When a Knight meets a Dragon Maiden:
Human Identity and the Monstrous Animal Other

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(Detail of 'Mélusine in the Bath', illustration to Thüring von Ringoltingen's Mélusine, 1477[1])

Part 1: Introduction, Method, and Sources

1- Of Monsters and Dragon Maidens: An Introduction

1.1   Introduction

The amount of research into the field of medieval monsters has been growing within the past few decades, but the monster has not always been accepted as a worthwhile topic of serious study. Although Prof. Tolkien made his famous appeal for the centrality of the monsters in *Beowulf* as early as 1936[2], it still took several decades before other scholars decided to undertake any serious studies of monsters. Incidentally, by choosing the word 'serious' I mean to refer to a type of study that does not brush aside all medieval monsters and label them as simply ornamental or the result of some strange joke. Nor does a 'serious' study view the medieval monster as some kind of unfortunate accident or a silly misinterpretation of strange phenomenon occurring in nature[3]. These interpretations of the medieval monster lack any kind of examination of, for instance, the psychological need of the medieval mind to create such monsters, and they certainly downplay the medieval imagination that allows these monsters space to roam within its world. No, a serious study of the medieval monster takes its central topic seriously and realises that the monster has meaning and that the medieval monster in particular is to be treasured and understood.

Passionate arguments aside, medieval monsters occur across a wide variety of sources and they are also extremely varied, ranging from shape shifting demons to dog-headed cynocephali. The topic of medieval monsters, therefore, is quite broad and too large for this study and needs to be specified even further. According to Isidore of Seville, one of the

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[2] J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and The Critics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), pp. 245-295.

[3] See John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 1981), p. 24-25, for a short overview of monsters considered by scholars as misinterpretations. It is possible that the legends of a few monsters were indeed the result of errors in observations of unfamiliar phenomenon, but assuming that all monsters have such a basis ignores "errors that were wilful, poetic, and imaginative" (p. 25).

earliest authors writing about monsters, monstrosity takes the following forms and can be classified accordingly:

(I) hypertrophy of the body, (2) atrophy of the body, (3) excrescence of bodily parts, (4) superfluity of bodily parts, (5) deprivation of parts, (6) mixture of human and animal parts, (7) animal births by human women, (8) mislocation of organs or parts in the body, (9) disturbed growth (being born old), (10) composite beings, (11) hermaphrodites, (12) monstrous races[4]

The focus of this study will be on one of these specific kinds of monsters: Isidore's number six, or the monster with a mixture of animal and human body parts. The monsters in this group are particularly interesting because their hybrid body forms a strange combination between two groups that, in the medieval world view, are considered to be clearly separate types of being. Those who encounter this hybrid creature are faced with anxieties on where the exact line between the human and the animal lies. This group of monsters, however, is quite large and certainly much too big for this discussion. Therefore, a further selection between different kinds of medieval animal-human hybrid monsters has to be made. Instead of examining some of the familiar monsters, such as the cynocephali or the werewolf, this study will focus on a type of monsters which has generally been overlooked as a group: the medieval dragon maidens. These medieval dragon maidens are particularly interesting because they are a group of ladies that have been turned into draconic creatures but are always described as having human properties. In examining these medieval dragon maidens I will focus on their hybrid form and see what cultural meaning may be derived from it. Ultimately, I wish to examine the relationship between ideas of the boundaries between man and animal,

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[4] See Etymologiae ii.38-54, quoted in David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p. 107.

as they are found in both medieval theological and philosophical discourse and the medieval literary chivalric world, and representations of the dragon maiden in medieval literature.

1.2   Approach

In this study, I will examine the medieval dragon maiden from a perspective that focuses on her monstrous hybrid status as a creature that is both human and animal. These medieval dragon maidens have, to the best of my knowledge, never been examined together as a group, and they have not been studied from this perspective before.

In order to examine this, I will first introduce the dragon maiden and discuss her occurrences within different sources from different historical and cultural backgrounds. What will become clear is that the dragon maiden is a figure that is not necessarily bound by historical or cultural boundaries and that, though the dragon maidens may be presented differently, they all have certain underlying features in common. Then, I will make a selection from this large body of dragon maidens and propose a focus on medieval literary examples.

The main focus of this study will be on the dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body and on the way she is treated by those who come across her in this form. To this purpose, I will combine two theories, Monster Theory and Animal Theory, in an examination of her figure and how she is perceived by those who encounter her. I will show some of the main concerns found in these two theories and then explain how they may complement each other in examining how the identity of the dragon maiden and the knight who encounters her are determined by certain 'degrees of animality' attributed to them.

Then, I will give an overview of the medieval texts containing examples of dragon maidens. This collection of texts can be further divided into roughly two different types of dragon maidens: those who, in the end, become human and those who, in the end, take on the physical form of the animal. These two groups have distinctly different patterns and

traditions, and they also engage with Monster Theory and Animal Theory in different degrees. The works discussed within these two groups will form my main corpus for this study and a comparison between these two groups will, hopefully, yield surprising results.

Next, I will examine the background of medieval theological and philosophical discussions on the differences between humans and animals, and the way in which an identity of 'the human' can be established through such a discussion. I will examine some of the arguments used in the debate, but most of all I will look at the themes and questions themselves to show that this debate is, after all, anthropocentric. It is important to understand the place of humans and animals within the medieval worldview and the reasons for their placement since the dragon maiden texts were written within this context.

Furthermore, I will examine the way in which a split between different degrees of humans and animals, or the 'degrees of animality', are present in both the medieval worldview and in the chivalric world created within medieval literature. The dragon maiden is found in this literary world and therefore this chapter will provide a useful background to understanding the way in which her figure challenges conventional boundaries between humans and animals.

Then, I will introduce the way monsters may or may not challenge the familiar ideas of the divide between humans and animals within medieval chivalric literature. By comparing the dragon maiden with several conventional monsters, the dragon, the giant, and the werewolf, I will show why she is a special figure even among her own kind.

Finally, I will explore the way in which anthropocentric thinking and conventional ideas of the boundaries between humans and animals is translated into the literary figure of the dragon maiden. For this, I shall focus on the moment where the knight encounters the dragon maiden in person and look at how this situation is resolved. Each text has its own way of dealing with negotiations between aspects of the human and the animal and a different way of solving the monster-problem, but the focus in both groups of texts is on the human and, in the

end, finding out who is the most 'human' human is of key importance to the story. What will be shown is that the dragon maiden is central to the themes, motifs, purpose, and structure of the texts in which she is found.

1.3   Main Questions

In the context of this study, I wish to answer the following question:

<u>Which meaning does the medieval dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body carry?</u>

In order to answer this main question, I will look at several smaller questions:

- In what way does the dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body reflect medieval ideas about what makes a human and what makes an animal, and how does she play with definitions of the boundaries between the two?
- In what way does the medieval dragon maiden play with ideas or anxieties about the boundaries between humans and animals as they are found in medieval chivalric literature? Does she challenge or confirm these ideas?
- Can the medieval dragon maidens found in literature be seen as a group?
- How does this group of dragon maidens differ from other monsters?
- How, if at all, do the encounters between a knight and a dragon maiden contribute to the themes, motifs, purpose, and structure of the literary texts in which they feature?

I expect that the medieval dragon maiden found in literary texts carries meaning and that this meaning is related to her being both human and animal. I also think that, even though the encounter between a knight and a dragon maiden may appear to be a randomly insignificant and frivolous little episode occurring within a much more important larger story, the episode in fact occurs at exactly the right moment and contributes to the overall story significantly

2- Introducing the Dragon Maiden

2.1   What is a 'Dragon Maiden'?

The dragon maiden is a woman who has been transformed into a dragon or serpentine creature, predominantly against her will. She sometimes takes on the form of a dragon or serpent entirely, with small details such as eyes or lips revealing her humanity, but also at times has the form of a dragon or serpent from the waist down, whilst her upper half remains human. She is, therefore, an animal-human hybrid monster.

Admittedly, one might argue that the dragon maiden could be seen as a shape-shifter rather than a hybrid creature. However, I prefer to see her as a hybrid. The first reason for this is that the dragon maiden is almost always described as having recognisably human body parts alongside her animal body parts. Moreover, the dragon maiden is always still human on the inside and is merely stuck in a kind of animal suit during her transformation. Secondly, the focus for this study will be on the moment when the human encounters the dragon maiden, and at that specific point in the texts she is a hybrid creature. In fact, in most of the stories she is a hybrid when the reader first encounters her and her background story is not told until after she has been transformed. Therefore, I will use the term 'hybrid' to indicate that this monster is made up of a combination which is considered unnatural and crosses perceived boundaries of order. Nonetheless, a process of metamorphosis is tied in with her character.

On a related note, the words 'dragon' and 'serpent' must be considered interchangeable in the context of this study. Within the texts on dragon maidens themselves, both words are often used together in descriptions of the hybrid creature, and in many medieval bestiaries the dragon is thought to belong to the species of serpents. Furthermore, the dragon is seen as an animal, and not necessarily a mythical beast, within the medieval world, and the possibility of encountering such a creature was considered quite real. For the

sake of simplicity, I will opt for the word 'dragon' in my description of this creature because it more readily calls up images of a large, dangerous monster in the modern mind. Similarly, I will opt for the word 'maiden' for the sake of simplicity, as most of the ladies are described as maidens and later marry the knight that rescues them[5]. Moreover, the combination of the two terms, 'dragon' and 'maiden', almost automatically evokes images of mixing and hybridity.

2.2   Where is the Dragon Maiden Found?

The dragon maiden is found in many images and texts over a wide range of time periods and from many cultures. Classical Greek and Roman stories of dragon maidens include stories on the Lamia, a woman who devours children and is sometimes depicted as having serpentine body parts. The Lamia tradition has continued on for centuries and the most famous versions of her story are probably found in the nineteenth-century poems 'Christabel' and 'Lamia'[6]. Other Classical examples are Eurynome and Echidna, who are both often depicted as creatures half woman and half serpent. Early Mesopotamian goddesses were also often represented as half-serpents. In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, and related stories such as the *Babyloniaca*, Marduk defeats the primordial water goddess Tiamat, a creature who gave birth to monstrous serpents and who in later tradition became a serpent or dragon herself[7]. The different examples of dragon maidens in ancient lore are too numerous to expand upon here, but clearly this figure made up of a combination of human female and draconic or serpentine animal body parts captured the imagination of many different cultures. Stories on dragon maidens continued on in the Middle Ages, through to the Renaissance and early modern

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[5] Mélusine is the exception to this rule since she is already married and has given birth to several children when her husband discovers her hybrid form. However, if I were to use the term 'dragon lady', I might risk confusion with a modern slang term denoting an attractive and domineering, mostly East-Asian, woman, coined in the comic *Terry and the Pirates*. Therefore, I prefer to stick to the word 'maiden'.

[6] Originally published Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Christabel', in *Christabel; Kubla Khan: A Vision; The Pains of Sleep* (London: William Bulmer and Co., 1816), and John Keats, 'Lamia', in *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820). See also image no. 4 in Appendix A.

[7] For these Classical, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, and other examples, see Gillian M.E. Alban, *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A.S. Byatt's Possession and in Mythology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).

period, and into modern and postmodern literature. An interesting example to note here is the figure of Mélusine, whose legend arose chiefly in medieval France but who also returns in many later texts. Her figure is, for instance, found in Goethe's 'Die Neue Melusine', Gerard de Nerval alludes to her story in his poem 'El Deschidado', and she is also found in A.S. Byatt's *Possession*[8]. Mélusine is usually presented as a dragon maiden, but has in later times become a kind of mermaid[9]. Generally, in Western lore, the dragon maiden is often mixed up with other animal-human hybrid figures such as sirens or mermaids.

Since the dragon maiden is such a popular figure of myth and folklore, it is difficult to trace all the different references to her. This problem is enlarged by oral traditions of stories featuring dragon maidens, which have only rarely been written down. My point here is not to present a coherent overview of all the contexts in which the dragon maiden appears, but rather to note that the dragon maiden is a figure who is found in many different cultural contexts and in many time periods. Similarly, the dragon maiden is also found across a varied body of sources. Several medieval manuscripts and printed books containing stories of dragon maidens have been illuminated with images of the dragon maiden in her hybrid form. For instance, examples of Mélusine bathing in the form of a half-serpent are found in many manuscripts, as well as images of her after she has turned into a dragon[10]. Some images of Eve and the serpent in Paradise depict the serpent as having the face of a woman[11]. Interestingly, several images and sculptures of St. Margaret, who defeats Satan in the shape of a dragon by bursting out of its stomach after having been swallowed by it, show her as half

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[8] Originally published Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Die Neue Melusine', in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Stuttgart: Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1821). Gerard de Nerval, 'El Deschidado', in *Le Mousquetaire*, ed. by Alexandre Dumas (December 1853), later re-printed in *Les Filles de Feu* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1854), p. 291. A. S. Byatt, *Possession* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990).
[9] See image no. 2 in Appendix A.
[10] See image no. 1 and 3 in Appendix A.
[11] See image no. 5 in Appendix A.

submerged into the body of a dragon as a rather curious hybrid[12]. The figure of Mélusine also later returns in music: Mendelssohn wrote an overture, entitled 'Zum Märchen von der Schönen Mélusine', around her legend, and the metal band Leaves' Eyes released a song entitled 'Melusine' in 2011[13]. The dragon maiden is also found in several examples of modern media, such as in the Disney film *Sleeping Beauty*[14] where the character Maleficent turns herself into a black and purple dragon. In the game *Dragon Age II*[15], the character Flemmeth can turn herself into a dragon and shows traces of dragon skin in her human form. Again, giving a coherent overview of a kind of 'evolution' of the dragon maiden figure is not possible and I certainly do not wish to trace her back to some sort of archetypical figure or myth. The different dragon maiden figures have certain basic properties, most notably their hybrid body, in common, but they are also different figures in their own right.

2. 3   The Dragon Maiden in Medieval Literature

The examples mentioned above show how wide and varied the occurrences of the dragon maiden are. For the sake of making this study manageable, though, a selection of all of these different time periods and source materials must be made. My focus for this study will be on medieval literary examples of dragon maidens.

The reason for this limitation is, first of all, because I am interested in the medieval monster, of which the dragon maiden is an example, because the Middle Ages themselves have often been seen as monstrous or "an aberration between antiquity and modernity"[16]. By deeming the Middle Ages as somehow backward and monstrous, thinkers from later periods have been able to formulate their own supposedly enlightened and evolved identity by

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[12] See Wendy R. Larson, 'Who is the Master of This Narrative? Maternal Patronage of the Cult of St. Margaret', in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca (NY): Cornell UP, 2003), pp. 94-104. Also see image no. 6 in Appendix A.

[13] Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, 'Zum Märchen von der Schönen Mélusine', *MWV* P 12, 1833. Leaves' Eyes, 'Melusine', on *Melusine: EP* (Napalm Records, 2011).

[14] *Sleeping Beauty*. Dir. Clyde Geronimi, Les Clark, Eric Larson, and Wolfang Reitherman. Buena Vista, 1959.

[15] *Dragon Age II*. Bioware. Redwood City (CA): Electronic Arts, 2011.

[16] Bettina Bildhauer, and Robert Mills ed., *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 2003), p. 3.

stressing how different they are. Yet, some scholars stress that certain modern or postmodern concerns may have already been present in medieval times and that medieval people were really not that different from us today. This paradox between sameness and difference is crucial to the way in which the Middle Ages is often viewed today, and it is this same paradox that determines the way the monster itself is viewed. As Cohen argues, "if the European Middle Ages are that intimately alien, medial time that are not quite the lost past and not quite the modern West, something of both and wholly neither, then medieval temporality finds its contemporary analog in what postcolonial theory calls the hybrid"[17]. In other words, the medieval period itself can be seen as a temporal hybrid monster composed of same and other. This idea of hybridity returns in the figure of the dragon maiden who is both same, as she is partly human, and other, as she is also partly animal.

A further reason for choosing the dragon maiden within medieval literature is the fact that she predominantly features in chivalric romance, a typically medieval genre which is often set in an idealized world where characters have a clear status. As Walker-Bynum argues, when "the romance replaced the epic as the popular aristocratic and bourgeois entertainment, heroes and heroines were understood to develop psychologically but in order to fill a given social role and become better versions of virtuous selves"[18]. Characters in medieval chivalric romance may go through a development, but the genre is very much about a specific process of 'becoming': a character becomes what he or she was always meant to become. Within the world of medieval chivalric literature, there is a fixed order, and a connected hierarchy, of beings[19]. It is interesting that our hybrid dragon maiden occurs within this ordered world since her figure refuses to be classified as either human or animal and so she proves to be an anomaly. For a genre that depends so much upon convention and certain

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[17] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales', in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 96.
[18] Caroline Walker-Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 23.
[19] To which we will return in chapter 6.

fixed ideals, a monster such as the dragon maiden provides an interesting challenge. The question is whether the dragon maiden will prevail and turn the orderly chivalric world upside down, or whether she will be forced to conform to this world and lose her hybrid status.

Furthermore, I believe the most useful examples for this particular study, which deals with the question of the boundaries between the human and the animal, are found in literary examples where a knight, the human, encounters a dragon maiden, the animal-human hybrid, because the physical and emotional reactions of the knight, and at times the narrator, can be observed and measured. Although an image of a dragon maiden may have elicited certain reactions in terms of feelings and anxieties in the eye of their beholder, these are now difficult to measure out of context. These reactions are actually given in the literary texts many of the characters show a remarkable similarity in their reaction to the encounter with such a monster. Furthermore, the dragon maiden herself is given a voice in the corpus selected for this study, and so her reactions too can be observed. So, I will discuss literary examples, but I will allow some room for discussion of several manuscript images depicting the figure of Mélusine because I feel they may have contributed to the way the reader read these manuscripts and therefore examining them will prove useful to my main discussion.

3- Method

3.1 Introduction

I will look at the dragon maiden from the perspective of the newly emerging fields of, medieval, Monster Theory, which holds that monsters are important in identity formations, and a postmodern field, referred to as Animal Theory, which focuses on the relation between humans and animals, or rather non-human others. Since both of these fields are still emerging and going through a process of finding its way, in terms of a clear name but also in terms of

their precise method, it is necessary to start this study with an overview of key themes

discussed within these fields. Both fields are relatively new and yet, paradoxically, at the

same time have quite a history of important concepts, ideas, and questions that underlie its

foundations. In the following overview, by showing with which of the themes, from either

field, I will engage in this work, a clearer definition of my own method in examining the

medieval dragon maiden will emerge. In general, I wish to combine the studies of monsters,

and the way in which they may be used in identity-formations, with studies on the way in

which humans have identified themselves as human by constructing themselves as different

from animals. Both notions, I feel, return in the figure of the dragon maiden found in

medieval literature, especially in the episodes where they are encountered by a knight.

3.2   Anxiety and Identity: Monster Theory

The first field of research discussed here is what will be referred to as Monster Theory, a

name taken from Cohen's book of the same title[20], although it has not always been referred to

by this name per se. In general, scholars working within the field of Monster Theory

recognise that monsters have a cultural significance, and so are not just for ornamental

purposes, and these scholars discuss the ways in which this may be true in different times and

for different cultures. Although one of the ideas behind Monster Theory is that the monster is

a feature found in all historical time periods, as well as across cultural boundaries, some of its

main ideas come from discussions on medieval monsters. What follows is an overview of

several themes discussed within this field, but this overview should not be considered

extensive but rather as an illustration of several major themes that return in this study. After a

brief note on terminology, the overview will present ideas about the medieval monster as a

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[20] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

breaker of boundaries, a challenger of order, a bringer of anxiety, and a tool for human identity formations.

3.2.1   Note on Terminology

Firstly, though, a note must be made when it comes to words such as 'monster', 'monstrous', 'creature', and 'hybrid'. As is shown in Thomson's book on *Freakery*[21], actual showings of so-called 'monsters' have occurred in history and continue to occur to this day. The relation between terms such as 'monster' or 'freak' and these real-life shows or, according to Thomson, exploitations of those with certain physical deformities, ensure that such terms are not unproblematic and may offend. Naturally, whenever such a sensitive term is used in this work, no offense is intended, but the terms will be used nonetheless. The reason for this is mainly because the term 'monster' was used by medieval authors themselves, even causing them to relate it to its Latin etymology in proclaiming that the monstrous body carried meaning[22], but mostly because the terms carry with it ideas of 'normal' and 'different', 'same' and 'other', and so reflect exactly those concerns of identity, both personal and collective, that return in Monster Theory. Therefore, such terms will be used in this study.

3.2.2   The Monster Challenges Boundaries

The most frequently noted feature of the medieval monster is that it challenges boundaries or, as Cohen puts it, "the monster is a category that is not bound by classificatory structurations"[23]. In fact, the very act of designating a creature as 'monstrous' implies that such a creature is beyond the boundaries of what is considered acceptable or 'normal' and so

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[21] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed., *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York UP, 1996).

[22] See Friedman, 'Signs of God's Will', in *The Monstrous Races*, p. 108-130. He argues that the monster was both seen as a divine portent and as a creature that deviated from the established norm.

[23] Cohen, 'Preface: In A Time of Monsters', in *Monster Theory*, p. ix. He also argues that the monster is a timeless creature that reappears in different guises throughout history. Although I choose to limit myself to medieval examples, chapter 2 has shown that the dragon maiden is also not bound by historical divisions of time.

the monster exposes the presence of such boundaries. The boundaries challenged by the monster can be those of gender, in examples of hermaphroditic monsters, or of the limits of the body, in examples of giants or pygmies. Another way in which the medieval monster challenges boundaries is found in its geographic location. In Classical times, the monster was deemed to live in geographic, and climatic, areas of extremes, and the Greeks and Romans "imagined themselves to be at the center of the civilized world and believed that their way of life constituted a standard by which all things far from that center were judged"[24]. In fact, the monstrous beings living on the extreme edges of the world were not only outside the ideal geographical and climatic middle, but also outside of civilization, society, and politics[25]. This way, the boundaries between the space of the human and the space of the monster was made clear. However, in the Middle Ages, the monster moves increasingly closer to the space of the human, and is suddenly not just found at the other end of the world, but also at the edges of a village or parish, or sometimes even living amongst humans. The boundaries between the space of the human, the city and society, and the space of the monster become increasingly unstable and unclear. Interestingly, the medieval monster does not challenge the fact that there is a boundary, but rather challenges where the exact split between what is 'normal', or 'human', and what is 'monstrous' lies. The dragon maiden embodies this challenge of boundaries as those who encounter her do not know if she is animal or human and where the exact boundary between the two lies. In addition, her location proposes a similar challenge to the boundaries of the worlds of humans and monsters.

