable is a short tale, obviously false, devised to impress, by the symbolic representation of human types, lessons of expediency and morality» (M. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, pág. 99).

[43] Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, pág. 134-136.

[44] See Ch. Brucker, *loc. cit.*, pág. 136.

Si n'ert jamés aparceü

Deliverer deit hum par le mort

Le vif dunt l'em ad [tant] cunfort.

(34-36)

[45] In fact, in her epimythium, Marie calls her story a «signefiance» (v. 37) which is symptomatic of an allegory or a parable. See also note 42 where the definition of the fable according to Smith is stated: «A fable is a short tale, obviously false...».

[46] On this theme, J. Morawski, *op. cit.*, gives the following proverbs: «Home mort n'a ami» (846, pág. 31). «Li mort aus morz, li vif aus vis» (1098, pág. 40). «Len ne peut faire les mors revivre» (1516, pág. 55).

[47] Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, págs. 194-200.

[48] J. Morawski, *op. cit.*, proposes the equivalent: «Ge ne croy pas ce que je oy dire, mais ce que je voy» (982, pág. 36). «Toute parole ne fait a croire» (2389, pág. 87).

[49] *La Femme et son amant*, v. 34, pág. 196.

[50] Ch. Brucker, *op. cit.*, págs. 344-350.

[51] Fables that portray actions that are too extreme to reflect real human behavior are common in the genre as a whole. See for example «*The Father, The Son and The Donkey*» (B. E. Perry *op. cit.*, pág. 608).

[52] In the fabliau *Do Pré Tondeu*, the analogue of «*Le Paysan et son épouse querelleuse*» in the Fable genre, one must note that the woman is only wrestled to the ground and cannot speak because of the blows she received. Here, outside of the realistic referents discussed above, since the reader or listener is not led to reverse his / her conclusion as to a justified or an unjustified retribution, he / she is not able to derive a true metaphorical equivalency. On this subject, Morawski gives the following proverbs: «Teus cuide gaingnier qui pert» (2347, pág. 85). «Qui vit a son vuell si vit a son duel» (2188, pág. 79). «Qui veut vaintre il doit souffrir» (2193, pág. 79). «Qui trop tent la vielle, la corde ront» (2178, pág. 79). «Qui fest contre rezon si se fiert de son baston» (1937, pág. 71). «Qui fait la folie si la boive» (1939, pág. 71). «Tel quide autre enguiner ki enguine sei meïmes» (2338, pág. 85). «Quaque len fet par mesure si profite et dure, quaque len fet sans razon vait a perdicion» (1730, pág. 63). «De bonne vie bonne fin» (471, pág. 17). «De mauvaise vie mauvaise fin» (521, pág. 19).

[53] Issi avient: plusurs estrivent

Vers lur seignurs, tant cum il vivent,

Ne saver ne veulent ne sentir,

Quels maus lur [en] peot avenir:

Lur riote tienent avant.

Quant il le va aparcevant,

E il le turne en maltalent,

Si se venge plus asprement.

(51-58) (*La Méchante...*)

Par cest essample veut mustrer,

— Bien le peot hum suvent pruver—

Si fols parole une folie

E autre vient, que sens li die,

Ne l' [en] creit pas, einz s' en aïre;

La u il set que l' en est pire,

Veut sa mençunge mettre avant:

Nul nel fereit de ceo taisant.

(29-36) (*Le Paysan...*)