3.2.3   The Monster Questions Man-Made Classifications of Order

One of the consequences of such questions of where the dividing line is found is that the monster points out that boundaries or ideas of order are not factual or set in stone, but

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[24] Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, p. 35.
[25] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

arbitrary and dependent upon the humans who construct them. For instance, in *Deformed Discourse*, Williams argues that the medieval monster points towards the problems of language and its representation. By looking at Pseudo-Dionysian sign theory, Williams argues that the monster is an example of the *via negative*: a way of understanding God by pointing out what he is not. In arguing this, Williams focuses on the idea that the monster is deformed and defies logic, and therewith shows that representations can be false or inadequate since "form *cannot* contain being"[26]. One of the orders questioned by monsters is that of language, revealing the ultimate inadequacy and limits of human language. He further argues that the monster "reminds us of the fragility and incompleteness of ontological and cognitive orders and provides the perspective from which the essence of order itself is revealed"[27]; that of a human construct. Similarly, Cohen has argued that the monster refuses "to participate in the classificatory "order of things""[28] and provides a significant challenge to binary systems of hierarchy, creating a need to re-evaluate concepts of order. He states that "the monster's destructiveness is really a deconstructiveness: it threatens to reveal that difference originates in process, rather than in fact (and that "fact" is subject to constant reconstruction and change)"[29]. A keyword in this quotation, however, is 'threatens', since a monster such as the medieval dragon maiden may point towards artificial boundaries and ideas of order but she is never allowed to break them down. This limitation on her monstrous character is brought on by the context in which she features, as some medieval thinkers may have doubted the way the world was ordered but they did not doubt that there was an order to the world[30]. The truth was, as it were, out there and it was up to the human to try and understand it.

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[26] Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, p. 6.
[27] Ibid., p. 83.
[28] Cohen, *Monster Theory*, p. 6.
[29] Ibid., pp. 14-15.
[30] For medieval ideas of order, see chapter 5.

3.2.4 The Monster Creates Anxiety

Another important notion raised in Monster Theory is that the monster may point out certain problems of boundaries and order, but it does not provide an answer to these problems and, as such, provides the human with anxiety. An encounter with the monster can evoke different kinds of anxieties, dependent upon the type of monster and its context, but examples include anxieties about the body and the Christian resurrection in stories of cannibals, or anxieties about male parentage and bloodlines in stories on incubi and succubi. For the dragon maiden, one of these anxieties is that of the boundary between the human and the animal. Another example of anxiety is found in Walker-Bynum's exploration of the monstrous in *Metamorphosis and Identity*, where she examines medieval attitudes towards anxieties of identity, the body, and change. Walker-Bynum discusses differences between the terms 'hybridity' and 'metamorphosis', and argues that hybridity recalls anxious images of defragmentation and unnatural mixing, whilst metamorphosis can show the problems of change when it involves loss or problems of how one's identity can still endure after change. In other words, if metamorphosis involves both change and a return to one's original state, is a person still the same person after the metamorphosis is completed? This may apply to the literal metamorphosis of, in her examples, a werewolf, but can also apply to human life in general, where people go through several stages of change in life but are seen as having a pervasive identity throughout. 'Anxiety' is a keyword in Walker-Bynum's investigation, and she views these anxieties about identity and the body as an issue that concerns mankind as a whole but is nonetheless also bound by historical situations. This idea also returns in this study, where anxiety about a human identity is on the one hand seen as a timeless issue but on the other hand an issue that is here bound by a specific medieval context.

3.2.5   *The Monster's Role in Identity Formations*

The connection between monsters and their role in processes of identity formations has often been noted. For instance, in *Of Giants*[31], Cohen looks at the figure of the giant within Old and Middle English literature. He argues that the giant is, on the one hand, an embodiment of masculine identity, but is most of all a representation of a hybrid identity. He likens this hybrid identity to the medieval English peoples themselves, who were never only just English, but rather Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, Anglo-Welsh, or some other combination. To give another example, Bildhauer has argued that Jews living in medieval Germany were often represented as monstrous figures in literature and on maps, because the Jewish identity needed to be marked as essentially different from a Christian identity[32]. Furthermore, examples of discussions on identity formations of medieval Saints through their defeat of a monstrous or demonic creature are abundant[33]. The formation of an identity, then, is an important part of the monster, but this identity is found most of all in the person who imagines or encounters the monster. This same notion returns in the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden, where the identity of the knight as the example of chivalry and an ultimate human is determined by the way he reacts to the dragon maiden. Interestingly, in *Hybridity*[34], Cohen argues that one way of representing difficult identity formations was found in the body of the hybrid, since it deals with 'difficult middles'. To Cohen, the hybrid body is not a perfect blending of different forms, but rather a constant reminder of disunity and "a conjoining of differences that cannot simply harmonize"[35]. This is also true for the dragon maiden's hybrid body, mostly because her middle space cannot hold and in the end the dragon maiden has to become either human or animal.

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[31] Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, And The Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
[32] Bildhauer, 'Blood, Jews and Monsters in Medieval Culture', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 75-96.
[33] For instance in Samantha J.E. Riches, 'Encountering the Monstrous: Saints and Dragons in Medieval Thought', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 196-218.
[34] Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[35] Cohen, *Hybridity*, p. 2.

Interestingly, Monster Theory often deals with the same concepts and concerns as postcolonial theory. Discussions of monsters often deal with concepts such as 'hybridity', 'the Other', and 'alterity', as well as notions of identity formation, which are all borrowed from postcolonial theory. Similarly, concepts from gender theory and queer theories also return in studies of monsters, since identities are considered to be subject to constant change and the boundaries between what is abnormal and what is normal is seen as a cultural construct. Other notions are of course also found at the basis of these ideas about monsters and identities. Kristeva's idea of 'abjection', a state between subject and object that exists but is nevertheless rejected, is an obvious one, as well as further theories of Freud on the monster and Lacantian theories about mirror-images, the fragmented body, and the imaginary, later reformulated through Žižek[36]. In all, the monster is an important tool to identity formations, an idea summed up by Cohen in his statement that "the monster is the abjected fragment that enables the formation of all kinds of identities – personal, national, cultural, economic, psychological, universal, particular"[37]. However, in the case of the animal-human hybrid monster there is a more fundamental question of identity that underlies all of these values: what is man?

3.2.6 It is All About the Human

With this last notion, we come to one of the most important ideas behind the medieval monster: determining the identity of the monster and its place in the world is really about determining the identity of the human and its place in the world. In one of the first large-scale studies on, mainly medieval, monsters in *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, Friedman argues that the medieval monster is a creature that must be interpreted and understood, since it was created by God and therefore part of the Christian world[38]. For humans, it was necessary to establish the place of the monstrous races within a Christian

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[36] For a short overview, see Bildhauer and Mills, 'Introduction', to *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 1-27.
[37] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in *Monster Theory*, p. 19.
[38] Friedman, 'Introduction', in *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, pp. 1-4.

framework, and, invariably, this meant that their degree of humanity needed to be ascertained. A paradigm of how to view the monstrous races emerges throughout the course of this book, where factors such as diet, language, clothing, and the ability to organise themselves according to rules of politics become the standards against which the degree of humanity found in these monstrous people is measured. It is clear that, by looking at how different monsters are from humans and what qualities make them more or less similar, the human is able to come to a theory of what it means to be human. For example, if a griffon is designated as a 'monster' because it cannot speak and does not wear any clothes, this is tied in with humans being thought to wear clothes and have the power of speech.

In the case of an animal-human hybrid figure such as the dragon maiden, this kind of tension between what makes a human and what makes a monster returns. Her hybrid form is both draconic and human and for the knight who encounters her it is unclear how should treat her. As we shall later see, the knight's own degree of humanity, too, depends upon his choice of whether to flee from the dragon maiden, to kill it, or to wait what happens. The dragon maiden's hybrid form evokes anxieties about the boundaries between the animal and the human and helps establish an identity of the human. As Cohen briefly suggests in *Monster Theory*, monsters "still serve as the ultimate incorporation of our anxieties – about history, about identity, about our very humanity"[39], and so the dragon maiden is, at her most basic, a monster that helps man form a human identity.

3.3   The Human and the Non-Human Other: Animal Theory

The theory I wish to combine with Monster Theory is not necessarily a field in its own, but rather more a general approach that is being echoed in several fields within the humanities. It is often referred to as Animal Theory, though this title is by no means sufficient to cover its

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[39] Cohen, 'Preface: In A Time of Monsters', in *Monster Theory*, p. xii.

wide range[40]. Animal Theory takes as its main purpose a re-evaluation of the privileged position of the human within Western society for over 2500 years, and the way in which the human has established its superior identity by comparing itself to the animal. The revaluating of the human and the non-human animal is only a recent trend found within the humanities and a broad and hugely variable trend at that. The ideas are found in fields such as queer theories, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and theories of the posthuman and biopolitics. Much of these concerns on the human and the animal are linked to contemporary developments within the fields of the natural sciences and biology, but political and ethical debates are also brought to the fore. In order to introduce Animal Theory, and the way in which it can be combined with Monster Theory, I will explain some of the main ideas and concepts it discusses. For this study, however, we are not concerned with finding a solution to overcome the so-called 'anthropocentrism' and so this overview will not go into any proposed answers. We must rather content ourselves with pointing out this anthropocentric paradigm and later show how it returns in the stories on the medieval dragon maiden.

3.3.1   Man's Identity and the Animal Other

As mentioned, the greatest ideas underlying Animal Theory are, firstly, that man has identified himself in relation to the animal and, secondly, that such concerns are to be found across different times and cultures. Such concerns have now led to the realization in some postmodern works that, although concepts such race or gender and their hegemonic constructs are being questioned by scholars, the underlying concept of 'the human' is never questioned and perhaps even taken for granted. When the end of human history, focused on humans and created by humans, was being predicted by the likes of Hegel, Fukuyama, and Kojève, some

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[40] For the sake of convenience, I will refer to this theory as Animal Theory, but wish to note that by calling it the theory of 'the animal', the name itself is reaffirming the difference between animals and humans, creating a boundary between the two. The label 'animal' also reduces the largely divergent group of millions of non-human species in the world as one Other. On a related note, this study will make use of terms such as 'the animal' and 'the human' to indicate the duality present in the medieval mind.

scholars called for a reconsideration of some of the most basic humanistic ideas. They argued that, though we supposedly live in a posthuman time, posthumanist theory is still focused on an anthropocentric view of the world. This idea is what Agamben, in *The Open: Man and Animal*, calls "the anthropological machine"[41] found in Western thought, which focuses on, and privileges, the human and determines what this human is by opposing it to the animal, or what is considered to be the animal. Derrida refers to the same kind of idea as the "auto-biography of man"[42], a self-written man-made construct he wishes to deconstruct, and notes that the whole concept of humanism is based on the exclusion of animals.

Wolfe, in *Animal Rites*[43], has similarly argued that the human has been at the centre of man's way of viewing the world, but "in the light of development in cognitive science, ethology, and other fields over the past twenty years, however, it seems clear that there is no longer any good reason to take it for granted that the theoretical, ethical, and political question of the subject is automatically coterminous with the species distinction between *Homo sapiens* and everything else"[44]. Wolfe acknowledges that this idea may seem strange to most scholars but this, for him, reaffirms that most scholars are still essentially humanists and are caught within an anthropocentric paradigm. He gives an overview of the different arguments used to split the human from the animal: "first it was possession of a soul, then "reason", then tool use, then tool *making*, then altruism, then language, then the production of linguistic *novelty*, and so on"[45]. Throughout history, different arguments for the difference between man and animal have been used, but all of these arguments serve to show that man was different and ultimately more superior. Wolfe refers to the bias against non-humans as 'speciesism'.

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[41] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, transl. Kevin Attell (Stanford(CA): Stanford UP, 2004), p. 37.
[42] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am: Perspectives on Continental Philosophy*, transl. David Wills (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), p. 24. Translated from the original *Animal que donc je suis*.
[43] Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003). As this title shows, much of these concerns are emerging against a North-American scholarly background.
[44] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p. 1.
[45] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p. 2.

Interestingly, in *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*[46], Salisbury starts her book on the relationship between animals and humans in the Middle Ages by asking "what is an animal?"[47] and rightfully finds its accompanying question by concluding with "what is a human?"[48]. Naturally, she comes to no real definitive answer but instead wishes to emphasize that "people's definitions of animals really amounted to a definition of what it meant to be human"[49]; a definition that was not always easily found.

The medieval dragon maiden, as an animal-human hybrid creature, can be placed within these concerns on a human identity depending on its difference from the animal. In the chapters on medieval philosophical, theological, and literary discourse on what makes the human as compared to the animal, it will become clear that the same kind of anthropocentric paradigm is at work in the Middle Ages, both in the real world and the literary chivalric world. The literary figure of the dragon maiden exposes this human-based thinking and shows that the boundaries between 'human' and 'animal' are unclear and dependent on cultural constructs, but yet always work together to exemplify the privileged status of the human. Just as medieval thinkers take the human as their main subject, so the questions arising from a literary figure like the dragon maiden reaffirm this medieval anthropocentricism.

3.3.2   *Objectification of Animals*

Another interesting idea found within Animal Theory is that depictions of animals, whether it be in literature or visual art, are almost always symbolic or metaphorical, and so animals are 'used' by humans to say something about themselves. In one of Derrida's descriptions, in which when he finds himself standing naked before his cat and wonders what it is that the cat sees, he continually stresses that the cat in front of him is an actual cat, rather than some

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[46] Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[47] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 1.
[48] Ibid., p. 167.
[49] Ibid., p. 168.

metaphorical cat which may be used to represent all kinds of notions which, in the end, really say more about the human using the metaphor than the cat itself[50]. In this example, Derrida starts to consider the cat as a subject in its own right, rather than an 'object' to be used by humans as he says was done for centuries. This same objectification is found in Salisbury's work on medieval animals, for instance in her discussions of the 'function' of medieval animals in images and literature, and when she argues that stories on werewolves "show an awareness of the animal that is within each of us"[51]. In the examples she gives of animal monsters, it is clear that these monsters are symbolic creatures, or objects, whose meaning is depended on their utility to the human. Questions on the boundaries between the human and the animal, found in a creature such as the werewolf, function so that the identity of the human can be established. The monster in the Middle Ages, and the dragon maiden too, is really a symbolic creature that is of 'use' to man and is created to say something about the human.

3.3.3   *Right of Access to the Animal Body*

Interestingly, some scholars working within Animal Theory further argue that a certain right of access[52] is assumed on the part of the, superior, humans when they encounter animals, so that the animal body may be touched, subsumed, or killed on the basis of the human right to do so. This also occurs in several medieval literary examples of human encounters with the dragon maiden, where the knight initially does not doubt that he is allowed access to the dragon maiden's body in killing it. Although the dragon maiden and the knight may share their space within a literary framework, this sharing is non-mimetic; they are not considered equals. The main purpose of the stories, especially in the episodes where a dragon maiden has

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[50] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, p. 6.
[51] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 160.
[52] This 'right of access', where the animal often becomes a tool, is very much related to gender theory and processes of objectification.

to be kissed, is to ascertain the worth of the human knight. Furthermore, scholars within Animal Theory have argued that the concept of 'the body' is often assumed to be human, even though it could just as well refer to the animal body. Indeed, most of the human body is similar to that of the animal body, and answers to questions of where the specifics of the human body differ from the animal body and if the human can be human without its body are not necessarily straight forward. These same concerns on the boundaries of the body, and whether or not a human or animal body determines if the being to which it belongs is human or animal, are again found in the curious animal-human hybrid body of the dragon maiden.

3.3.4   *Degrees of Animality*

Finally, one of the most interesting notions first proposed by Derrida and later picked up and developed by other scholars such as Wolfe, is that of the four degrees of animality[53]. These degrees of animality are continually at work, in literature, science, or politics, and determine which being has dominance over another. Firstly, there are the 'animalized' animals, who, in the culture of what Derrida calls carnophallogocentrism[54], are lawfully and ethically allowed to be put to death. There is also the 'humanized' animal, a category into which pets are often placed but examples of speaking animals found in medieval literature could also fit this category, who presents ethical problems to the concept of noncriminal putting to death. There is the 'animalized' human, who is classified as an animal for being different from what is thought to be the ideal human, either in the way he behaves or for belonging to some sort of group designated as Other, and who throughout history has been put to death under the guise of legality. Finally, on top of this gradual scheme is the 'humanized' human, who is seen as the one who possesses all the most desirable faculties, especially within carnophallogocentrism, and who gets to decide and rule over the other three categories, even

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[53] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, pp. 101-102.
[54] A dominant cultural model which revolves around the meat-eating male who possesses language.

deciding who falls within what category. As Wolfe points out, all four degrees of animality are idealised categories, constructed by humans, and all these different gradations are in a constant state of change and negotiation with one another. Many of these notions are related to Derrida's concept of noncriminal putting to death, where a human is able to rationalise its right to kill another based on where they rank in these four degrees of animality.

The degrees of animality return in the encounter between the human and the dragon maiden. In these stories, the dragon maiden is sometimes presented as animalistic, sometimes as human, or as a curious mix between the two. For the knight, who is also in negotiation with his own status as a human, it is unclear if the dragon maiden is to be considered killable or not. In the dragon maiden stories, constant negotiations between these degrees of animality are found, and these negotiations work together to affirm which of the characters ultimately possesses the ideal human identity.

3.4   Combining Monster Theory and Animal Theory

In examining the dragon maiden, the combination between the focus on the monster's role in identity formation as found in Monster Theory, and the focus on the way the human forms its own identity by considering itself different from, and superior to, animals found in Animal Theory, work together to form an interesting interpretation. Monster Theory argues that monsters have a cultural meaning and are crucial to identity formations in defining what falls within the established norm and what does not. In practice, many works within Monster Theory discuss how a monster can help question and define boundaries of, for instance, race or gender. However, by introducing Animal Theory to these identity formations, a much more fundamental idea concerning the identity of the human in the representation of an animal-human hybrid monster like the dragon maiden can be laid bare. This combination explores

how before becoming, say, a French Christian white male, a being-in-the-world[55] needs to establish itself as human in order to set all the other identity formations into motion.

Most of the examinations of a dragon maiden that focus on their monstrosity consider the way these figures play with certain gender boundaries[56], and there is indeed a link between the body of the female dragon maiden and the story of the Fall. Echoes of Eve's seduction by the snake in Paradise are present in the hybrid serpentine body of the dragon maiden, which may work to enhance the sense of danger perceived by those who encounter her. Many medieval stories and images reflect this perceived connection between the female body and seductive or treacherous serpents[57]. These echoes can, of course, not be ignored and her gender troubles will be kept in mind throughout the course of this study. However, these kinds of examinations on gender have been done many times and I wish to introduce a new approach to the figure of the dragon maiden so that she may be seen from a different perspective. My focus here is on her hybrid body as a combination of human and animal body parts, but not specifically female body parts since this would already imply a process of gendering. Again, I would argue that, in order to come to some notion of gender, a being-in-the-world, such as the dragon maiden or the knight, has to first affirm its own humanity first. The dragon maiden is not just a gendered figure, but more fundamentally a creature challenges the boundaries between the human and the animal.

Animal Theory complements Monster Theory in examining identity processes of the human, but, conversely, Monster Theory complements Animal Theory in showing that Agamben's anthropological machine was already at work in the Middle Ages and is not just a

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[55] Or 'in-der-welt-sein': a Heideggerian term which in postmodern times has replaced the older word 'being'.
[56] See, for instance, Caroline Jewers, 'Slippery Custom(er)s: On Knight and Snake in the *Bel Inconnu*', Neophilologus 94 (2010), pp. 17-31, and Kevin Brownlee, 'Mélusine's Hybrid Body and the Poetics of Metamorphosis', *Yale French Studies* 86 (1994), pp. 18-38. Also the part on Mélusine in Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), on the link between women's blood and monstrosity. Mélusine in particular is often considered an interesting case for gender studies, as she is both a monstrous mother and a founding figure.
[57] For more on the connection between snakes and women, I refer to other studies, such as H. A. Kelly, 'The Metamorphosis of the Eden Serpent during the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Viator* 2 (1972), pp. 301-328.

challenge exclusively posed to posthumanist thinkers. Medieval thoughts on the boundaries between the human and the animal, and their rightful place in the world, lead to establishing the place of the human in the Great Chain of Being[58]. The theories complement each other when it comes to ideas of identity based on exclusion, especially in the example of the dragon maiden. To exemplify this, the literary accounts of an encounter between a knight and a dragon maiden give a wonderfully interesting indication of the constant negotiations of the degrees of animality found in both characters, whilst, in the end, this is all done for to reaffirm what makes the human. Although the two groups of dragon maidens engage with these theories differently, the negotiation between the degrees of animality and the anxieties that come with it are at the heart of all the encounters between a knight and the dragon maiden.

4- Sources and Corpus

4.1. Introduction

The following overview discusses the occurrences of the dragon maiden in medieval literature. Naturally, though the texts featuring a dragon maiden are diverse, certain familiar patterns and motifs can be discerned. In general, the dragon maidens can be divided into two groups: the first is a rather large group in which the dragon maiden is waiting to be freed from her spell by means of a Perilous Kiss and then turns back into a human, the second group deals with a woman who turns into a half-dragon or serpent at specific times and is not to be seen by her husband in this state, but when this does happen she eventually becomes the animal. In the following overview, the texts will be grouped according to these two different

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[58] With this notion we come to another important way in which the medieval human identity is formed: by its relation to the higher beings. What I wish to discuss in this study is the way the human forms itself by placing itself above that which it considers to be inferior, but indeed the converse may be possible. This group of celestial non-humans which may be used in creating a human identity is normally overlooked in posthumanist thinking, but, I think, should not be ignored. This kind of thinking has been prevalent for centuries, not just within Christianity alone, and even though belief in these beings may not be widespread today, a being such as the angel is an example of a non-human Other.

patterns. Each group deals with my central themes in different ways and some discussions are more suitable for one group than the other. What I wish to show, though, is that negotiations between degrees of animality are present in all these stories, and that these are one of the ways in which the identity of a literary character, such as a heroic knight, can be constructed. To this purpose, a further selection of specific scenes will be made, so that the literary discussion found later on in this study will mainly focus on the scenes featuring and encounter between the human and the dragon maiden.

4.2   Confusions and Oral Traditions

Before exploring the two different groups of dragon maidens, though, I first wish to mention several confusing stories and oral traditions that are difficult to objectively trace back to the Middle Ages. For example, two Scottish ballads, 'Kemp Owyne' and 'The Laidley Worm of Spindleston Huegh', deal with the theme of an enchanted dragon maiden who waits to be kissed[59]. The girl has been turned into a dragon by her stepmother and offers gifts to her hero in return for his kiss, or three kisses as it may happen. Similarly, the Danish song 'Jumfruen I Ormeham' describes a lady who has been turned into a serpent, and who needs to be kissed in order to turn back into her true form. Many ballads about the kissing of an enchanted maiden exist[60], such as 'King Henrie' in which a maiden has been turned into a monstrous ghost with snakes for hair, or 'The Laily Worm and the Machrel of the Sea' in which a young man has been turned into a worm and his sister has become a mackerel. The problem for most of these ballads is that they are contained within several eighteenth- or nineteenth-century collections, under the pretence of being medieval, without making further reference to any existing

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[59] Both are found in Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1965).
[60] See W.H. Schofield, 'Disenchantment by Means of a Kiss', in *Studies on the Lybeaus Desconus* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1895), pp. 199-201. Schofield rightfully observes that the theme of the Perilous Kiss is found in many medieval works and he gives a short overview of no less than thirty-four examples. Though there are quite a few examples found in medieval literature, many of those listed by Schofield are ambiguous songs and tales that are only known from books published after the Middle Ages.

manuscripts. The same goes for a number of German tales and songs supposedly found in different areas of the country and written down in various collections. An example of these is 'Die Jungfrau im Oselberg', found in Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's collection of *märchen*[61], in which a story is told of a ghostly dragon maiden that haunts the castle of Oselberg. The problem with these tales is their possible verification as medieval creations. Since for most of the tales an oral source is proffered, it is difficult to guess at their origins, both in time and place. Furthermore, of a story such as 'The Laidley Worm of Spindleston Huegh' it has been shown that its author was an eighteenth-century vicar of Norham, Robert Lambe, who encouraged the belief of it being a medieval ballad so that his book, containing the ballad, could be published[62]. Therefore, a certain amount of carefulness with labelling these tales as 'medieval' is cautioned. What is interesting is that authors of such tales go to great lengths to define their stories as medieval so that their veracity may be proven. The true sources for these dragon maiden stories, concerning either a Perilous Kiss or a Mélusine-type figure, are considered to have been written in the Middle Ages. What can be said about this group of songs and tales is that the dragon maiden has made her way into oral stories and folklore, and that the myths have spread to other regions. Next, we will turn to medieval written texts.

4.3   Group I: The Perilous Kiss and a Return to the Human

The first group of written texts is formed by stories in which a beautiful young woman has been enchanted into the form of a dragon or giant serpent and can usually only be released by means of a kiss. Eventually, she turns back into her original human form. A large part of this group is formed by several so-called Fair Unknown romances, in which an unnamed young man sets out to find his true identity and subsequently establishes his role within the chivalric

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[61] Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm, ed., 'Die Jungfrau im Oselberg', in *Deutsche Sagen, Herausgegeben von den Brüdern Grimm* (Charleston: BiblioLife, 2010), p. 303.
[62] See Helen Child Sargent, and George Lyman Kittredge, 'Introduction', in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1932), p. xxix.

world. In quite a number of these texts, the main protagonist encounters a dragon maiden, whom he must kiss, and this encounter occurs just before the knight finds or establishes his identity. Almost all of the texts within this group are chivalric romances, and the dragon maiden moves within the space of the chivalric world.

4.3.1   *Le Bel Inconnu*

The earliest of these, *Le Bel Inconnu*[63], has been preserved in only one manuscript, which is found in the Condée museum of Chantilly, ms. 472[64]. The story borrows some familiar elements from other Arthurian tales, most notably those of Chrétien de Troyes. The text is also famed for its narrator, who makes frequent interventions in the story and even creates an open ending, the conclusion of which depends upon the favours of his *amie*. The episode of the *Fier Baiser* or Perilous Kiss, in which l'Inconnu has to kiss a dragon who subsequently turns into a lady, occurs halfway through the text. The dragon maiden is found in a besieged castle, swarming with monsters and enchanters, and forms the final hurdle for the knight who volunteered to complete this quest after a maiden came to Arthur's court asking for help. When the knight encounters the dragon maiden, he is thoroughly confused and does not know how to react. Eventually, the dragon maiden kisses him, retreats back into the cupboard she came from, and meets the knight again the next day after having become human again. The lady, Blonde Esmerée, is extremely grateful to L'Inconnu and offers him her hand in marriage. L'Inconnu, however, is in love with another woman, the Pucelle de Blanches Mains, and although he marries Blonde Esmerée in the end, the narrator suggests that he would rather have married the Pucelle.

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[63] Edition used is Célestin Hippeau, ed., *Le Bel Inconnu ou Giglain Fils de Messire Gauvain etde la Fee aux Blanches Mains* (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1860). Modern French translation by Michèle Perret and Isabelle Weill, ed., *Le Bel Inconnu: Roman d'aventures du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1991). Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.
[64] The manuscript contains mostly Arthurian texts, such as *Erec*, *La Vengeance Raguidel*, and the *Fergus*, but also includes several branches from the *Renard* tradition. Generally, the manuscript is regarded by scholars as a unique collection of Arthurian texts, whose main focus is on stories revolving around Gauvain. Indeed, the story of *Le Bel Inconnu* recounts the adventures of Gauvain's son, Guinglain.

Although he seems to name himself in line 6249 of the verse romance as Renaut de Beaujeu, scholars have not yet clearly identified the text's author. It has been suggested that the author might have been a member of the Beaujeu family, based on the image on Le Bel Inconnu's shield mentioned in lines 73-74 and 5921-5922[65]. Guerreau has suggested that the author was Guy-Renaud de Bâgé[66], based on a supposed reference to him in Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dôle*. Furthermore, Dragonetti has argued that the name 'Renaud de Beaujeu' is not an actual name at all, but rather a literary invention that emphasizes how the narrator of the story plays a *beau jeu*, or wonderful game, by constantly pleading to his lady so that he may obtain her love in real life[67]. The supposed date of the story is also debated and varies to somewhere between 1180 and 1230, though most scholars agree on a date around 1200. Although it is uncertain if *Le Bel Inconnu* should be regarded as the original source text, since another version may have once existed, it is the earliest written example of its type and was later transmitted into several different languages.

4.3.2 *Lybeaus Desconus*

A middle English version of the story of l'Inconnu, entitled *Lybeaus Desconus*[68], was written in the middle of the fourteenth century, possible by Thomas Chestre, the author of *Sir Launfal*. This story, comprising of over 2200 lines of tail rhyme, follows the main outline of *Le Bel Inconnu*, as the main protagonist again volunteers to complete the quest to rescue the dragon maiden, but there are some differences. Generally, the story of *Lybeaus Desconus* is shorter, has a greater emphasis on action, and, crucially, ends shortly after the dragon maiden

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[65] Perret and Weill, 'Introduction', in *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 12.

[66] A. Guerreau, 'Renaud de Bâgé: *Le Bel Inconnu*. Structure symbolique et signification sociale', *Romania* 102 (1982), pp. 28-82.

[67] R. Dragonetti, *Le gai savoir dans la rhétorique courtoise, Flamenca et Jouffroy de Poitiers* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1982), and Francis Dubost, 'Le "Beau Jeu" de Renaut avec le Merveilleux', in *Le Chevalier et la Merveille dans Le Bel Inconnu ou le Beau Jeu de Renaut*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1996), pp. 23-56.

[68] M. Mills, ed., *Lybeaus Desconus* (Oxford: Oxford UP for the Early English Text Society, 1969). This edition presents mss Cotton Caligula A. II and Lambeth Palace 306 as parallel texts. I choose to follow the Lambeth manuscript because it is slightly more elaborate. Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.

has been freed of her plight. Another interesting difference is that Lybeaus gladly marries the Lady of Synadowne, the dragon maiden of this text, and so there is no open ending and the ambiguous game played by the narrator in the French version is gone. The text of *Lybeaus Desconus* is found in six manuscripts, many of which contain other chivalric romances[69].

4.3.3   Carduino

Another version of the Fair Unknown story, *Carduino*[70], was written in Italian, perhaps by Antonio Pucci[71] around 1375. This version is much shorter, with 72 stanzas in *ottava rima*, and is followed by another 35 stanzas containing a story about *Tristano e Lancielotto*. Again, the story follows the main narrative outline found in *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Lybeaus Desconus*. The knight Carduino also encounters a dragon lady who wants to have a kiss, but this time it is the knight who kisses her. The lady herself does not give Carduino an explanation of her transformation, but instead a dwarf tells Carduino about her background in preparation of their meeting. In this story, the dragon maiden, who is chained down in the middle of a square, is not the only one who has been turned into an animal, as all of the inhabitants of her city have suffered a similar fate.

4.3.4   Other Texts Belonging to the Fair Unknown Group

Around 1530, Claude Patin rewrote the version of the story by Renaud de Beaujeu, and added the story of the Occitan *Roman de Jauffré* to it. This version was printed under the title of *L'Hystoire de Giglan*[72]. In this story, the knight again encounters the dragon maiden, here called Emerie, but she comes to him from her chamber. The author of *L'Hystoire de Giglan*

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[69] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 1-9.

[70] Pio Rajna, ed., *I Cantari di Carduino* (Bologna: Presso Gaetano Romagnoli, 1968). Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.

[71] The text is found in ms Florence, Bibliotheca Riccardiana, 2873. This manuscript contains several works by Antonio Pucci and therefore it has been argued that *Carduino* must also be by his hand.

[72] There is currently no modern edition available for this text, although an forthcoming edition by Jewers is scheduled for Summer 2011. Therefore, I cannot make direct references to the text but have to rely on several quotations and descriptions given in Jewers, 'Slippery Custom(er)s'.

has made a fairly loyal translation and only deviates with some minor details. Finally, two other versions of the story are generally mentioned in this group of texts. The first, *Wigalois* by Wirnt von Grafenberg, was written in Bavaria around 1210[73]. However, the author of this version has omitted the character of the dragon maiden[74] and therefore it is not directly relevant for our discussion. In another similar text, *Le Chevalier du Papegau*, a prose romance from the fifteenth century[75], there is also no dragon maiden.

4.3.5   Lanzelet

Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*[76], a poem of roughly 9400 lines in four-beat rhymed couplets, also includes an episode on a dragon maiden who waits to be kissed by a worthy knight. The *Lanzelet* is a text with an illustrious background as it was supposedly based on a French or Anglo-Norman manuscript owned by Hugh de Morville, one of the hostages replacing Richard Coeur de Lion when he was being held by duke Leopold of Austria and emperor Henry VI of France in 1194. The text was translated into Middle High German by the Swiss Ulrich after he somehow managed to obtain the manuscript. Little is known of the author, who mentions his own name at the end of the poem, except that he may have worked as a parish priest in Thurgau around 1214. It has been argued that the text must have been written between 1200-1203, since Ulrich shows some knowledge of Hartmann's *Erec* but not his *Iwein* in this work, but overall the dating of the text is very uncertain. Generally, the estimated dates vary from somewhere between 1194 and 1205. The *Lanzelet* is found in two almost complete manuscripts, from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and four further

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[73] Wirnt von Grafenberg, *Wigalois*, transl. by Sabine Seelbach and Ulrich Seelbach (Berling: De Gruyter, 2005).This version was in turn also rewritten several times.

[74] There is no dragon maiden in this story, although the father of Wigalois' lady can assume the form of an animal. Wigalois also fights the dragon Pfetan and a wild woman. For a comparison with other versions, see Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 43-44.

[75] H. Charpentier, and P. Victorin, ed. and transl., *Le Conte du Papegau* (Paris: Champion, 2004). There is, however, a sea creature half-giant half-horse, called the Fish Knight, and Arthur recues a knight from a giant serpent. For more information, see Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 44-46.

[76] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, ed. and transl. by Florian Kragl (Berlin:de Gruyter, 2006). Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.

fragments[77]. In short, the story follows the adventures of Lanzelet from his upbringing by the Lady of the Lake, to his quest of finding his own identity and his success as one of Arthur's knights, and finally ends when he dies after having taken on the role of king himself. A little before Lanzelet encounters the dragon maiden, his lady Yblis already warns him about the dragon and forbids him to go near it. Lancelot ignores her, and takes nine knights with him to witness his bold deed. The dragon maiden in this story speaks to Lancelot and eventually convinces him to kiss her. After she has been turned back into a human, Clidra the Fair explains how she was punished for her unruly behaviour by being turned into a dragon.

4.3.6 *Ponzela Gaia*

Finally, a story that is a little different from the usual motif of the Perilous Kiss, but nonetheless tells of an enchanted dragon maiden, is *Ponzela Gaia*[78]. This story, written in *ottava rima*, is very similar to Marie de France's *Lanval*[79], and starts with a bet set by Troiano to see which knight can defeat the most ferocious animal. Galvano accepts the challenge and rides out to a forest, where he is attacked by a serpent. They fight for a long time until the snake asks him to say his name. Galvano eventually complies and the serpent turns into a beautiful damsel: Ponzela Gaia. Ponzela Gaia becomes Galvano's fairy lover and she supports him throughout the story, even helping him to win the bet. When Ponzela Gaia is later imprisoned, Galvano goes out to rescue her and they return to Arthur's court together. In this story, it is not a kiss which turns the dragon maiden back into a human, but the revealing of

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[77] See Nicola McLelland, 'Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Lanzelet', in *German Literature of the High Middle Ages* (Rochester (NY): Camden House, 2006), pp. 101-107. The two almost complete manuscripts are: W, found in Vienna, 2698, and P, found in Heidelberg, Codex Palatinus Germanicus 371.

[78] Giorgio Varanini, ed., *Ponzela Gaia: Cantare dialetalle Inedito del sec. XV* (Bologna: Commissione per i Testi di Lingua, 1957). See p. L-LII for an overview of the different manuscripts. Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.

[79] See Maria Bendinelli Predelli, 'Monstrous Children of *Lanval*: The *Cantare* of *Ponzela Gaia*', in *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. by Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 543-552.

the knight's identity. Generally, though, all the texts mentioned above work with the motif of the Perilous Kiss and these dragon maidens all become human again.

4.3.7   *Orlando Innamorato*

Another literary work featuring a dragon maiden is *Orlando Innamorato*[80] by Matteo Maria Boiardo. The unfinished poem was probably written around 1486 in Italy. The story mentions many serpents and dragons, including a giant who uses a dragon as a weapon and continually switches bodies with this dragon during combat. When a lady who has been trapped in a palace encourages the knight Brandimarte to open a sepulchre, a huge dragon rises up from the tomb and Brandimarte does not know how to react. The damsel tells him not to kill the dragon or to run away, but to kiss it. After much debate between Brandimarte and the damsel, he finally decides to kiss the serpent. The serpent immediately transforms into a woman, or rather a *fata* or fay, and offers Brandimarte gifts as thanks for his brave deed. *Orlando Innamorato* was first published in 1495 and has been reprinted many times. The story has also been translated into several languages[81]. The text features material from different chivalric romance traditions and combines parts from the matter of Rome, the matter of France, and the matter of Britain. Boiardo's poem was quite popular in its time, but later became overshadowed by one of its continuations, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and several rewritings of the original[82].

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[80] I will make use of the edition by Luigi Garbato, *Orlando Innamorato* (Milan: Marzorati, 1970), and a modern English translation by Charley Stanley Ross, *Orlando Innamorato* (Indiana: Parlor Press, 2004).
[81] See Julius A. Molinaro, *Matteo Maria Boiardo: A Bibiography of Works and Criticism from 1487-1980* (Ottawa: Biblioteca di Quaderni d'italianistica, 1984).
[82] For more on the tradition of *Orlando Innamorato* and its re-discovery, see Andrea di Tommaso, *Structure and Ideology in Boiardo's Orlando Innamorato* (Chapel Hill: North Caroline UP, 1972).

4.3.8   *Mandeville's Travels*

In chapter four of the famous medieval, though still widely read in the Renaissance, travel book *Mandeville's Travels*[83], the story of a dragon maiden found on the island of Lango is told. She is described as the daughter of Hippocrates, who has been enchanted by the goddess Diana and can be freed by the kiss of a knight. The work was immensely popular and was copied many times to such an extent that it is difficult for modern scholars to trace the more than three hundred different surviving manuscript versions to their possible sources. Most likely, the original text, written somewhere between 1357 and 1360, has been lost and the earliest example is an Anglo-French copy from which all extant versions are derived. Manuscript copies of the text circulated in many areas, not just in England and France but also in, for instance, Germany, and many copies were themselves again copied to such an extent that *Mandeville's Travels* almost becomes a tradition in its own right, where certain versions were clearly more popular than others[84]. Tzanaki has argued that part of the medieval fascination with *Mandeville's Travels* was a result of its wide range of topics. Indeed, she argues that the text works within five different subjects and genres: pilgrimage, geographical travel writing, romance, history, and theology[85]. Indeed, Oswald proposes that another category should be added: it is also a book of marvels[86]. The book is based largely on invention and tradition and the author almost certainly never went on the journey he describes[87]. The author names himself as Jean de Mandeville, but this is most likely a literary

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[83] There are many editions and translations based on different manuscripts, but I have made use of Paul Hamelius, *Mandeville's Travels: Translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, Edited From Ms. Cotton Titus C.XVI in the British Museum* (London: Early English Text Society, 1923).

[84] See Dana M. Oswald, ed., 'The Monstrous Feminine', in *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Suffolk: Brewer, 2010), pp. 121-122, note 6, for an overview of the mss and their dissemination.

[85] Rosemary Tzanaki, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences: A Study on the Reception of the Book of sir John Mandeville* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), p. 4.

[86] Oswald, 'The Monstrous Feminine', pp. 122-124.

[87] The work has subsequently been claimed as one of the greatest hoaxes in literature. However, as many scholars will agree, there is nothing wrong with the strategy adopted by Mandeville in writing his book. Since most of medieval writing depends upon tradition and intertextuality, the author is, as it were, merely following protocol and actually shows an exceptional amount of knowledge of some of the greatest medieval travel tales, as well as being able to frame them in a way that captivates readers from many layers in society.

invention. When it comes to the true identity of the author, scholars often return to theories of the author being Jean de Bourgogne, as the contemporary author Jean d'Outremeuse claimed, or an English nobleman who used 'Jean de Mandeville' as an alias[88]. The story of the dragon maiden found in this text is unfinished and the reader gets the impression that one could go to Lango now and still see her sitting on the island, waiting for the knight who dares to kiss her.

4.3.9   *Tirant lo Blanc*

Interestingly, the daughter of Hippocrates returns in the fifteenth-century romance *Tirant lo Blanc*[89], where the knight Espertius comes to the island of Lango after a storm. Although he, like all the other knights who have come before him, is terrified by the sight of the dragon, he does not run away and is eventually kissed by the dragon maiden. The story of Hippocrates' daughter is unfinished in Mandeville, but receives a happy ending in *Tirant lo Blanc*. The story was written by the Valencian knight Joanot Martorell, and possible finished by Martí Joan de Galba after the first author died[90]. The work is dedicated to Don Ferdinand of Portugal and was published in 1490, when all 715 copies were sold, and was reprinted in 1497. Though little is known of him, Joanot Martorell appears to have been a fascinating character. He is known to have fought several duels and he had ties to the most noble families of Spain and England. His work could have been based on personal experiences within the chivalric world, but it certainly also shows influences from other medieval works, such as the Anglo-Norman romance *Guy of Warwick* which provides the main outline for chapters 1 to 28. Clearly, influences from *Mandeville's Travels* can be detected as well, as in the example of the dragon maiden of Lango. But, even though the author made use of certain literary

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[88] See Tzanaki, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences,* p. 3.
[89] Joanot Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc*, ed. by Martín de Riguer (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1969). English translation by David Rosenthal, *Tirant Lo Blanc* (London: Macmillan, 1984). The work is noted as an influence on Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.
[90] The work was published long after its author died, but it is possible that it was finished before being published and that Martorell wrote all of it. If Martorell did die before the work was finished, it seems unlikely that de Galba, who claims to have written about a fourth of the book, did anything more than rearrange several scenes.

examples, it is very possible that the author actually made several of the journeys described in his book in real life, or knew other knights who told him about their travels[91].

4.3.10 *Notabilia Temporum and the Thirteenth Book of Amadis de Gaule*

Furthermore, a story of a swineherd who meets a dragon maiden is told in the *Notabilia Temporum*[92] by Angelo de Tummulillis. In this text, the dragon maiden promises the swineherd immense riches if he kisses her. This encounter is the only one in which the dragon maiden does not encounter a knight and it is the only story that does not directly take place in the chivalric world. Another occurrence of an encounter with a dragon maiden in a medieval literary text must also be noted: that of Amadis d'Astra in "Historia del Principe Sferamundi" in Book XIII of the French *Amadis de Gaule*, corresponding to the Spanish Book XIIa. This thirteenth book, out of twenty-four in the French *Amadis* tradition, was translated by Jacques Gohory in 1571. In this story, Amadis d'Astra comes across two dragons, whom he touches and subsequently restores back to their true form as beautiful young maidens[93]. Unfortunately, the last edition of this work was published in 1610, and it is not readily available. Therefore, I cannot access the text itself to make an analysis, and must contend to merely mention it here as another example of a medieval text containing a dragon maiden.

4.4   Group II: A Wife's Warning and a Return to the Animal

The second group of texts contains stories in which the dragon maiden becomes the animal. This group consists exclusively of texts about Mélusine, a woman who becomes a half-serpent every Saturday. Mélusine has forbidden her husband to see her this one day of the week, but he eventually succumbs to his curiosity and sees her hybrid body whilst she is

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[91] See Rosenthal's introduction to *Tirant Lo Blanc*, p. xiv-xviii. Overall, the author shows knowledge of both the literary chivalric world and the real chivalric world.
[92] Angelo de Tummulillis, *Notabilia Temporum*, ed. by Constantino Corvisieri (Rome: Livorno, 1890).
[93] See Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads: Volume 1*, p. 308.

taking a bath. For a while, he keeps the information on what he has witnessed to himself, but he eventually reveals her monstrous nature, forever driving her away. The Mélusine story, like those of the first group, is set against a chivalric background.

4.4.1 Medieval Traditions of the Legend of Mélusine

The figure of Mélusine was, before the most famous version by Jean d'Arras was published, already a familiar creature of folklore. The story of a woman from Lusignan, who changed into a snake after her husband saw her naked body, is for instance found in Pierre Bersuire's *Reductorium Morale*[94]. A similar story is also found in Gervais of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia*, where the snake lady's husband is given the name Remondin, though she herself remains unnamed. In *Les Voeux du Paon,* possibly written around 1312, a count notices that his lady does not want to stay in church for too long, and when he and his knights try to force her to do so, she turns into a dragon and flies off[95]. She was also a familiar figure or oral traditions, but the name 'Mélusine', however, is not given to her until the end of the fourteenth century.

4.4.2 Jean d'Arras' Mélusine

The text by Jean d'Arras is the first long version of the story of Mélusine as it became known centuries after. According to the information given in its prologue, *Mélusine ou La Noble Histoire de Lusignan* was written by Jean d'Arras for the "puissant et redoubté seigneur Jehan, filz de roy de France, duc de Berry et d'Ouvergne, conte de Poictou et d'Auvergne"[96], as commissioned by his sister Marie. The prose romance was finished on the 7th of August

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[94] See Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine ou La Noble Histoire de Lusignan: Roman du XIVe Siècle*, ed. and transl. by Jean-Jacques Vincensini (Paris: LGF, 2003), p. 8.
[95] See Mélusine edition, pp. 9-12, and Coudrette edition pp. 12-19, on more examples of texts that include a reference to a man married to a woman that later changes into a snake. Jean d'Arras may have written the story in Latin first, and probably made use of many Latin texts. For the possible availability of these texts to Jean d'Arras, see pp. 19-27 of the edition.
[96] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine,* p. 110, line 8-10: "powerful (rich) and illustrious sir Jean, son of the king of France, duke of Berry and Auvergne, count of Poitou and Auvergne". Translation of quotations into modern English is mine.

1393. The text, or parts of it, has been transmitted in eleven manuscripts dating from the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was first published in 1478 by A. Steinschaber under the title *L'Histoire de la B   'Arras*[97].

In this story, the young knight Remondin meets a beautiful woman, a king's daughter, near a spring. She helps him several times and in return asks that he will marry her. Remondin gladly agrees, but she further stipulates that Remondin must never look for her on a Saturday or he will lose her forever. Though Remondin is not aware of it, Mélusine has been cursed by her own mother to turn into the form of a half-serpent every Saturday. Eventually, they marry and have many children, almost all of whom are born with signs of physical monstrosities, and Mélusine becomes a founding figure of Lusignan. Although the work traces much of the exploits of Mélusine's children, who are exemplary courtly figures, the story turns back to Remondin and Mélusine towards the end. One Saturday, Remondin decides to go and look for Mélusine, after others have convinced him that she may be seeing another man. When Remondin spies on his wife through a keyhole, he sees her sitting naked in the bath and is shocked to discover that the lower part of her body has the form of a serpent. Mélusine knows Remondin spied on her, but for a while neither of them speaks about the incident. Eventually, however, Remondin snaps, after he receives the horrifying news that one of his sons has killed the other[98], and curses Mélusine for her wicked progeny, claiming that she is the cause of their monstrosity. In his confusion and rage, he tells her to leave. Mélusine is hurt and makes a final speech, during which she forces Remondin to reconsider who truly is the monster in this situation, and then flies off in the form of a serpent. The narrator later notes that she is sometimes still seen in this serpent form, haunting the castle she used to live in.

4.4.3   Coudrette's Mélusine and Other Rewritings

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[97] See the introduction to Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, pp. 42-63, for an overview of all the manuscripts.

[98] When Gieffoy finds out that his brother Fromont has become a monk, he is enraged and believes the other monks have tricked Fromont into becoming one of them. He decides to burn down the abbey, with Fromont in it.

A little after Jean d'Arras completed his text, a poetic version of Mélusine's story, entitled

Mélusine ou Le Roman de Partenay[99], was created by Coudrette, at the request of Guillaume

VII L'Archevêque de Parthenay. This version was most likely finished shortly after 1401[100]

and it is found in twenty manuscripts[101]. The story of Mélusine was later transmitted into

several other languages. There is, for example, an anonymous Middle English prose version[102]

written around 1500, a Middle Dutch version first printed in 1491[103], and a German prose

version written by the Swiss Thüring von Ringoltingen in 1456[104]. The Middle English and

the Middle Dutch version are based on that by Jean d'Arras, whose popularity is attested by

the twenty-two times the version printed by Steinschaber was reprinted in the next hundred

years. The German *Melusine* is a translation of Coudrette's version, equally popular, and was

printed in 1474 in Augsbourg. In the next hundred years, another twenty-four editions of this

text, and translations into other languages, such as Flemish, Danish, Swedish, and Spanish,

followed. These texts make up the second group of medieval dragon lady texts. However,

following scholarly convention, I will mostly discuss the version by Jean d'Arras and I will

make reference to the other versions when they deviate from their source text significantly.

4.5   Selection of Texts and Episodes

In short, for the comparison between different dragon maiden episodes, I will focus on the

moment when the human, in this case a knight, encounters the animal-human hybrid monster.

In the first group, this is the scene in which the knight comes across the monster and either

kisses it or is kissed by it, and the further resolve in which the dragon maiden becomes human

again, tells her story, and is integrated into chivalric society. For the second group, it is

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[99]Coudrette, *Le Roman de Mélusine, ou, Histoire de Lusignan*, ed. by Eleanor Roach (Paris: Klinckzieck, 1982).
[100] Guillaume died in 1401, and his son Jean then continued patronage; both patrons are mentioned in the text.
[101] See Roach, 'La Tradition Manuscrite de Roman du Mélusine par Coudrette', *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* (1977:7), pp. 185-233.
[102] A.K. Donald, ed., *Melusine* (London: Early English Text Society, 1895).
[103] Another Dutch verson was printed in 1510. Willem Kuiper, ed., *Meluzine: Leeu 1491* <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/dsphome/scriptamanent/bml/Meluzine/leeu1491.pdf> [accessed 8 May 2011].
[104] Thüring von Ringoltingen, *Melusine*, ed. by Karin Schneider (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1958).

somewhat more difficult to pick out a single instance of Mélusine's role as dragon lady since she plays a prominent role in the story and allusions to her state are made throughout. Nevertheless, the most central episode is the moment when her husband decides to spy on her in the bath and sees her in the form of a half-serpent. This episode is followed by reactions given by Remondin and Mélusine herself, where we see his damnation of the monster and her final defence of her humanity. These episodes, along with Mélusine final transformation into a full serpent and later sightings of her, are the most useful examples for this study as they show the encounter between the human and the animal-human hybrid monster most clearly.

For the first group, a further selection of texts must be made. The dragon maiden in *Mandeville's Travels* will not be included for further study, since a complete transformation from hybrid creature to human or animal is not present in the text. It is, in a way, completed in *Tirant lo Blanc*, but this text will also not be included because the episode of the Perilous Kiss is merely related as a short second-hand account in which no real descriptions of the knight's reactions are given and the dragon maiden is merely reduced to a side-character. In order to examine the response of the human, descriptions of the knight's reaction and that of the dragon maiden herself are needed, and so the account found in the *Notabilia Temporum* will also be excluded for lacking these reactions. For more practical reasons, mentioned above, *Amadis de Gaule* cannot be included for further study. In short, the first group will consist of: *Le Bel Inconnu*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Carduino*, *L'Hystoire de Giglan*[105], *Lanzelet*, *Ponzela Gaia*, and *Orlando Innamorato*. Since the dragon maiden-scenes in these texts are relatively short and follow a similar pattern, I will follow this main pattern and note interesting differences as they arise. As mentioned, for the second group I will look mostly at Jean d'Arras' version and consider the others if they deviate significantly from their source text[106].

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[105] I will make only a few references to *L'Hystoire de Giglan* since it hardly differs from *Le Bel Inconnu*.
[106] See Appendix B for an overview of the dragon maiden encounters of group II in different versions.

Generally, the two groups consist of texts that have an underlying pattern in common, but I feel they should still be considered as individual texts to allow for authorial invention. Therefore, I will look at a general pattern and mention differences when they occur in an attempt not to reduce the dragon maiden to one simple story. Nevertheless, these stories show great similarities in that they all deal with negotiations between different degrees of animality and they all focus on the human. On the next page, two tables with an overview of where the different dragon maiden episodes occur in these two groups are presented. These episodes from the two groups will, later on in this study, be compared to show how two different patterns can ultimately show the same anxieties about the difference between humans and animals, and the need to establish the human identity.

Dragon Maiden Episodes Group I:

Episode and Text	Names of Knight and Dragon Maiden	Encounter with the Knight	Background Story or Warnings
Le Bel Inconnu	Le Bel Inconnu (Guinglain) Blonde Esmeree	Line 3101-3274	Line 3275-3373
Lybeaus Desconus	Lybeaus Desconus (Gyngelayn) The Lady of Synadowne	Line 2061-2093	Line 2094-2141
Carduino	Carduino Beatrice	Stanzas 54-55, and 61-65	Stanzas 40-49 (told by dwarf)
L'Hystoire de Giglan	Giglan Emerie	On f.o.ii r. to f. o.iii. r. of the ms	
Lanzelet	Lanzelet Elidia	Line 7882-7982	Line 7837-7881 and Line 7983-8040
Orlando Innamorato	Brandimarte Febosilla (Doristella)	Book II Canto xxvi	Book II Canto xxvi
Ponzela Gaia	Galvano Ponzela Gaia	Canto 4-14	Canto 15-20

Selected Dragon Maiden Episodes Group II:

Text and Episode	Mélusine in the bath	Remondin's rebuke	Mélusine's speech	Mélusine's final speech and transformation	Later sightings
Jean d'Arras' *Mélusine*	Folio 130ra to 130vb	Folio 137vb-138ra	Folio 139ra-139va	Folio 139vb-140vb	Folio 141rb-141va Folio 164va-165vb

Part 2:

The Medieval Background, The Literary Background, The Monster

('Adam Names the Animals', illustration to folio 5r of the Aberdeen Bestiary[107]. In this image, Adam is wearing clothes, is sitting on a throne, and is depicted as resembling Christ in his ruling over the animals. The animals have been divided into several categories according to the way they can be used by Man. Following the text found in Isidore's Etymology (XII.II.1-8, and XII.VII.I-9), some animals are designated as beasts of burden, some are raised for food, some may be ridden, whilst others are not so easily dominated by men. Note that the division also makes a hierarchical distinction: lions are put on top, as they are often represented as a symbol of Christ, followed by cattle, and the bottom category features brute beasts.)

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[107] Aberdeen University Library MS 24 <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/comment/5r.hti> [accessed 18 June].

5- Human Exclusion and Denigration of the Animal Other:

Discussions in Medieval Philosophical and Theological Discourse

5.1   Introduction

In order to better understand the context in which the medieval literary works featuring the

dragon maiden were written, and to grasp exactly why her hybrid form is such an anomaly, it

is important to explore the medieval background of philosophical and theological discussions

on humans and animals. As said before, the main concern found in Animal Theory is the way

in which the human has established its own superior identity by comparing itself to and

setting itself apart from the animal. Generally, scholars working within Animal Theory focus

on today's society, but the ideas can be applied to the Middle Ages as well. In fact, the idea

that Man is a unique rational being different from other animals first began to take shape in

Classical times and mostly developed against a Greek background. It is already found with the

Sophists, later returns in a different form with Socrates and Plato, then continues on in the

works of Aristotle, and is still present in ideas by, for instance, the Stoics. Indeed, man was

the ultimate focus of much of Classical philosophy and Baker concludes that "the Greek

philosophic tradition (…) had on the whole viewed man benevolently. He was a rational

animal quite at home in a universe essentially rational"[108].

This idea of Man as the rational animal at the centre of the universe continues on in the

Middle Ages, but goes through some changes. Medieval philosophers inherited several ideas

from the Classics, especially when Aristotle's works were rediscovered through commentaries

by Islamic philosophers in the twelfth century[109], but by trying to square the ideas of the

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[108] Herschel Clay Baker, *The Image of Man: A Study of the Idea of Human Dignity in Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 109. Originally published as *The Dignity of Man*.

[109] Some of Aristotle's ideas were known in early medieval times through works by Cicero and translations by Boethius, but through commentaries by Arabic philosophers, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and Averroes (Ibn

ancients with the medieval Christian worldview shaped by thinkers such as Augustine, a different type of anthropocentrism, also distinctly different from today, arose.

5.2   Defining Man Through Use of the Animal

Throughout the medieval discussions that follow in this chapter, the crucial underlying thought is that the definition of what is an 'animal' can be and, crucially, is used to define the 'human'. In *De Anima*, Aristotle argues that by defining the souls of other living beings such as animals, one can understand the human soul[110]. This idea returns with Aquinas, who argues that "from the resemblance of sense (i.e. animals) to intellect (i.e. humans) we can mount to some knowledge of intellectual beings"[111]. Both Aristotle and Aquinas argue that questions of defining the animal are really about defining the human; a defence which allows them the liberty of discussing animals. Consequently, Pellegrin calls the Aristotelian descriptions of nature an "anthropocentric doctrine"[112]. This anthropocentrism found with Aristotle, and later returning with Aquinas, works two ways: Man's superior identity is formed by its comparison to lower forms of being such as animals, and the lower forms of being are judged according to scale by determining how far from the human exemplar they are.

Overall, medieval Man's relationship to the animal is somewhat ambiguous, as the human is considered to have several basic needs and features in common with animals and yet medieval thinkers insist that Man is essentially different from the animal and is really in a league of its own. This ambiguity between Man and animal is similar to that between Man

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Rušd), many more of Aristotle's works became known in the medieval Western world from the twelfth century onwards. Following this, Aristotle quickly became one of the great ancient authorities in the Middle Ages.

[110] Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, transl. by Richard C. Taylor, ed. by Thérése-Anne Druart (Newhaven: Yale UP, 2009), pp. 8-10. I have chosen to present Aristotle's *De Anima* through this version as it was via Averroes that this work became known to medieval Western thinkers and his commentaries had a greater influence on Western philosophy than that by Avicenna.

[111] Quoted in Judith A. Barad, *Aquinas on the Nature and Treatment of Animals* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1995), p. 50. This book is a useful guide, but the author at times does not clearly document her sources and so it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between Aquinas' opinions and her own.

[112] Pierre Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals: Biology and The Conceptual Unity of the Aristotelian Corpus*, transl. by Anthony Preus (Berkeley: California UP, 1986), p. 92. Originally published as *La Classification des animaux chez Aristote: Statut de la biologie et unite de l'aristotélisme*.

and monster, since the monster is often frighteningly similar to humans, but yet Man insists on seeing itself as superior to the monster, who is essentially a faulty being. By emphasizing how different or bad an animal or monster is, and determining why this is so, Man is able to create its identity as a superior human that defines the norm by which others are to be judged. Similarly, throughout the negotiations between degrees of animality found in the dragon maiden stories, the purpose of defining the boundary between human and animal is to define who is the human in the story.

5.3   Souls and Hierarchy

In the medieval worldview, the world is divided into a hierarchy of beings[113], and this hierarchy is intimately tied to ideas about whether or not a being has a soul and if this soul is different from other degrees of soul found in other living beings. This idea is already found with Aristotle, who, unlike Plato, does not accept one universal kind of soul found in all living beings, but starts to distinguish between different degrees of soul. In *De Anima*[114], Aristotle argues that there are three degrees of souls: the nutritive soul found in plants, the sensitive soul found in animals, and the rational soul found in humans. The nutritive soul is only concerned with growing and feeding itself and does not breathe. The sensitive soul is somewhat more advanced than the nutritive soul because its senses are more developed and because it has breath, but it merely has to rely on instinct and cannot really move of its own accord. The most advanced is the rational soul, which has all the properties pertained by the nutritive and sensitive soul but is also capable of varying degrees of intellect[115], and is able to act out of its own accord. These degrees of soul form a kind of hierarchical chain, in which

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[113] Medieval minds seem to have a natural preference for order and classification, as is exemplified by the ideas of universal hierarchies but is also found in the many works on classification of plants and minerals, florilegia containing important quotations divided into categories, or even the invention of chapters and paragraphs.

[114] Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, pp. 5, 12-13. The following summary is based on Book II, pp. 106-291.

[115] See Aristotle, 'Topics', *The Internet Classics Archive*, transl. by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/topics.mb.txt> [accessed June 1 2011].

the souls considered to be higher up in the chain contain all the features of those below it, but not vice versa. Aristotle also argues that the sensitive soul can be further divided into different groups of higher and lower animals. Interestingly, a similar connection between the hierarchy of being and different kinds of soul is found in the works of Augustine, who uses different vocabulary for what he perceives to be different kinds of soul: " he uses the Latin *anima* for soul in general, while reserving *animus* or *mens* for the rational soul"[116]. Generally, Augustine assumes that the human soul is different from and superior to animals.

There is, however, one very important difference between the hierarchy of beings found in Aristotle's works and that proposed by Augustine. In the hierarchy proposed by Aristotle, Man is on top of the chain of beings in the world. Augustine the theologian, however, adds the celestial beings to the Great Chain of Being[117] and therewith appears to change the balance somewhat. Although, on the face of it, Man in this new hierarchy suddenly receives a new level that is placed above it, in fact the added level and the added God-factor serve to exalt the higher human status even more. Augustine's view of the medieval world has God at its centre, followed by different hierarchies of angels[118], followed by Man, and finally the lower creatures, in an outwardly expanding order. Within this hierarchy of centre and periphery, where God is at the most central point and inanimate objects are at the extremes, there is also an ascending hierarchy. As with Aristotle, the human is on top of the worldly part of this ascending hierarchy, because "as the sentient nature, even when it feels pain, is superior to the stony, which can feel none, so the rational nature, even when wretched, is more excellent than that which lacks reason or feeling"[119]. God's light shines over all of his created beings, but that which is closer to Him can share more in his

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[116] Roland J. Teske, 'Augustine's Theory of Soul', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), p. 116.

[117] He is not the first to do this, as Plato was for instance also concerned with the heavenly spheres, but Augustine certainly shaped this hierarchy in terms of Christianity and his influence was felt for centuries after.

[118] For a much-referenced medieval hierarchy of angels, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia Volume 15: The World Order*, ed. by M.J. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), p. 185.

[119] Augustine, *The City of God*, transl. Marcus Dods (Peabody (MA): Hendrickson Publishers, 2009) p. 343.

divine illumination than what is further away and can only perceive a diluted reflection of the divine spark. Humans, therefore, receive more of God's illumination, which translates to human intellectual capabilities, than animals. Furthermore, in *The City of God,* Augustine argues that "not every creature can be blessed (for beasts, trees, stones, and things of that kind have not this capacity)"[120] and so lumps all earthly things different from Man together and denies their share in the celestial world. Humans are God's chosen species, and moreover the history of salvation focuses on the redemption of the human soul alone. Animals cannot share in this and so remain blissfully ignorant of the great rewards found in the afterlife. Humans, unlike animals, may spend some time on earth, but they are essentially temporary visitors, bound for a greater place in the hereafter if they stay focused on God.

Throughout such discussions it becomes clear that Man is God's favourite creation who was created in His image to rule over the world. These ideas are echoed in other works by medieval thinkers. Albert the Great[121], for instance, opens book twenty-two of *De Animalibus* by stating that "by way of preface we will consider man, the most perfect of all animals, since in the order of perfection he ranks the highest"[122]. Further on in the book, he discusses "man's natural and spiritual properties" and states that "man is the point of union between God and the world. Man, indeed, possesses a divine intellect by which he is sometimes so far uplifted above the mundane world that the matter of the universe is compelled to bend to his ideas"[123]. He takes these ideas even further and argues not only that Man is the most perfect being connected to God, but states that "though part of man is conjoined with the world, he is not subject to it; rather he is set over it as governor"[124]. These ideas are of course Scriptural echoes of Genesis 1:26: "et ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem

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[120] Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 342-343.
[121] Or Albertus Magnus, a Dominican friar and later bishop of Regensburg, who lived from roughly 1193 to the 15th of November, 1280. He is known for his works on the natural sciences and was a tutor to Thomas Aquinas. See the introduction to Albert the Great, *Man and The Beasts: De Animalibus, Books 22-26*, transl. by James J. Scanlan (Binghamton (NY): Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), pp. 1-14.
[122] Albert the Great, *Man and The Beasts*, p. 59.
[123] Ibid., p. 65.
[124] Ibid.

et similitudinem nostram et praesit piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae omnique reptili quod movetur in terra". Aquinas even argues that the human itself is a microcosm that reflects the hierarchies found within nature as they were created by God[125]. In the medieval hierarchy of the world it is clear that divine providence has deigned humans to be above animals so that they may rule over them, and humans have even been given the ability to possibly ascend further up the Great Chain of Being. This notion of the human on top of the worldly hierarchy returns in the literary context of the dragon maiden stories, and it is this status quo which the dragon maiden encounter questions.

5.4   Why the Human is Better

Many medieval thinkers believe that Man is essentially an animal, but Man differs from other, inferior, animals for a variety of reasons, several of which return time and time again. Firstly, the most-used argument in separating Man from beast is of course Man's towering intellect, the equivalent of which is nowhere to be found in nature. For instance, Aquinas argues that "for all other animals, nature has prepared food, hair as a covering, teeth, horns, claws as means of defence or at least speed in flight, while man alone was made without any natural provisions for these things. Instead of all these, man was endowed with reason, by the use of which he could procure all these things for himself.[126] Aristotle further connects Man's intellect to his senses, which he has in the greatest form of perfection[127]. In his commentary, Averroes notes that in humans none of the senses are absent and that "if there were a sixth sense, it would have to be found in a human being"[128]. Generally, Aristotle, and many medieval thinkers after him, distinguish between sense and intellect, but the two are

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[125] Barad, *Aquinas on the Nature and Treatment of Animals*, p. 39.
[126] Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno: On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*, transl. Gerald B. Phelan, ed. Joseph Kenny (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), chapter 1: 4-5.
[127] See, for instance, Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, p. 165.
[128] Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, p. 252.

connected in Man since knowledge is obtained through observations made by the senses[129].

Animals rely completely on their senses, have no great intellect, and so react blindly to what their senses tell them, whilst humans have all the senses, have a superior intellect, and are able to ponder upon wise decisions and the deeper meaning of things[130]. Humans can freely choose from the data supplied by their senses, whilst animals react to the data gathered from their senses out of instinct, not intellect.

There are many other arguments given by medieval philosophers and theologians as to why Man is superior to animals. An examination of the different arguments summed up by Albert the Great in *De Animalibus* proves an interesting case to exemplify some of the many possible reasons proposed by medieval thinkers as to why this is true. Albert naturally follows familiar arguments that Man is superior because of his intellect, his will, and his ability to control his emotions and desires. He continues by stating that only Man knows true friendship, is uniquely able to be educated, and is the only animal capable of laughing[131]. He goes even further and says that "simply put, man is the civilized animal "par excellence", because he communicates verbally with his fellows (…) and in general his life is ordered and perfected by the urbanities of civilized behaviour"[132]. The two most prominent features that distinguish Man from mere beasts are language and politics. Man's capacity for language returns with Aquinas, who says that "other animals, it is true, express their feelings to one another in a general way, as a dog may express anger by barking (…) but man communicates with his kind more completely than any other animal known to be gregarious"[133]. This idea of language as a distinguishing human feature also returns with the dragon maiden as some of them speak to the knight during their encounter, causing further confusion about their nature.

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[129] What is observed through the senses is then stored in a human being through knowledge. Compare Aristotle's example in 'Topics' 1.13: "sensation differs from knowledge in that the latter may be recovered again after it has been lost, while the former cannot".

[130] The idea that an animal reacts on instinct and a human thinks before he acts also returns with the dragon maiden, where the knight actually has to change his instinctive reaction to kill a beast and ponders what to do.

[131] Albert the Great, *Man and The Beasts*, p. 67.

[132] Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[133] Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno*, chapter 1:7.

Furthermore, Man does not have a natural covering of fur, but wears clothes to keep warm; a sign of civility. This notion, too, returns in the case study of the dragon maiden.

Albert's last point on politics is often made by medieval thinkers and returns in many works from the period after the Middle Ages. The idea goes back to Aristotle, who, in his *Politics*, argues that "man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity"[134]. Man is a member of a wider community and has both responsibilities and rewards within this community. Aquinas picks up the same idea when he argues that "it is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal"[135]. Augustine, too, writes of politics and communities when he makes a distinction between the City of Man and the City of God, but Man must here rather work together in the religious community to attain happiness in the afterlife[136]. Though they had no access to a translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, both al-Fārābī [137] and Moses Maimonides[138] write about Man as an essentially political animal whose well-being depends upon the community, where each individual contributes to the greater good and the political system is responsible for keeping order. This idea of the importance of communities also returns with the dragon maiden, where the ladies of the first group are eventually absorbed into chivalric society but Mélusine, surprisingly, first becomes the absolute centre of society and is eventually driven away as an outcast. In short, Man is not

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[134] Aristotle, 'Politics', *The Internet Classics Archive*, transl. by Benjamin Jowett, Book I, Part 2: 1253 a 1-2. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html> [accessed 1 June 2011].

[135] Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno*, Chapter 1:4.

[136] Augustine, *The City of God*.

[137] Abū Naṣ r al-Fārābī lived from roughly 870-950. Not much is known about his life since most biographies were created centuries after his death, but his philosophy held sway for some time until other Arabic philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes became more influential. In *The Virtuous City*, he argues that Man needs a community and that happiness cannot be achieved by an individual alone. See Majid Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002).

[138] Moses ben-Maimon is a Jewish philosopher who was born in Córdoba in 1135 and died in Egypt in 1204. He was well read in the Arabic tradition and follows ideas like those of al-Fārābī in arguing that the ability to govern oneself and others is unique to human beings, though he views man more as a social than a political animal. See Kenneth Seeskin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

only rational and able to curb his desires or tell right from wrong, but also the epitome of civilization because he speaks, wears clothes, and is part of the greater community.

5.5   If a Man Were to Act Like A Beast…

Following medieval ideas of what distinguishes a human from an animal, a definition of the ideal human emerges. More precisely, it is exactly those things which distinguishes man from animal which form Man's greatest purpose in life. For example, medieval thinkers argue that human beings are not only able to curb their strongest emotions and desires through their Will, but even have a responsibility to do so as this is what separates Man from beast. If a Man were to listen to his raw emotions or bodily desires, he is in fact acting as an unworthy human or, in other words, a beast. Compare for example Albert the Great's argument that:

> If a man freely chooses to abase himself to the level of the world, he sheds the dignity of his humanity and assumes the nature of a beast. Such a man is likened to a pig because of his wanton behaviour, to a dog because of his snarling temper, to a lion because of his rapacity, and similarly to other animals because of his *sub-human* actions.[139]

There is, in fact, nothing more shameful than a human who ignores those great features which distinguish him from the animal other and chooses to live a worldly, sinful life. Following the Aristotelian categories of the different degrees of soul, Man acts like a vegetative being if he is only concerned with eating and surviving, and Man acts like a sensitive being, or an animal, if he is merely concerned with eating and acting upon his most basic senses without using his intellect. To Aristotle, such behaviour is a disgrace, since Man's ultimate goal is to use his intellect in understanding the greater challenges in the universe. Augustine similarly calls

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[139] Albert the Great, *Man and The Beasts*, p. 65. Italics mine.

those who focus only on the needs of this world and therefore live a sinful live 'animals' or 'beasts' because they ignore man's true purpose of obtaining knowledge of God. Interestingly, in the heavenly Paradise the human body is said to be resurrected in its ultimate form, and will no longer have need for basic, animalistic bodily functions such as hunger or sexual desire. These desires are of the world and will stay there.

Related to this is another of Man's properties: the ability to distinguish between good and evil[140]. Again, Albert the Great makes things very clear in stating that "only man is able to discern the moral choice between good and evil (…) whereas all brute animals seek only the useful and the pleasurable"[141]. Albert also notes that "one of the properties peculiar to human nature is the feeling of shame engendered by committing an evil deed (…) hence, incorrigible sinners are termed shameless because, by foreswearing the honourable path of reasoned behaviour, they sink to the irrational level of witless cattle"[142]. Not only is Man able to distinguish between good and evil, Man is also the only being that understands the consequences of any act, whether it be good or evil, and feels shame. In other words, with humanity's great power comes great responsibility. If he were to act against his superior nature, Man sinks to a level below that of the animal which is deemed to know no better. So, a man of sin acts even worse than an animal: a hell of an insult within such an anthropocentric worldview. Through comments like this it becomes clear that medieval Man has not only distanced himself from the animal in claiming that he is different, but moreover creates a superior identity by aligning the natural behaviour of animals with negative concepts such as baseness, stupidity, and sin. In the end, the man of sin is the greatest beast of all.

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[140] See Gen. 3:5: "et eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum", and Gen. 3:22: "et ait ecce Adam factus est quasi unus ex nobis sciens bonum et malum". After the Fall, Man became as gods in knowing good and evil through the intellect, yet man's body would from thereon be similar to that of the beasts, knowing hunger and desire.
[141] Albert the Great, *Man and The Beasts*, p. 66.
[142]Ibid. Shame also came to Man after the Fall, when Adam and Eve first noticed they were naked and hid.

6- The Norm(al) versus the Monster

6.1   Degrees of Animality in the Medieval Literary Chivalric World

After the previous examination of arguments used within the debate on the difference between humans and animals found in philosophical and theological discourse, it has become possible to make an overview of the way in which Derrida's degrees of animality are at work in the Middle Ages and, more specifically, within medieval chivalric romance, the context in which the dragon maiden features. The degrees of animality can be applied to the medieval worldview because philosophers and theologians continually make attempts to distinguish humans from animals and therewith reveal that the distinction may not be equally clear to everyone and is perhaps a distinction present in the human mind[143]. The themes discussed above show by which standard the degrees of humanity are measured, and it is noticeable that room has been created for beings who act outside of their perceived species boundaries. For example, Aristotle discusses a hierarchy amongst sensitive souls, whilst other medieval thinkers sometimes distinguish between the word 'cattle' for domesticated animals who's products are of use to man, and the word 'beasts' for wild and dangerous animals[144]. Similarly, the discussions on Man's ultimate purpose in life and sinful living serve to exemplify that even among humans there is a hierarchy: some men act like true humans whilst others lower themselves to the level of beasts. In other words, there is room for movement or further dividing between the categories of 'human' and 'animal'. Nevertheless, whether it be in arguments on the souls of living beings, the establishment of a hierarchy of the universe, or

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[143] Compare medieval discussions on universals, where one of the questions is whether categories such 'human' or 'animal' are actual realities occurring in nature, or rather the result of something created in the human mind. See Gyula Klima, 'The Medieval Problem of Universals', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. by* Edward N. Zalta *(Winter 2008)* <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/universals-medieval/> [accessed 8 June 2011].
[144] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 15.

on discussions of the intellect, civilization, and sinful living, humans come out better than animals and are even thought to rule over inferior animals.

In the following overview I will show how the degrees of animality are present in both the general medieval world view and more specifically in the chivalric world found in medieval literature. This literary chivalric world is, after all, the home of the dragon maiden, and in order to understand how the dragon maiden challenges the norm of the divide between humans and animals within this world, it is important to first establish what this norm is. Therefore, I will first explore the way in which Derrida's degrees of animality are usually presented in medieval chivalric literature. In this overview, I cannot say exactly which animal out of the many different species falls into which category because this proves to be an unending task. There is however, a fairly uniform view on which being belongs to which category within the context of medieval chivalric literature[145] and so I will give some of the most common examples found in chivalric literature and consequently deduce their status.

6.2   The 'Animalized' Animal

In Derrida's classification, the 'animalized' animal is lawfully, and ethically, allowed to be put to death. This animal is furthermore designed to be subjected by Man, and Man has a right of access to making use of the animal's body. In our modern Western society, these are the animals that form the greatest threat to Man or those that function as Man's greatest source for food or other useful products. In medieval times, these same two types of animals fall within this classification, but the second group also includes animals that serve as Man's property and are useful for work-related activities.

The first group of animals that fall within this category of 'animalized' animals are generally determined as 'beasts'; they are a danger to Man and are therefore to be eliminated.

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[145] This is not to say that there is no difference among medieval chivalric works in general; the rules and operations of Chrétien's early medieval chivalric world is very different from that of, say, Malory.

The elimination of such a dangerous animal has no lawful repercussions, should cause no moral dilemma, and is in fact an obligatory act. The killing of wolves and bears, who pose a threat to humans and their livestock, is deemed permissible according to this principle. Similarly, a dangerous creature such as the dragon is not only allowed to be killed, by for instance a knight or a saint, but moreover has to be killed in order to eliminate its threat to humanity. Knights in the medieval literary chivalric world, therefore, have no trouble killing dangerous beasts and are expected never to hesitate in doing so. Also, many works of chivalric literature deal with the hunt, an important social event where knights are able to prove both their own masculinity and their strong social bond as a group by chasing down wild animals. Several Arthurian tales, such as *Erec and Enide* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain*, in fact begin with a hunting scene and much of the plot in other chivalric tales, such as *Ipomadon*, *Sir Degrevant*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, revolves around the hunt[146]. Furthermore, the hunt of a white stag is a recurring theme within Arthurian literature[147]. These dangerous animals can also function as status symbols after their deaths. Such is the case when dead animals are put on display after a hunt, but also when a knight takes part of the body of a defeated dragon as proof that he is the best of knights.

The second group of animals that falls within this category consists of those animals which are of use to Man and are sometimes of vital importance for Man's survival. This applies to those animals that serve as suppliants of food and drink, such as sheep, goats or pigs. It also goes for animals that can supply humans with clothes. Apart from these types of

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[146] Carleton W. Carroll, transl., 'Erec and Enide', in *Chrètien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, ed. by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 37-122. James J. Wilhelm, transl., 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell', in *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 467-488. Anglo-Norman Ipomadon: Anthony J. Holden, ed., *Ipomedon, poème de Hue de Rotelande* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979). English Ipomadon: Tadahiro Ikegami, ed., *The Lyfe of Ipomydon* (Tokyo: Dep. Of English Seijo University, 1983). Helen Cooper, ed., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, transl. Keith Harrison (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998). Leslie F. Casson, ed., *The romance of Sir Degrevant: A Parallel-Text Edition from mss. Lincoln Cathedral A.5.2 and Cambridge University Ff.1.6* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1949).
[147] It is found in, for example, *Lanceloet en het Hert met de Witte Voet*, *Lai de Tyolet*, Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, Chrètien's *Erec and Enide*, and the Wauchier Perceval continuation. For more information, see Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

animal, those animals which are of use to Man in other fields also fall within this category. Examples of this kind are horses, used for transport and in battle but also for farming, and cows or oxen, similarly used as work animals. It must be noted that these areas can overlap: a cow, for example, was not only useful as a working tool or a possible source of food but was also valued for its hide, which could be turned into leather or parchment. Within the context of chivalric literature, the horse is the quintessential example of the animal used by humans, as much of the knight's identity is connected to his horse. In fact, the word 'chevalier' literally means 'horse-man': an indication of the intricate connection between these two. In *Le Chevalier du Papegau*, Arthur encounters a monstrous centaur-like sea creature whose armour and horse are part of his body, parodying the connection between a knight and his horse and armour. After a knight has defeated another, it is standard protocol to take both the loser's armour and horse as the spoils of war. In *Erec and Enide*, by following this custom, Erec has won so many battles that he and his wife are at some point in the story riding around with a dozen horses or so[148]. It is also quite shameful for a knight to lose his horse, as is attested by the story of the deceived Gawain in *Perceval*[149]. In this episode, Gawain loses his most beloved horse, Gringolet, and has to suffer the humiliation of riding around on a battered old nag: a clear sign of demasculinization if ever there was one. As with Gringolet, some horses within the chivalric world are even given a name[150].

Although the act of killing animals from the first group of dangerous animals creates no legal problems, the killing or hurting of animals found within this second group can have legal repercussions. This, however, has nothing to do with any moral objections, but rather with objections to destroying someone else's property. The animals found within this second group generally function as Man's 'property' and are part of Man's perceived cultural status.

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[148] See Carroll, 'Erec and Enide', in *Chrètien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, pp. 72-87.

[149] William W. Kibler, transl., 'Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal', in *Chrètien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, pp. 381-494.

[150] Compare also Bayard, a magic horse from the chansons de geste, who returns in *Orlando Innamorato*. Horses in chansons de geste are often incredibly strong and loyal, functioning almost as characters in their own right.

6.3   The 'Humanized' Animal

The animals within this category are the ones "we exempt from the sacrificial regime by endowing them with ostensibly human features"[151]. According to Wolfe, the primary group of animals which falls within this classification for modern Western society are pets. However, medieval people did not really have what we would call 'pets'. Admittedly, several medieval kings and noblemen kept dogs in a way that brings them close to the status of a pet, but animals were mostly kept in or close to medieval households for their utility to humans and dogs too were kept for their use as herding or hunting animals[152].

Nonetheless, this category is particularly interesting and fruitful for medieval times, since a different group of animals can be placed within it: animals used as symbols. Although symbolic animals are found as early as Aesop's fables and are still present today in many children's stories, the medieval period shows a particular fondness for the symbolic or allegorical use of animals. Many paintings, woodcuts or examples of heraldry bear symbolic images of animals, and they are also found abundantly in literature. Camille argues that the theological model of interpretation of animals established by Augustine, and Aristotle's philosophical model, both "emphasize mimesis - assuming that animals are marvellous and beautiful, worthy of human representation and reflection"[153], but the Christian model "views animals as a text to be read in order to reach a higher, allegorical and usually Christological significance"[154]. For instance, some medieval saints are known for their love of animals, but in a story such as St. Anthony's sermon to the fishes[155] the main point that comes forward is how Man, the higher rational being, acts as a lowly being when a simple animal such as the

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[151] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p.101.
[152] See, for instance, John G. Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).
[153] Michael Camille, 'Bestiary or Biology? Aristotle's Animals in Oxford, Merton College, MS 271', in *Aristotle's Animals in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1999), p. 356.
[154] Camille, 'Bestiary or Biology', p. 356.
[155] For the whole story, see Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), p. 180.

fish is more willing to listen to the word of God. The insult is in this case all the more painful because the human is deemed to be less worthy than a beast.

Furthermore, medieval bestiaries, in which the significance of the way an animal acts is related to the world of humans rather than to any biological features of the animal itself, make a clear example of the way in which animals are used for symbolic meaning. To give an example, in *The Second-Family Bestiary*, the ostrich is described as a creature that "raises her eyes to the sky and strains <to see> if that star which is called Virgilia <the Pleiades> appears, for she does not lay eggs unless that star has risen"[156]. After the ostrich has laid her eggs, "she at once forgets her eggs and never returns to them"[157]. This act is interpreted as a guiding principle for Man because the ostrich forgets all earthly things and focuses only on the heavens. The author further laments: "how much more, O man, should you strive for the prize of a heavenly summons, you for whom God was made Man"[158]. Whilst an ostrich is a guiding example for good men, a creature such as the dragon is likened to evil: "the dragon is larger than all serpents or than all animals on earth (…) to this dragon is likened to the Devil, who is the most monstrous serpent"[159]. Animals can be presented as good or bad examples, but in both cases their worth is measured by the lessons Mankind can learn from them.

Similarly, in literature animals are often used to portray a symbolic or allegorical level of meaning. One need only think of the lion in Chrètien's *Yvain*[160] or the leopard, the lion, and the she-wolf in Canto I of Dante's *Divina Commedia*[161]. Animals can also appear in dreams, as happens in the *Morte Arthure*, when Arthur has a prophetic dream of a battle between a

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[156] Willene B. Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second-Family Bestiary: Commentary, Art, Text and Translation* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006). p. 173.
[157] Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, p. 173.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., p. 194.
[160] Kibler, transl., 'Yvain, or the Knight With the Lion', in *Chrètien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, pp. 295-380.
[161] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. Volume 1: Inferno*, transl. by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 2003), pp. 67-71. Interestingly, all the animals in this text are found in the *Inferno*.

dragon and a bear that symbolizes his future victories[162]. Other examples of animals who fall within this category are anthropomorphised animals, who possess many features associated with humans such as language, clothing, and life within a community. Salisbury argues that in stories containing such animals the boundaries between human and animal begin to blur, perhaps even "revealing the animal within each human"[163]. Examples of these are the stories on Reynard the Fox, Latin beast poems, and beast fables like those of Marie de France, but there are also religious exempla containing 'humanized' animals. Both *Le Chevalier du Papegau* and *Las Novas del Papagay*[164] feature a parrot as one of the main characters, whose presence provides a satirical symbolic note on the role of composers of chivalric tales. Again, in these stories the animals say something about humans and their ways of living.

6.4   The 'Animalized' Human

This category is what Wolfe calls "probably the most troubling category of all, since all manner of brutalizations carried out by cultural prescription can serve to animalize humans"[165]. The 'animalized' human is someone who is deemed un-human and inferior by those who place themselves in the category above him. The branding of a human as a 'monster' because of his physical appearance which deviates from the norm, as was done during nineteenth-century freak shows, is essentially the same kind of process. According to Wolfe, "the fundamental sacrifice of *nonhuman animals* (…) must continue to be legitimized if the ideological work of marking human others as animals for the purposes of their objectification and sacrifice is to be effective"[166]. The legitimized treatment of 'animalized'

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[162] See Larry D. Benson, ed., 'Alliterative Morte Arthure', in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, rev. by Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), line 760-805. This famous dream first occurs in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and returns in several Arthurian tales.

[163] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 105.

[164] Arnaut de Carcassès, 'Las Novas del Papagay', in *Nouvelles Courtoises*, ed. by Suzanne Méjean-Thiolier and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997), pp. 186-205.

[165] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p. 101.

[166] Ibid.

humans is inextricably tied to the way humans treat 'animalized' animals. For the Middle Ages, two groups of people fall within this category: those who, by tradition, are deemed the inferior other, and those who fail to act as a 'proper' human.

People who traditionally fall within the first group are, for instance, slaves or captured enemies of war. The Jewish people have also been deemed the inferior other throughout history, and similarly the Romani peoples. During the Roman conquest, the so-called 'barbaric' peoples subdued by the Roman Empire were viewed as inferior brutes worthy of domination[167], whom the Romans brought civilization and rule. Similar examples from history are of course the native Southern American peoples versus the 'civilized' conquistadores, the native Northern American peoples versus 'more advanced' European settlers[168], and the Australian aborigines versus the 'intellectually superior' Europeans. Cultural hegemony spread by the British to their colonies and Western insistence on spreading democracy to other parts of the world can be legitimized for the same reasons. Returning to medieval times, the branding of another person as 'animalized' or backward and culturally and intellectually inferior is a powerful tool for establishing one's superior identity, especially in times of war. For example, during the Reconquista the troubadour Gavaudan attempted to encourage the French to help the king of Spain "conquer all the dogs and renegade turncoats that Muhammad has bamboozled" and told them "let us not abandon our heritage to the black dogs from oversea"[169]. Through such declarations, the Spanish army and its allies, all predominantly Catholic, were able to justify their destruction of what they deemed to be an

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[167] Compare, for example, Tacitus, 'Germania', in *The Agricola and The Germania*, transl. by H. Mattingly (London: Penguin, 1948.
[168] Several contemporary texts attest to a debate on whether or not native Northern Americans had a soul and if they should be seen as animals or humans. See, Friedman, 'Epilogue', in *The Monstrous Races*, pp. 197-207.
[169] Quoted in Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 69.

inferior and beastly enemy. In chivalric literature, the Saracen is one of the standard enemies that needs to be defeated so that the superiority of the Christian knights may be reaffirmed[170].

The other group placed within this category are those who are considered to act like animals. The sinful man, who listens to his desires and either does not use his intellect or does not use it for good, is of course listed here. The power of such a designation should not be underestimated: a sinful man has in fact lost all of its human features and so is no longer worthy of being treated as such. Someone who has killed another human, for example, has acted like a beast and should be taken out of the human community, whether by being locked away or by being put to death. The bodies of criminals become property of those in rule and the wider community. Similarly, heretics or enemies of the king lose their human status and so are allowed to be tortured or killed. The greatest example of this found in Arthurian literature is of course the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere and its consequences. When this affair is discovered, a band of knights takes up arms to capture the queen and kill Lancelot, with Arthur's permission. The two have not only committed adultery but have also betrayed their king and so are branded as sinners. Lancelot manages to escape, but Guinevere is to be burned at the stake and so has lost not only her sovereignty as a wife or a queen but also as a human being[171]. Another example worthy of mention here is the outlaw, frequently found in medieval literature, who is allowed to be killed without legal consequences[172].

However, a sinful man can escape the category of the 'animalized' human if he repents. Through God's grace, the sinful man can do penance and either retain some of his human status in this life or at least be granted forgiveness in the next. This idea returns in

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[170] As is done by several of Mélusine's sons. The Saracens are also the enemy in *Orlando Innamorato* and, in fact, Brandimarte used to be one.
[171] The story occurs in different versions, but arguably the famous one is found in Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, ed. by Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), pp. 673-684.
[172] See John C. Appleby, and Paul Dalton, ed., *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c. 1066-1600* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

much of medieval literature[173], not only in hagiography where aspiring saints make a grave error early in life and then devote the rest of it in God's service, but also in chivalric literature where a figure like the Fisher King has to do penance in guarding the Grail until a chosen knight comes along to release him[174]. Lancelot and Guinevere, too, redeem themselves by devoting the rest of their lives in God's service and both eventually die a saintly death[175].

One specific tradition must be mentioned here: that of the medieval 'wild man'. Yamamoto calls this wild man "perhaps the most problematic of all medieval bodies (…) who seemed to straddle the boundary between what was human and what was not"[176]. The wild man generally lives on his own outside the human community and is often described as having no clothes, but being covered in hair, or having lost much of his power of speech. This wild man may have once been human, or still shows certain signs of humanity, but he has reverted to an animalized state[177]. An example of such a wild man is found in *Yvain*, where Calegronant describes his meeting with a herdsman who "looked down at me, without saying a word, no more than a beast would have; and I thought he didn't know how to talk and was mute"[178]. Calegronant asks him "if you are a good creature or not?" because he doubts whether or not this wild man is human, and the herdsman replies "I am a man"[179]. Nevertheless, Calegronant is not too sure about him and keeps asking questions. It is not until the herdsman tells the knight that he is "lord over my beasts"[180] as proof that he ranks above animals, that the knight feels comfortable to discuss his quest with this strange man.

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[173] It also returns with Remondin and Gieffroy in *Mélusine*.
[174] In some versions of the Grail story, like that of Wolfram, the Fisher King devoted too much of his life to worldly pleasures and was punished by God by being struck through the loins by a spear. He cannot die and suffers agony from his wounds, awaiting a virtuous knight who can heal them and release him from his bond.
[175] Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, pp. 718-726.
[176] Dorothy Yamamoto, 'Introduction', in *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 10.
[177] This is also true for the young Carduino.
[178] Kibler, 'Yvain, or the Knight With the Lion', p. 299.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

6.5   The 'Humanized' Human

By debating what makes a human different from an animal, a picture of the ideal human emerges and the most perfect category of the 'humanized' human comes out most clearly. The ideal medieval human, as can be deduced from the discussion above, is a rational being who spends his time understanding the universe, preferably the kind created by God, and uses his knowledge for good, especially for the good of the greater community. The ideal human acts as a human and takes the accompanying responsibilities in that he[181] should tell right from wrong and always choose the morally better option, he should keep his emotions and desires under control, and he is to act civilized in using language and wearing clothes. This human will not lower himself to the standards of other beings in this world; otherwise it will no longer fit into the category of the 'humanized' human. It is apparent that the requirements for a human to fit into this category are not that different from the ones described by Derrida: features such as rationality, language, and acting civilized all return, though of course the medieval worldview has an added God-factor. Although one might argue that, biologically speaking, all humans are automatically humans by virtue of having, for instance, a human body, this feature alone is not enough for the medieval world. A human is also expected to act like a proper 'humanized' human and should not descend to the primitive level of beasts.

Within chivalric literature, knights are the most 'humanized' humans, but even among knights there are qualitative differences. This is found most clearly in the stories of the Grail Quest, where only the most virtuous knight, whether it be Perceval or Galahad, can find the Grail. This perfect knight is of high social standing, helps others for the greater good of the community, has a perfect balance between the concerns of this world and his faith in God, keeps his desires under control, and is the epitome of civility in his use of courtly language

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[181] In referring to the ideal medieval human as a 'man' or 'he, I am following medieval convention. Indeed, as Derrida had proposed with regard to modern Western society, a further distinction within the top degree of animality can be made to indicate that man is above woman. This is similar for medieval times, where women are often ranked below men but above animals, though sometimes only just.

and the way he dresses himself in rich clothing. It is, after all, not any innate quality that makes one a proper human, though this does set man apart from beast, but it is the way one conducts oneself in life that makes the measure of a man.

6.6   Creatures that Dwell at the Boundaries

The different degrees of animality mentioned in the previous chapter of course form an idealized picture rather than a permanent, inflexible division based on fact. Surely, the example of the last category of the ideal 'humanized' human does not apply to the average medieval person but rather serves to create an image to strive for. Although this idealized image is discussed in philosophical and theological discourse and is present in the medieval real world, it is actually even greater within literature. As Cohen argues, when it comes to ideas of the most perfect human, "no human body can actually occupy the impossible space of knighthood's inhuman ideals"[182]. In this ideal chivalric world created within literature, the differences between the most idealized 'humanized' human, the knight, and the most beastly 'animalized' animal, such as a dragon, are the most extreme, and yet it is perfectly plausible for them to meet within the space of a chivalric text. Beings in a chivalric text fall within one of the categories and hardly ever break the mould. A knight, for example, is always already destined to become one, even at a young age, and only needs to be given the means and opportunity to do so. Quests often await a specific knight who is destined to complete them, and similarly some ladies are destined to marry only one particular knight. Similarly, 'animalized' human figures are always inferior, are often enemies, and they deserve pity rather than sympathy. The 'animalized' animals is just an enemy that needs to be defeated or subdued, whilst examples of 'humanized' animals always stand out and are viewed more positively for what they say of humans. In other words, within the literary chivalric world, the

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[182] Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 83.

specific divisions for beings belonging to each degree of animality are quite fixed and the narrative patterns actually rely on these familiar categorical divisions[183].

In all, the two most extreme categories of the 'animalized' animal and the 'humanized' human are the easiest to describe since they are the ones set apart most clearly, both in theological, philosophical, and literary discourse, whilst, the two middle categories are more difficult to deduce. However, the most interesting cases are not those beings who easily fit into a category, but those who dwell on the edges of the category and present difficulties as to which one they belong. These last creatures are the ones who create anxiety, expose boundaries, and question familiar concepts. These complicated creatures, or monster as one would call them, are rare but do exist in the medieval literary chivalric world. They are the ones who expose the degrees of animality as arbitrary constructs, and yet at the same time they help to define the standards against which the degrees of animality are measured.

6.7   The Dragon Maiden as a Special Case of Interest

Of course, the dragon maiden is one of these monsters. Before we examine exactly why the dragon maiden is such an interesting character and how she contributes to the stories in which she features, however, we must first examine some of the more typical dangerous creatures within the medieval literary chivalric world. In order to show why the dragon maiden is a monster compared to these other creatures, a comparison between the dragon maiden and two of the most common enemies in medieval chivalric literature, the dragon and the giant, will be made. From this comparison it will become clear that the dragon maiden is a far more difficult and ambiguous creature than either dragon or giant and, consequently, it is difficult for the knight to decide what to do with her. As we shall see, most of the knight's enemies fall within

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[183] Admittedly, there are a few tales that play with these fixed notions, humorously exposing them, but these texts of course work as a funny parody simply because there is a fixed pattern. It must also be noted that these patterns appear to be cross-cultural: whether it be in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch or Scandinavian texts, a knight is allowed to defeat an inferior beast without any moral objections.

one or two categories of the degrees of animality, but the dragon maiden uniquely falls within all four at different points in the story. Then, a comparison between the dragon maiden and another animal-human hybrid creature found within the chivalric world, the werewolf, will be made to show that even among her own kind, the dragon maiden is a special case of interest.

6.7.1   Two Common Enemies: The Dragon and The Giant

Firstly, we will make a comparison between the dragon maiden on the one hand and the dragon and the giant on the other hand. Both the dragon and the giant are easily fitted into the degrees of animality and so do not require the knight who encounters them to do anything but act out of instinct. The dragon is a common 'animalized' animal enemy within the literary chivalric world[184], whilst the giant makes an excellent example of an 'animalized' human.

Encounters between a knight and a dragon generally follow the same narrative pattern, which is quite short: the knight encounters a dragon, of which he is sometimes told beforehand, and he kills it. The knight is honoured for his actions and the kill helps to define his identity as a proper knight. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, for example, Lancelot is asked to defeat a dangerous dragon locked in a tomb and he immediately complies: "whan sir Launcelot had lyffte up the tombe there came oute an orryble and a fyendely dragon spyttynge wylde fyre oute of hys mowthe. Than sir Launcelotte drew his swerde and faught wyth that dragon longe, and at the laste wyth grete payned sir Launcelot slew that dragon"[185]. Only a few lines are needed to describe the encounter, during which Lancelot does not hesitate to kill the dragon. In killing the dragon, Lancelot proves his identity as a knight of prowess and virtue who is

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[184] This is not to say that dragons are found all over the place. In fact, knights spend a lot of their time fighting each other to prove their superiority. But, when they do encounter a beast, more often than not it is a dragon.

[185] Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, p. 478, line 44-45, and p. 479, line 1-3: "when sir Lancelot had opened up the tomb, a horrible and dangerous dragon came out, spitting fire out of his mouth. Then sir Lancelot drew his sword and fought long with that dragon, and finally, with much effort, slew the dragon" (transl. mine).

able to overcome evil[186]. Actually, Lancelot's encounter is longer than the average dragon encounter as, more often than not, the narrator of a story mentions a dragon and has it killed off in the same line. If a dragon encounter does take some time, as in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Isolde* where it lasts for several pages, the added narrative merely serves to emphasizes how dangerous the dragon is and, ultimately, how formidable the knight is in defeating it. In this encounter, Tristan also does not hesitate and kills the dragon without suffering any serious negative repercussions[187]. This enemy, then, is easy to classify. The dragon is an 'animalized' animal and falls under the category of dangerous creatures that need to be killed and this is done without any legal or moral repercussions. There is no ambiguity or any moral dilemma: a dragon is a dangerous animal that has to be eliminated.

Of course, when we turn to the dragon maiden, the draconic part of her hybrid body recalls this non-hesitant killing of an enemy and, as we shall see in the next chapter, most of the knights who encounter her initially want to take this form of action. However, as soon as they realise that the dragon maiden is also partly human, the situation becomes more complicated and the knight can no longer rely on convention in dealing with this monster. The knight first has to figure out in which degree of animality she ought to be placed and then take the appropriate action. In fact, during the encounter between a knight and a dragon maiden, both characters fall within different categories at different points in the story, and the status of one being as either 'humanized' or 'animalized' depends on that of another. The interplay between the two characters causes tension and this anxiety of who really is the animal and who really is the human makes these encounters very interesting for our study.

Whilst the dragon is an example of an 'animalized' animal, the giant is a typical example of an 'animalized' human. Within many chivalric texts, such as in *Lybeaus*

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[186] See chapter 6.3 for the symbolic use of the dragon. Note also several hagiographic texts, where the dragon is a symbol of evil that has to be eliminated and a saint achieves his or her saintly identity in being able to do so.
[187] Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*, ed. by Francis C. Gentry, transl. by A.T. Hatto (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1988), pp. 118-121. Other versions of the Tristan and Isolde story follow the same conventions, but the dragon is much fiercer in this text.

Desconus[188] and *Mélusine*[189], knights come across a giant at some point in the story. However, the most famous giant in chivalric literature is undoubtedly the Giant of Mont St. Michel. The story goes that, one day, as Arthur is on his way to fight a battle, he hears news of a giant who is terrorizing the land and acts as a beast in eating humans and raping women. After hearing that a princess has been captured by this dreadful giant, Arthur decides that he will help and rides towards the giant's last known location, at the borders of society in a mountainous area. This giant does not care about those things which matter to humans, such as the law or the community, but he lives in his own little world, governing as a tyrant. Eventually, Arthur finds the giant lying down for a supper of bits of animals and humans[190]. Arthur calls to the giant, accusing him of being "the foulsomest freke that formed was ever"[191] because "thou killed has these crismed childer"[192] and raped many women. He commands him to "dress thee now, dog-son, the devil have thy soul! For thou shall die this day through dint of my handes!"[193]. Arthur makes it very clear that this giant has acted like a beast and so deserves to be put down like one. The giant's uncontrolled desire, both for food and sex, does not fit into normal society. He has crossed the boundary between his monstrous periphery and the centre of the Arthurian society in taking away children and, most importantly, the daughter of a king. He poses a chaotic threat to the chivalric order and has to be eliminated. Arthur does not hesitate at all when he is told of the giant's beastly character, and puts his main quest on hold so that this dangerous anomaly can first be removed.

The Giant of Mont St. Michel has not only acted as a sinful man, but is also by its very nature a creature with no intellectual control of his bodily desires. The comparison between

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[188] Mills, ed., *Lybeaus Desconus*, line 598-581.
[189] Where it is defeated by Giefrroy. Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 708-722.
[190] On the sin and monstrosity of cannibalism, see Peggy R. Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).
[191] Benson, 'Alliterative Morte Arthure', line 1061: "the most foul freak that was ever created" (transl. mine).
[192] Ibid., line 1065: "you have killed these baptized children".
[193] Ibid., line 1072: "get ready, you son of a dog, may the devil have your soul! Because you will die today by my hands!".

the giant and the animal, which relies solely on instinct, is of course an obvious one, and indeed the narrator described the giant as, for example, being:

Grassed as a *mere-swine*   with carkes full huge

And all faltered the flesh   in his foul lippes,

Ilke wrethe as a *wolf-heved*   it wrath out at ones!

Bull-necked was that berne   and brode in the shoulders,

Brok-brested as a *brawn*   with bristeles full large,

Rude armes as an oke   with ruskled sides

Limm and leskes full lothen,   leve ye for sooth[194]

The giant's body parts are in essence the same as those belonging to humans, but they are described as having the likeness of various animals and consequently the giant's 'animalized' status increases. The description conjures up an image of a huge hairy beastly and unruly creature that belongs in the wild rather than in Arthurian society. Curiously, the status of the medieval wild man is not that different from the giant as they are both 'animalized' humans and are sometimes even described in similar terms. Compare, for example, Calegronant's original description of the herdsman in *Yvain*: "his head was larger than a nag's or other beasts's (…) he had the eyes of an owl and the nose of a cat, jowls split like a wolf's, with the sharp reddish teeth of a boar"[195]. This description, too, describes a person's human body parts as if they belonged to an animal.

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[194] Benson, 'Alliterative Morte Arthure', line 1091-1097: "greasy as a dolphin, with a huge carcass, the flesh on his foul lips quivered, at once each fold twisted out like the head of a wolf! Bull-necked was that creature, and broad in his shoulders, his breast was spotted as a boar, with huge bristles, (he had) arms as rough as an oak, with wrinkled sides, (he had) very loathsome limbs and loins, believe me as I tell the truth". Italics mine. The giant is also said to use a barbaric club as opposed to the more civilized sword used by knights.

[195] Kibler, 'Yvain, or the Knight With the Lion', p. 298. This herdsman is a curious character who is said to be somewhere between a wild man and a giant.

The narrative pattern of the encounter between a knight and a giant is fairly standard. A knight is usually warned of the giant beforehand, or sees the destruction and death left in its wake, and does not hesitate to kill it. There is usually a build-up before the knight actually comes face to face with the giant, but there is no doubt as to who will be the victor and who will have to be eliminated. The encounter with a giant often features at a crucial stage of the knight's becoming: in defeating the giant the young knight shows that he has now entered manhood and is able to exercise control. Generally, the narrative space of an encounter between a knight and a giant is larger than that of an encounter between a knight and a dragon. Merely mentioning the word 'dragon' is usually enough for a knight to be justified in killing it, whilst, apparently, a little more is needed to justify the killing of a giant. During this longer narrative, the giant is presented as an 'animalized' human, who does not only fall into this category because of his monstrous nature, but also because of his sinful actions. However, as he is by nature an overly destructive force too far removed from the human, redemption is not possible[196] and he has to be killed. There are, in the end, no moral objections to the killing of a giant, and so in this example Arthur does not hesitate to attack it after hearing and seeing what it has done. The giant has a clear place within the degrees of animality present in the medieval literary chivalric world and a knight knows exactly how to deal with him.

There are no ambiguities in any of these encounters: dragons and giants are bad. There is, of course, no such clear marking on the dragon maiden. Whilst the dragon both looks and acts like a beast and the giant partly looks but definitely acts like a beast, the dragon maiden looks like an animal but in fact acts human. She is, therefore, a far greater monster than either a dragon or a giant could ever be.

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[196] Nor does the giant want to be redeemed, even if he is able to know what this means, as giants generally quite enjoy their rampaging sprees. For more information on giants, see Cohen, *Of Giants*.

6.7.2   The Dragon Maiden versus the Werewolf

As a final comparison, the similarities and differences between stories featuring a werewolf and stories featuring a dragon maiden provide a surprising analysis. Whilst the dragon and the giant differ from the dragon maiden because they can be easily classified, the werewolf is similar to the dragon maiden in that it is also an animal-human hybrid monster and so it is similarly difficult for a knight to deal with. The werewolf, too, has the outer appearance of a beast, in this case a wolf, but is still human on the inside and even acts human.

As we have seen, a knight is able to prove his identity as a knight of virtue by defeating the evil dragon, and a young knight can show that he has grown into manhood by killing a destructive giant. With the dragon maiden and the werewolf, however, the identity-quest is of an entirely different order: they help form an identity of what makes a human. This is not to say that a knight who encounters a female dragon maiden does not want to show that he is a man or a virtuous knight, but the main focus is no longer on these standard, almost reliable, features belonging to a knight. Instead, he has to rely on the most basic ideas of survival and identity, wondering who has what status and how to get to the best possible outcome of the situation. These basic questions of identity return with both the werewolf and the dragon maiden, but yet there are some interesting differences.

We have seen before that the two groups of dragon maidens have certain features, such as their hybrid form and the consequent anxiety and doubt they engender in those who meet them, in common and yet they can be clearly split into two groups[197]. The encounter between a knight and a dragon maiden always takes the same pattern, where the knight's first instinct is to get rid of the monster but he is soon forced to rethink his options. Eventually, the knight takes action and, because the dragon maiden's hybrid form cannot hold, she has to become either human or animal. Dependent on which of these two is the result, she is either taken into

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[197] See chapter 4.

chivalric society or has to remain at its borders. The status of both characters before and after the encounter is relatively easy, but the middle space of the moment where the knight sees the dragon maiden in her hybrid form creates doubts and anxieties. Also, whilst the first group of dragon maidens follows a typical Arthurian circular structure, the texts of the second group are themselves curious hybrids that have a more linear structure[198]. The two groups of dragon maiden stories have things in common and yet at some points also differ, which makes a comparison between the two all the more interesting. But, individually, they can also be compared to the narrative structure of the werewolf stories to again reveal several interesting similarities and differences.

There are quite a number of medieval werewolf stories, the most famous of which include *Bisclavret*, *Melion*, and *Biclarel*[199]. Many scholars have written on medieval werewolf stories and, consequently, these have become the archetype of the animal-human hybrid monster story, where the human is an animal for some time but eventually becomes human again. Curiously, the dragon maiden has not received much attention from scholars, despite the fact that she is also a very interesting hybrid character. Moreover, the dragon maiden actually makes a wonderful counterpart to the werewolf. In order to show most clearly how the stories about werewolves and dragon maidens are both similar and different, an outline of the main structure of both is given in the following table:

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[198] I will not expand too much on this here, the idea will return in chapter 7.
[199] Glyn S. Burgess, and Keith Busby, transl., 'Bisclavret', in *The Lais of Marie de France* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 68-72. Amanda Hopkins, ed. and transl., *Melion and Biclarel: Two Old Werwolf French Lays* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Online Series, 2005). <http://www.liv.ac.uk/soclas/los/Werwolf.pdf> [accessed June 17, 2011].

Structure of Werewolf lays compared to Dragon Maiden stories

Werewolf[200]	Dragon Maiden Group I	Dragon Maiden Group II
Prologue and introduction	-[201]	Long prologue on marvellous creatures, introduction to Mélusine's dragon form
Marriage, secret, vows	-	Marriage, secret, vows, has children and builds legacy
Wife asks about absences (affair?), eventually finds out truth	-	Husband is asked about absences (affair?), finds out truth for himself
-	-	Doubts, exchanges between husband and wife
Betrayal of hero in beast form, disappears into woods	-	Betrayal of Mélusine, final speech emphasizing Mélusine's humanity, takes form of beast and disappears
In woods, king comes across beast in hunt, wants to kill it	In enchanted palace, woods, or enchanted tomb, knight comes across dragon maiden, wants to kill it	-
Beast acts human, bows down, doubts, back to court	Dragon Maiden acts human, bows head or speaks, doubts	-
Beast attacks wife and her new husband	Dragon Maiden appears to attack, then again bows head or speaks, doubts	-
Find out the truth (wife or squire's confession), wolf is said to be human		-
Hero regains human form by being given clothing	Dragon Maiden is kissed[202], regains human form, focus on naked or clothed	-
	Lady tells the truth, was human all along	-
Punishment of wife, hero absorbed into society	Lady learns enchanter was killed by knight[203], lady absorbed into society (marriage with knight)	Punishment of husband, Mélusine stays outside of society, tied to castle
Epilogue	-	Epilogue

[200] The overall structure has been taken, somewhat reduced, from Hopkins, *Melion and Biclarel*, p. 16.

[201] The dragon maiden is not really introduced as the knight only knows that the daughter of a king is in distress, but he does not know she has been turned into a dragon. Only Carduino is told of the dragon maiden beforehand.

[202] In *Ponzela Gaia*, the knight tells the dragon maiden his name.

[203] In *Ponzela Gaia*, the enchanter is the lady's mother and she is not killed.

What immediately comes forward in this outline is that the two different groups of dragon maidens both conform to a different part of the werewolf stories. In the second group, Mélusine marries her husband on the condition that he never goes to look for her on a Saturday and she is later betrayed by her beloved and is forced to flee in animal form. This also happens to the werewolf, who is betrayed by his wife as she steals his clothes, forcing him to stay in his wolf-form and flee. The werewolf's wife has no regrets about having done this, though perhaps later she regrets being found out, but Mélusine's husband does immediately regret what he has done, even though it is too late. For Mélusine, the story ends here, but not before her husband is punished and the narrator emphasizes that Mélusine has the more noble heart. Still, Mélusine keeps her animal form and is forced to live outside the chivalric society for the rest of her life. For a while, this is also the fate of the werewolf, until one day a king comes into the forest and sees the wolf. From this point onward, the story becomes more similar to that of the dragon maidens in group I. The king initially wants to kill the beast, just as the knight in group I does, but then has doubts when the beast begins to act human, again similar to the interaction between knight and dragon maiden in group I. Eventually, the king discovers the truth about the wolf's true form and the wolf is allowed to transform back. The dragon maiden of group I is similarly allowed to transform back into a human and then tells the knight how she was enchanted into looking like an animal. Both the lady and the former werewolf are absorbed into chivalric society, becoming worthy members of the human community, but Mélusine is left at the edges of society in her beastly form, despite having been a worthy member for years.

So, on the one hand, the dragon maiden resembles the werewolf stories, as both characters fit into all four degrees of animality at some point during the tale[204], but on the
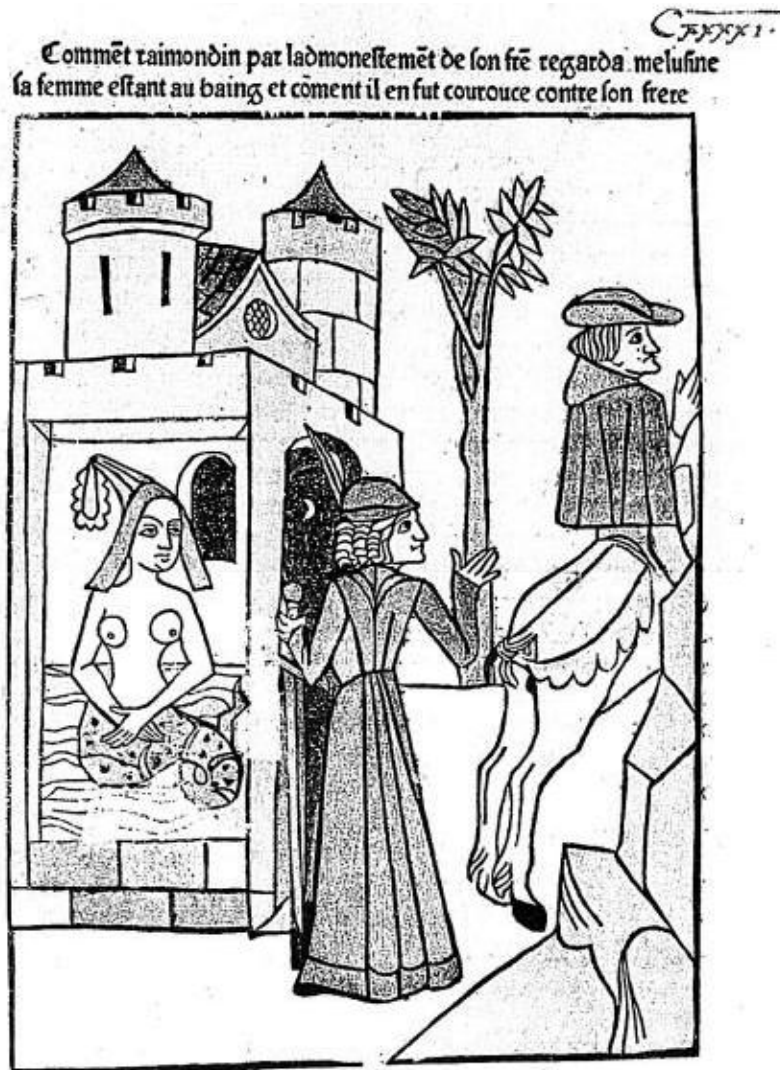
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[204] In the case of the werewolf, he is an 'animalized human' when transformed and in the way he is treated by his wife and her lover. He is seen as an 'animalized' animal when the king first sees him and wants to kill him, but then becomes a 'humanized' animal when he humbles himself before the king. Eventually, the werewolf transforms back, becoming the 'humanized' human.

other hand she is quite different. For example, the werewolf always becomes human again, but for the dragon maiden this is not a given at all. Also, when compared to the narrative structure of the werewolf stories, the dragon maiden's story is much more incomplete, as she is either not introduced as being an animal-human hybrid monster, as it is for group I, or she never gets released from her animal form, as is the case in group II. In fact, the reader of the werewolf stories is very aware of what is happening throughout the story and knows that the werewolf is really a human, whilst in the dragon maiden stories the reader is often left to guess at the dragon maiden's real status just as much as the knight is. Consequently, the anxiety and uncertainty about human and animal identities and where the boundary between the two lies, is much greater for the stories with the dragon maiden than those featuring a werewolf. Furthermore, in the werewolf stories it is very clear that these stories focus on a werewolf and the prologue and epilogue explain that the story's meaning is tied in with this fact, whilst the dragon maiden stories make this much less clear and so again create a certain anxiety in the reader as to why this monster is there. Also, more specifically, differing degrees of anxiety are even found within the dragon maiden stories themselves since, unlike the ladies belonging to the first group, the eventual status of Mélusine is deeply ambiguous[205]. The comparison between these two groups of dragon maidens, different and yet so same as is proper to all monsters, make this figure stand apart from other animal-human hybrids even more. In short, even within the realm of monsters, the dragon maiden stands out as a curious anomaly that is difficult to classify and even challenges what is familiar about the unfamiliar.

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[205] As we shall see in the next chapter.

Part 3:

Case Study of the Dragon Maiden

Commēt raimondin par ladmonestemēt de son frē regarda melusine
sa femme estant au baing et cōment il en fut courouce contre son frere

(Illustration to folio CXLI of L'Histoire de la Belle Mélusine published by Steinschaber in 1478[206], depicting the scene of Remondin's discovery of his wife's animal-human hybrid form. The wall has been removed so that the reader, who knows she takes this form once a week, may see what is going on inside. Note that Mélusine is dressed as a noble lady and clearly has both human and animal body parts.)

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[206] BNF, m 10626/R 100665 <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b22000077/f37.item> [accessed 1 July 2011]

7- The Encounter between the Knight and the Dragon Maiden

7.1   Introduction

After seeing how medieval ideas about the differences between man and animal return in the literary chivalric world, and the way in which a monster can challenge these norms, we will now turn towards the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden. In these encounters, conventional ideas about humans and animals are challenged and all four degrees of animality are presented in the interaction between the two characters.

In the stories of group I, the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden is relatively short and often seems to come out of nowhere. This has led some scholars, such as Mills in speaking of *Lybeaus Desconus*, to say of the dragon maiden that "she ought theoretically to be of considerable interest and importance. But in fact she is quite the least memorable part of the episode in which she figures; (…) she is credited with all the qualities of mind and body obligatory in a romance heroine, but remains an essentially passive figure, who belongs to Lybeaus (i.e. the knight) by right of conquest and has little complexity of any kind, either within the frame of a single version of the story or within the larger context of the romances as a whole"[207]. The short episode comes so sudden and unexpected that some scholars have branded both the episode and the dragon maiden as mere ornamentation or, in other words, an episode which is interesting to read but does not really contribute to the overall story. Naturally, I do not agree with this assertion and wish to show that the dragon maiden in fact contributes much to the stories' main themes and structure. The stories in the first group of dragon maidens all revolve around a quest of identity and the dragon maiden is an important factor in this process of identity formation and is found at a significant point in

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[207] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 57.

the story. The key to this importance lies in her animal-human hybrid body and the way she plays with ideas of degrees of animality present in the medieval literary chivalric world.

For the second group of dragon maidens, it is a little easier to argue that the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden is of great importance since, from the beginning of the story, the narrator makes it clear that Mélusine is a dragon maiden and that one day she will be betrayed by her husband. The narrator begins the story by setting the tone for what is to follow when he says it will be a story about marvellous events and creatures. The narrator then briefly mentions a tradition of stories on women who change into serpents, such as is found with Gervais of Tilbury, and introduces his own story which will also be about such a lady. Immediately, the reader knows that the story will feature a dragon maiden and as most of the traditional stories on such women do not end well, when the husband loses his wife who flies off in the form of a serpent, this pattern is again to be expected. This expectation is increased by the tale of Elinas and Presine, Mélusine's parents, with which the narrator begins his story. Whilst riding one day, Elinas comes across Presine as she is standing near a fountain, and they fall in love. Presine agrees to marry him on condition that he promises never to look at her during her period of confinement for childbirth. A while later, Presine gives birth to three daughters, Mélusine and her sisters, and Elinas, predictably, breaks his promise and walks in whilst the new born girls are being bathed by their mother. Presine scolds her husband and tells him that she has no choice but to leave and he will never see his wife and daughters again. This short story prefigures that of Mélusine and so the encounter between the knight and Mélusine in her hybrid form is expected from the beginning and is not in itself a surprise, as it is in group I. One could argue that the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden is so much expected that it loses any real originality or significance, but is more like an obligatory part of the story. Again, I wish to argue that even though the encounter is in itself not unexpected, it is still interesting since it ties in greatly with the

work's main themes and occurs at a crucial stage in the story. In fact, the episode is not superfluous at all, but reveals important ideas about what makes a human or an animal.

In order to show all this, I will compare and contrast the episodes found in both groups of dragon maidens. Since the first group consists of a greater number of smaller stories, these will also be compared with one another to show their differences and similarities. The second group is formed by the Mélusine story, which is much larger and somewhat more complicated than those in the first group and will therefore make a worthy counterpart. This chapter will trace the encounter both from a chronological perspective, as the reader learns the story, and from the perspective of both knight and dragon maiden. First, we will consider the status of the knight and the dragon maiden before the encounter, leading up to the first sighting of the dragon maiden in her hybrid form. At this point, the status of both characters is mostly clear and simple to deduce. Secondly, we will consider the status of the knight and the dragon maiden during the encounter, where we will examine how both characters react to another and how the negotiations on the degrees of animality take place. At this point, which is at the heart of the encounter, the status of the characters is much more ambiguous and in a constant state of flux. Lastly, we will consider the status of the knight and the dragon maiden at the end of the encounter, when the situation has been resolved and the dragon maiden has become either human or animal. Here we will see that for group I, the status of both characters is clear, whilst for group II, the status of the dragon maiden still remains somewhat ambiguous. The different literary genres in which the two groups of dragon maidens operate is the cause of this difference, and for both groups the eventual outcome of the dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid status is an important part of the texts' main themes, structure, and purpose.

7.2 Status Before the Encounter and First Sight of the Monster

7.2.1 Group I

Before the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden occurs, the knight is essentially a 'humanized' human who is in the middle of an identity quest. As mentioned before, the dragon maiden stories with the Fair Unknown motif are about a knight who has to find his identity and prove his worth in order to be accepted into Arthurian society. In *Le Bel Inconnu*, l'Inconnu starts out not knowing his true identity but he has, by the time he encounters the dragon maiden, proven his worth as a knight by defeating many opponents. L'Inconnu is slowly growing up, but his greatest challenge is yet to come in the form of the dragon maiden. The same also goes for *L'Hystoire de Giglan* and *Lybeaus Desconus*, whose narrative patterns closely follow that of *Le Bel Inconnu*. The knights in *Le Bel Inconnu* and *L'Hystoire de Giglan* were born to become knights and are, in fact, already knights when they arrive at Arthur court. The knight in *Lybeaus Desconus* is not immediately a knight, but very easily makes the transition from his old world to the chivalric world. These knights have, before the dragon maiden encounter, proven themselves as worthy knights but do not yet know their true identity and have not yet been fully accepted into Arthurian society. These knights are, therefore, well on their way of becoming the ideal 'humanized' human.

Carduino also belongs to the group of Fair Unknown stories and he is similarly in the process of proving himself and ultimately becoming an example of chivalry as a 'humanized' human. However, the transition from the world of his youth to the male chivalric world is not easy for Carduino and he has to go through a much greater development in becoming a 'humanized' human than the others. At the beginning of the tale, Carduino and his mother live together in the woods, where Carduino grows up alongside the animals that live there. His mother tells him that no other creatures exists except those found in the woods, and she

moreover says that there are no other humans in the world: "non è più giente se non tu ed io, elle bestie che sono in questa serra"[208]. Carduino spends the first years of his life being naked, apart from a thick covering of hair, just like an animal. He even lives among the animals, "colle bestie si stave note e dia, onde colloro il fanciul dimorava"[209], and he sees himself as one of them because "questo fanciullo usò tanto colloro, che non crede sia altro che costoro"[210]. His clothing is made from animal skins and he and his mother live of meat obtained through hunting. Carduino does not consider himself any different from an animal.

Later, when the king himself is out hunting, Carduino is spotted by the king's knights and they run after him, thinking that he is either an animal or a wild man. The king's knights do not even recognise him as a fellow human. At this point of the story, Carduino is presented as an 'animalized' human, who lacks culture and lives with beasts. Naturally, Carduino now realises that there are other humans in the world, and so he and his mother leave the woods and Carduino eventually decides to go to Arthur's court[211]. He trades in his animal furs for knightly armour and begins his formation of a 'humanized' human identity. For Carduino, the 'humanized' human presents a qualitatively better kind of life than that of the 'animalized' human. In fact, Carduino does not leave the woods primarily to become a knight[212], but does so to find out more about other humans. Up until that point, he has identified himself with animals and has created his identity in comparison with them. From then on, Carduino identifies himself with other humans and creates his identity in contrast with animals. This last point is seen most clearly in the way Carduino now suddenly regards horses: as the tools of a knight to whose bodies he has a right of access. The obtainment of a human identity is a very important theme in the Carduino story, and his road to knighthood and the achievement

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[208] Rajna, *I Cantari di Carduino*, p. 5, Cantare I, canto 10, line 5-6: "there are no more people except you and I, or the beasts that are here in the green (in this forest)" (transl. mine).

[209] Ibid., p. 4, 8: line 5-6: "among the beasts he stayed night and day, so that with them the boy dwells".

[210] Ibid., 8: line7-8: "this boy was with them (the beasts) so often that he did not believe there was anything else but them".

[211] The story of course has many parallels to that of Perceval in Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and its variants.

[212] As is done by Perceval and Lybeaus.

of a 'humanized' human status is much longer and much more difficult. Nevertheless, by the time Carduino meets the dragon maiden, he has proven himself as a knight, though he still needs to be fully accepted as a member of chivalric society.

The other stories belonging to group I may not be part of the Fair Unknown group but they nevertheless also deal with the identity quest. In *Ponzela Gaia*, the story immediately begins with a competition between a group of knights in which they can prove their worth. Even though Galvano is already an accomplished knight, he still needs to prove himself as a far above-average knight and as a champion of courtly love. Also, as he does not have a lady, he is not yet fully settled within the chivalric community. Although in most of the texts featuring a dragon maiden the main protagonist is the one who encounters her, this is not the case for *Orlando Innamorato*. Nonetheless, Brandimarte is also in the process of proving his worth as a newly-converted Christian knight who is both a valiant fighter and someone who knows how to be courtly to ladies. The story of Lanzelet stands out from the others as the dragon maiden encounter occurs towards the end of his story and he has at that point already proven his worth as a knight, has obtained a lady, and has become a worthy member of the community. He has, however, not yet proven himself to be the best knight, or the most ideal 'humanized' human, and this is where the dragon maiden episode comes in.

The knights who encounter a dragon maiden are all in the process of becoming the greatest example of a 'humanized' human. They have left the safety of the Arthurian society and find adventure at its borders and beyond. In the Fair Unknown romances and *Orlando Innamorato*, the knights encounter the dragon maiden in an enchanted city or palace, which is home to a host of marvellous creatures. In *Ponzela Gaia* and *Lanzelet*, the dragon maiden is found in a forest, a familiar location for knights to encounter marvels, as is attested by lady Elidia's comment that she wanted to be freed of her dragon shape and so went "ze Britânje in

einen foreht, wan drin manic guot kneht durch âvientiure reit"[213]. The dragon maiden's secluded location, away from civilization, also points to her distance from humanity.

Most of the time, the knight does not know that the lady he must recue has been turned into a dragon, nor does he realize that the dragon he encounters is in fact human. At the beginning of *Le Bel Inconnu*, l'Inconnu witnesses a maiden riding into Arthur's court, who asks for help on behalf of her lady, the daughter of king Gringras. This is the first time l'Inconnu hears of Blonde Esmeree, the lady in need of help and he is not given any description of what kind of peril she is in. This knight receives no hints that the human lady he sets out to rescue has been turned into an animal. As such, when l'Inconnu first sees the dragon, he has no idea that this may be a transformed human being. The same goes for the knight in *L'Histoire de Gyglan*, and also for the knight in *Lybeaus Desconus* who is only told that the "lady of Synadowne is brought in stronge prison"[214]. All of these knights do not know that the dragon is the transformed lady and therefore react to the dragon out of instinct and want to treat it as they would any other dangerous wild animal. In *Ponzela Gaia*, there is no introduction to the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden at all. Galvano is simply riding along in search of a creature with which to win the hunting contest and he immediately encounters a serpent. Galvano, too, reacts out of convention and wants to strike the serpent. In these stories, the reader encounters the dragon maiden for the first time along with the knight and so also does not know that the ferocious dragon really is a beautiful lady.

In some stories, there are more hints as to what will happen during the encounter. For Brandimarte in *Orlando Innamorato*, there is some warning provided by the lady of the palace, who comes down from her balcony and tells Brandimarte what to do:

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[213]Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, p. 450, line 8022-8025: "to Brittany in a forest, because in there many knights ride to find adventure" (transl. mine).

[214] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 85, line 160-161: "the Lady of Sidadoune has been imprisoned" (transl. mine).

a te bisogna quell sepolcro aprire,

o qua rinchiuso di fame morire.

Ma, poi che quell sepolcro sera apero,

Ben ti bisogna avere il core ardito (…)

Questa converrai aprire (…) darai un baso.[215]

Brandimarte is not at all taken aback at these prospects and replies: "un baso? (…) è quest oil tutto? Ora èvvi altro che fare?"[216]. He even boasts that whatever comes out of the tomb, even if is the fiercest of devils, he will kiss not just once, but ten times. Brandimarte also reads a description on the tomb that warns him of the danger inside. This knight is told what to do beforehand, but he is not told what exactly is contained within the tomb he is about to open. The lady's warnings suggest that it is a dangerous and fearsome creature, but Brandimarte does not know that it is a giant serpent, nor does he have even the faintest clue that this dragon is really a human. In the *Lanzelet*, the knight hears about the dragon before the encounter and this actually causes him to set out in search of the dragon in the first place. Consequently, the knight knows a little of what to expect and the encounter comes less as a surprise. Lanzelet's lady tells him about the dragon and warns him that it is dangerous:

einen grôzen wurm, der was gebart,

daz nie tier sô vreislich wart.

er sprach reht als ein man. (…)

swenne er der ritter wart gewar,

sô bat er, daz in di helde kusten.

[215] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato: Volume Quarto*, pp. 72-74, Book II, canto 25, stanza 57-58, line 7-8 and 1-4, and canto 26, stanza 4, line 5-8: "you have to open up that tomb or, locked up here, you'll starve and die. But when that tomb is opened up, you have to have a valiant heart (…) whatever emerges after opening (…) you must kiss".

[216] Ibid., p. 74, 25: 5, line 1-2: "a kiss? (…) is that all? There is nothing else to do?".

si begunden sich dannen rusten

mê zo flühte danne zuo im[217]

In this description, the dragon is an ambiguous creature from the start because it is said to be a bearded beast that speaks. Immediately, hints towards the dragon's humanity are made as it asks to be kissed, "durch god"[218] , and therewith be released from a terrible predicament. This interesting feature grabs Lanzelet's attention and he goes off to look for the dragon. When he first sees the dragon, this knight is naturally not very surprised at encountering it and even has some idea that it may not be a normal dragon. It can therefore also not be defeated by a normal knight, and Lanzelet does rather fancy himself as being the only worthy knight able to complete the challenge. Lanzelet knows he is going to face a dragon and he has some idea that this creature has several human features. Finally, in *Carduino* the first meeting between knight and dragon maiden is even less surprising. A dwarf warns Carduino about the giant serpent beforehand and also tells him that this creature can be turned back into a lady[219]. The dwarf also explains that the animals that walk within the enchanted city are also humans that have been transformed against their will. Furthermore, Carduino already knows the name of the enchanted damsel, since the lady who comes to Arthur's court to ask for help explains that her mistress is called Beatrice[220]. He also knows that this same lady is the one who has been transformed into an animal. For Carduino, the encounter should not really come as a surprise and yet, as we shall see, he still doubts whether or not he should kiss the serpent when he actually meets it face to face. In these stories, the narrator makes no foreshadowing comments and so the reader again learns about the dragon maiden along with the knight.

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[217] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, pp. 440-442, line 7847-7861: "a great dragon, it had a beard, no other animal was as terrifying. It spoke just like a man (…) when he became aware of the knights, it begged the heroes to kiss it. They would then rather flee from it than go towards it".
[218] Ibid., p. 442, line 7851: "by God's will".
[219] Rajna, *I Cantari di Carduino*, p. 36, stanza 49.
[220] Ibid., p. 16, 5: line 6.

The status of the dragon maiden at the beginning of the encounter is seen most clearly at the exact moment when the knight first sees her. In *Le Bel Inconnu*, l'Inconnu is suddenly surprised by the entrance of the dragon when he is in a hall of an enchanted palace: "atant vit I aumaire ouvrir, et une wivre fors issir"[221]. The description which follows creates an image of a terrifying creature. The dragon "moult par estoit hideous et grant"[222]. Its eyes shine like carbuncles and its body has many colours. The dragon descends from the cupboard down on the ground. The dragon's size is enormous: it is said to be "quatre toises de lonc duroit, en la queue III neus avoit, c'onques nus hom ne vit greignoir"[223]. The dragon is described as animalistic, a terrifyingly dangerous beast of massive stature with a long tail[224]. When the dragon begins to approach the knight, he crosses himself. At this point in the story, the knight is clearly human and the dragon is clearly a dangerous, ferocious animal. The account of the moment when the knight encounters the dragon maiden in *L'Hystoire de Giglan* is very similar to that found in *Le Bel Inconnu*. However, the dragon maiden emerges from a chamber and, according to Jewers, "as chambers tend to represent feminine space in the romance, there is a subliminal suggestion that the snake is a woman"[225]. On the surface, though, at this point of the story of *L'Hystoire de Giglan*, the knight is again the human and the dragon the animal.

In *Orlando Innamorato*, Brandimarte felt sure he could handle whatever was about to come out of the tomb. What happens when he confidently opens it, however, completely catches him by surprise since "uscinne una serpe insino al petto, la qual forte stridendo zuffelava; ne gli occhi accesa e d'orribil aspetto. Apredno il muso gran denti mostrava"[226]. As with the other stories, the first time the knight sees the dragon maiden, it is described as a

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[221] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 110, line 3101-3102: "then he saw the opening of a cupboard, and a serpent came out" (transl. mine). On possible meanings of the cupboard, see Jewers, 'Slippery Custom(er)s', pp. 27-28.
[222] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 111, line 3110-3113: "was very hideous and huge".
[223] Ibid., line 3117-3119: "four toises (twenty-four feet) long, in its tail it had thee loops; never had a man seen something so large".
[224] Note also the sensuous undertones in her approach towards the knight. The act can also be read as lustful or animalistic desire. This sensuality is not present in the other stories.
[225] Jewers, 'Slippery Custom(er)s', p. 28.
[226] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, p. 74, 26: 7, line 2-6: "a dragon stretched forth its upper length, huffing and puffing and wheezing noisily. Its eyes were lit and fierce to see; its mouth gaped to reveal huge teeth".

beast with no signs of humanity. In *Lybeaus Desconus*, however, there are some signs of humanity in the description of the way the beast looks. This dragon comes in through a window and Lybeaus, feeling "grete wondyr with-all, (…) sate and be-helde, a worm ther ganne oute-pas, with a womanes face"[227]. This dragon is immediately presented as a hybrid creature since it has a human face. The dragon is further described as such:

> Hir body and hir wyngis
>
> Shone in all [þ]ynchis,
>
> As amell gaye and gilte.
>
> Hir tayle was mekyll vnnethe,
>
> Hir peynis gryme and grete[228]

Again, the dragon's body is colourful and it has a gigantic tail, but this dragon also has awfully big paws. The dragon may have a human face, but the continuing description focuses on its beast-like qualities and ultimately creates the image of an animal ready to strike.

In the other stories, the description of the dragon maiden at first sight is much shorter. In the case of *Ponzela Gaia*, the serpent is not described with any more words other than the comment that it is "una serpa"[229] and this short description only adds to the idea that the dragon is a dangerous animal which shows no signs of humanity whatsoever. The introduction to the meeting between the knight and the dragon maiden is here virtually non-existent, and at this point the dragon maiden is very obviously an 'animalized' animal as she suddenly appears in the middle of a hunt and the knight prepares himself to act out of convention and strike the serpent down immediately. In the *Lanzelet*, the dragon has already

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[227] Mils, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 197, line 2064-2068: "great surprise at everything (that happens) (…) sat and beheld how a serpent with the face of a woman came out".
[228] Ibid., pp. 197-199, line 2070-2075: "her body and her wings shone all-over as glittering gold. Her tail was huge, her paws grim and great".
[229] Varanini, *Ponzela Gaia*, p. 4, stanza 4, line 3: "a serpent" (transl. mine).

been introduced by Lanzelet's lady and so there is not much of a description when the knight first comes face to face with the dragon. The narrator only mentions that the dragon cries out towards the knight as it hears him approach. Because of this lack of a description, the description given by Lanzelet's lady still holds and the dragon remains an ambiguous creature, both dreadfully animalized and yet displaying certain human features. The short description found in *Carduino* is again a little different. The narrator describes how, as Carduino enters the city, he sees a serpent, chained down "con tre catene a collo"[230], in the middle of the square. The serpent is in "gran tenpesta e gran lamento"[231]. It tries to speak and finally manages to tell Carduino: "Baron, fa che sia ardito e dotto"[232]. The description of the serpent does not really focus on its looks, which are simple terrifying, but rather focuses on the way it acts towards the knight. Since both the knight and the reader know that this is an enchanted human who has been chained and laments her state, the sympathy for this creature is enlarged. Carduino, however, does not respond to her pleas right away, but goes out to kill the enchanter. Carduino then returns to the chained enchanted serpent, which comes towards him with great leaping saults, seemingly ready to strike. The serpent seemed pitiable before, but now suddenly acts more like a beast, its behaviour matching its 'animalized' appearance.

Generally, the knight is at the beginning of the encounter a 'humanized' human and the dragon maiden is presented as an 'animalized' animal. Sometimes, hints of her human nature are present, but she still both looks and behaves in such a way that the knight is sure she is a dangerous creature that is best to be eliminated like any other dangerous animal.

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[230] Rajna, *Carduino*, p. 38, 54: line 7: "with three chains around the neck".
[231] Ibid., 54: line 6-8: "great tempest and great lament".
[232] Ibid., 55: line 8: "Sir, be bold and learned (wise)".

7.2.2 Group II

For the reader of *Mélusine*, the status of the dragon maiden before the encounter is fairly clear: she is human most of the time and an animal-human hybrid once a week. Early on in the story, the narrator tells how Presine and Elinas' daughters learn what their father has done, and how Mélusine convinces her sisters to avenge this act by locking Elinas away in a mountain. Presine is livid when she hears what they have done and she tells Mélusine and her sisters that they have ruined their chances of ever becoming human because "la vertu de germe de ton pere (…) eust attrait a sa nature humaine et eussiés esté briefment hors des meurs nimphs et faees sans y retourner"[233]. Presine curses Mélusine, the chief instigator of the plot, so that from then on she becomes "tous les samedis serpente du nombril en aval"[234]. But, there is an escape: if Mélusine can find a husband who does not look for her on a Saturday and discovers the truth about her hybrid form, nor tells anyone else about it, "tu vivras cours naturel comme femme naturelle et mourras naturelment"[235]. If her husband betrays her, however, she will resort back to her original form and be cast out, only appearing to others three days before one of her male descendants is about to die. The reader now knows that Mélusine spends all her Saturdays in the form of a serpent from the waist down. Although this draconic form is not mentioned again in the story until the moment where Remondin sees his wife in the bath, it is still in the back of the reader's mind when reading the rest of the story. This is attested most of all by several manuscript images of the Mélusine story found in Ars ms fr 3353, where Mélusine is shown in several crucial scenes in which she is depicted as a human but is accompanied by a small dragon[236]. This dragon seems to be constantly looming over her as a reminder for the reader of this manuscript that Mélusine is no ordinary woman.

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[233] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 134, folio 5vb: "the virtue of you father's semen (…) would have attracted a human nature in you, and you would have soon left the state of nymphs and fairies, without returning (to that form)" (transl. mine).

[234] Ibid., folio 5vb: "every Saturday, a serpent from the navel (waist) down".

[235] Ibid., folio 5vb: "you will live a normal life, as a natural woman (a human), and you will die naturally".

[236] See Appendix A.

Furthermore, during her marriage with Remondin, Mélusine fulfils her duty as the wife of a noble lord in giving him many sons. As her sons all have physical deformities that reveal their monstrous descent, the reader is again reminded of Mélusine's hybrid nature. Urien, for example, is said to be "de toutes figures bien forméz, excepté qu'il ot le visage court et large au travers, et avoit un œil rouge et l'aultre pers"[237]. At the birth of Anthoine, the narrator comments that he was "bien forméz de tous membres, mais il apporta en la senestre joe une pate de lyon"[238]. The brothers' deformities are mainly found around the area of the head, which make these signs very visible to people who meet them. Interestingly, according to medieval theories on inheritance, the substance of a human is passed on through the male semen, whilst the form is passed on through the female semen[239]. This notion is also behind Presine's comment that Mélusine and her sisters could have become humans because their father was human. Although the brothers are mostly described as having noble personalities, Mélusine's sons show physical signs of their mother's monstrosity. Kelly argues that the brothers bear "the phenomenon known as mother-mark, birth-mark, or envie de mère"[240], but that the specific signs of monstrosity in this text can also be seen as signs of royalty. The brothers do not lose these marks at any point in the story and yet the narrator often does not mention them at all when the boys are older. Nevertheless, these signs and their connection to Mélusine's weekly animal-human hybrid form are always at the back of the reader's mind.

Interestingly, in this story, there is a remarkable difference between what the reader and what Remondin, the knight, knows about Mélusine. Whilst the reader is aware of Mélusine's hybridity since the beginning of the text, Remondin has no idea that she turns into

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[237] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 218, folio 23vb: "well formed in his whole body, except that he had a short and broad face, and he had one red eye and the other was blue-green".
[238] Ibid., p. 292, folio 41rb: "well-formed in all his members (body-parts), but he had on his left cheek a lion's paw".
[239] This idea is found with Aristotle and Hippocrates, and was later developed by Galen who believed men and women both have strong and weak sperm in differing degrees and so can both contributed to the nature of a child. See Galen, *On Semen*, ed. by Philip DeLacy (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), p. 166-169.
[240] Douglas Kelly, 'The Domestication of the Marvellous in the Melusine Romances', in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens: Georgia UP, 1996), p. 39.

a half-serpent every week until he actually encounters her in this form. Remondin meets Mélusine for the first time when he comes across her at a fountain and she begins to talk to him. Similar to the Fair Unknown stories, Remondin does not know who his father is at the beginning of the story, and Mélusine reveals this to him when they meet. She also advises him how to gain back the domain which formerly belonged to his father and should now be his. Mélusine here plays a role similar to the fairy mistress, who brings her lover riches if he keeps her identity a secret, but also similar to the dragon maidens in the first group, as she plays a part in the discovery of the knight's identity. For Remondin, the revelations seem a little odd, but before he is able to question Mélusine's status or intentions she tells him that she knows "que tu cuides que ce soit fantosme ou euvre dyabolique de mon fait et de mes paroles, mais je te certiffie que je suiz de par Dieu et croy en tout quanque vraye catholique doit croire"[241]. After Mélusine's prediction comes true and Remondin has followed her advice, he returns to meet her again and is offered her hand in marriage. But, she makes him promise to never come and see her on a Saturday and, more importantly, to never tell other people about her secrets. During all of this, Remondin shows an extraordinary amount of faith in Mélusine as he not only follows her advice but also gives her his promise and never questions why he cannot see her on a Saturday. Mélusine further assures him that she is a king's daughter, but does not mention which king this may be, and he does not question this assertion at all[242].

Furthermore, Remondin does not appear to notice his sons' physical deformities at all before the dragon maiden encounter[243]. This is not as odd as it seems, since much of the book focuses on the brothers' heroic deeds, which include the rescue of a princess and battles against of the Saracens, and any mention of their monstrosity seems at times to be forgotten.

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[241] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 164, folio 11va: "that you think I am an apparition or a demon for what I have said and done, but I assure you that I am of God and believe in everything that a good Catholic believes in".
[242] Unlike his uncle and brother, who ask Remondin several times about Mélusine's descent. Each time, Remondin replies that she has said she is a king's daughter and leaves it at that.
[243] But he will notice them after his son Giefrroy kills his own brother, see chapter 7.3.2.

The King of Cyprus, for example, calls Urien a "bon garant et tresvaillant prince"[244]. Hermine says of Urien that he may have certain deformities, but that "se il avoit le visaige plus contrefait .c. foiz que il n'a, si est il talliéz pour sa bonté et pour sa prouesse d'avoir la fille du plus hault du monde a amie"[245]. In fact, almost all of Mélusine's sons marry king's daughters and therewith either already, or are about to, inherit even more land for their family. The brothers are judged for the way they act, not for the way they look, and this idea applies to all characters in this story. As mentioned, medieval theories on inheritance argue that the father's substance, the soul and someone's personality, is passed on to his children, and so the brothers are really humans because their father is human. Furthermore, as nobility was said to be transmitted through blood, mostly through that of the mother who here really is the daughter of a human king, the sons are in fact perfect material for knighthood. For Remondin, Mélusine is human and he has no clue about her true nature.

Remondin himself has slowly worked his way up to becoming a good example of a 'humanized' human. Very much thanks to Mélusine, he has obtained all those things that the knights in group I strive for: he has proved himself worthy of being a knight and found his identity, he has married a noble lady, and he has found his place within chivalric society. Before he encounters Mélusine as a dragon maiden, Remondin's identity process in fact appears to have reached a state of completion as he now rules over a large territory and several of his sons have become good knights in their own right. Remondin's linear progress has developed quickly, but at the moment before the encounter it has stagnated and there appears to be no real possible further development for Remondin. As we shall see, however, Remondin's 'humanized' human status is about to be challenged.

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[244] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 386, folio 63va: "a good protector and extremely valiant prince".
[245] Ibid., p. 348, folio 54rb: "if he were to have a face a hundred times more deformed than he has now, his kindness and his prowess would still make him worthy of having the daughter of the greatest king in the world as his lover".

7.3 Status during the Encounter

7.3.1 Group I

In group I, the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden lasts from the moment the knight first sees the dragon until the moment it is kissed. During this encounter, the knight is at first ready to strike the dragon, but when the dragon starts to show signs of humanity the knight suddenly feels hesitation and anxiety. At this point of the encounter, the negotiations between the degrees of animality present themselves most clearly and, consequently, the status of both characters becomes more ambiguous than either before or after the encounter.

One of the ways in which the knight is baffled by the dragon, and is forced to rethink both the dragon's nature and his own actions, is in the way the monster uses its body language. In *Le Bel Inconnu*, l'Inconnu is at this point faced with the sight of an enormous serpent slowly coming towards him. The knight grabs his sword and prepares to strike. However, when he moves to kill the serpent, "la grans Wivre li encline, del cief dusqu'à la poiterine; sanblant d'umelité li fait, et cil s'espée plus ne trait"[246]. L'Inconnu refrains from striking and tells himself he cannot possibly kill a creature that shows so much humility. Doubt begins to form in his mind since he suddenly cannot treat this beast as he would any other. This pattern repeats itself several times and, each time l'Inconnu wants to kill the serpent, the serpent bows its head and l'Inconnu holds himself back. Then, the serpent lifts itself up, coming close to l'Inconnu's face and the knight stops to marvel at the beast: "il l'esgarde, pas ne l'oublie, ne de rien nule ne ferie, et si i a moult grant mervele, de la bouce qu'il a si bele"[247]. L'Inconnu is particularly interested in the creature's human-like lips and is rooted to the spot by its sight, unable to pay attention to anything else. Then, "la guivre vers

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[246] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 111, line 3131-3134: "the great serpent bowed (inclined) itself, its head down to its breast; it resembled an act of humility, and he no longer pulled his sword".

[247] Ibid., p. 112, line 3153-3156: "he regards it, without forgetting about it, without doing anything (unable to move), and he has much great marvel (he marvels) at its mouth that is so beautiful".

lui s'elança, et en la bouce le baisa"[248]. Again, the knight prepares to strike the serpent, but the

serpent shows signs of submission and the knight decides against it. The serpent retreats back

into the cupboard it came from, leaving behind a bewildered l'Inconnu. The encounter is

described in similar terms in *L'Hystoire de Giglan*, though the knight's hesitation on whether

or not to strike the serpent is shorter and he shows an extra level of disgust when he wipes his

mouth after the kiss[249]. Both knights first react out of instinct and convention in wanting to

strike the serpent, but when faced with an animal that appears to act as a human would they

are thoroughly confused. On the one hand, they feel they are being attacked and so have to

defend themselves, but on the other hand they cannot just strike an innocent creature. To these

knights, and the reader alike, the dragon maiden is now a 'humanized' animal, the killing of

which is no longer without any moral consequences. In fact, if the knight were to kill a

creature that turns out not to fit Derrida's category of noncriminal putting to death, the knight

would act sinfully and would himself become an 'animalized' human.

This anxiety is also felt by Carduino, who, as we last left him, is about to face the

giant serpent as it comes jumping towards him. Our knight "non s'ardia apressare (…) la

serpe allui facie grand'afoltare, e'l suo cavallora é forte inpaurato"[250]. Nevertheless, the

knight fears he has to move on. The narrator comments that "non sa che farsi il cavalier

pregiato; in sè diciea: <<I' nolla vo' baciare>>. Egli à paura e non sa chessi fare"[251]. Carduino

does not want to kiss the serpent, but knows he has to because the dwarf told him to. Carduino

is in doubt for some time, wondering whether to flee or stay and kiss the terrible beast.

Carduino's hesitation is particularly interesting because he knows, and the reader knows, that

this serpent is really a beautiful damsel and yet he finds it extremely difficult to overrule his

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[248] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, line 3159-3160: "the serpent throws itself upon him, and kisses him on the mouth".
[249] Jewers,'Slippery Custom(er)s', p. 28.
[250] Rajna, *Carduino*, p. 41, 62: line 3-4: "did not dare approach (…) the serpent made great leaps towards him and his horse was very afraid". The dragon maiden is no longer described by the word 'biscia', denoting a small snake, but by 'serpe', indicating a much larger viper-like snake; a change that increases the sense of danger.
[251] Ibid., p. 41, 62: line 6-8: "the fine knight does not know what to do, but says to himself: 'I am not going to kiss her'. He is afraid and does not know what to do".

own instinct of either killing the monster or running away. Eventually, "colla ispada i' mano ne fue andato, presso ala serpe il cavalier sovrano"[252]. The serpent allows itself to be approached and stays calm. In *Lybeaus Desconus*, Lybeaus is awaiting a similar fate in being approached by a serpent as he "sate in his sete, as alle had ben in fyre; so sore he was agaste, hym thought his herte to-braste, as she neyhid him nere"[253]. Clearly, Lybeaus is very afraid of the creature approaching him. This knight does not reach for his sword and has no internal debate on whether or not he should kill the serpent. In fact, he is perfectly petrified with terror, thinking only of fleeing and the thought of kissing or killing this serpent never enters his mind. Nevertheless, Lybeaus remains seated and awaits what will happen. In the serpent's approach, she shows no signs of humanity, but this serpent of course does not need to show her humanity through body language because she has an actual human head. This hybrid form alone is confusing enough for the knight as it is. The reader receives even more hints of the dragon's true nature as the narrator uses 'she' and not 'it' in the description of the serpent, already making the dragon a bit more human. Still, Lybeaus has to act against his own instinct as he is being approached by what seems to be a terribly dangerous beast, and is shocked when "ere that Lybeous wiste, the worme with mouthe him kyste"[254]. Both Carduino and Lybeaus have received signs that the dragon is either a 'humanized' animal or an 'animalized' human, and yet both of them still need to fight their own instinct during the encounter.

Another way in which the dragon maiden can let the knight know she is really human is by making use of one of the defining aspects of a human: speech. This is, for example, the tactic employed by the dragon in *Lanzelet*. When Lanzelet approaches her location, "vil vremdeclîch er (i.e. the dragon) schrê, als ein wildez wîp: >ôwê, wi lange sol ich bîten

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[252] Rajna, *Carduino*, 63: line 3-4: "with his sword in his hand, the supreme knight came close to the serpent".
[253] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 199, line 2077-2081: "sat in his seat, as if everything was on fire, feeling so very afraid he felt his heart would burst as she came closer to him".
[254] Ibid., line 2082-2083: "before Lybeaus knew , the serpent kissed him with its mouth".

dîn!<"[255]. Thoroughly fascinated by the creature, Lanzelet does not move and asks the dragon "nuo sprich, wannen kom dir men*sch*lish stimme? Ich gesach nie tier sô grimme, noch als engeslîch getân"[256]. The fearsome, horrible creature has clearly succeeded in capturing Lanzelet's attention by speaking. Lanzelet marvels that he sees an animal standing before him, but the creature speaks to him just as a human would. Lanzelet then continues to say that "hæt ich es niht immer schande, sô wær ich gerne von dir"[257]. Lanzelet's choice to stay, then, is a combination of curiosity and fear of disgrace. As soon as these words are uttered, the dragon desperately shouts at Lanzelet: "neinâ, helt, daz verbir!"[258]. In a total of twenty-four lines, the dragon gives a moving speech in which it explains that it was created by God as one of his mysteries[259] and that it awaits the kiss of a heroic knight. Only after being kissed will she become "schœne und sâ gesunt"[260]. Her present state of the 'animalized' human is considered lacking; she will only be whole when she is fully humanized and her body fits her actual species. Until now, she continues to explain, all knights have fled from its sight because "ich enmoht es aber nieman nie erbiten"[261]. Only "der beste ritter, der nuo lebet"[262] will be able to kiss her and free her from her horrible form. She then begs Lanzelet to kiss her, pleading to his honour to both God and womankind. Lanzelet replies: "daz tuan ich, swaz imer drûz werde"[263] and dismounts his horse to kiss her. In an attempt to increase both the horrifying image of the giant dragon and the degree of courage displayed by Lanzelet, the narrator comments that Lanzelet kisses the dragon maiden on "den wirsgetânesten mund"[264].

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[255] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, Lanzelet, p. 444, line 7891-7893: "the dragon cried very strangely, like a wild woman: 'Alas, how long must I wait for you!'".

[256] Ibid., p. 444, line 7896-7899: "now tell me, where does your human voice come from? I have never seen an animal so grim or frightening".

[257] Ibid., line 7902-7903: "if I would not be shamed forever, I would gladly flee from you".

[258] Ibid., line 7904: "no, hero, you must leave that (do not do that)!".

[259] Compare the introduction to Jean d'Arras' *Mélusine*.

[260] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, p. 444, line 7912: "beautiful and also healthy".

[261] Ibid., line 7913: "but I could not convince anyone to do so".

[262] Ibid., p. 446, line 7921: "the best knight that is alive now".

[263] Ibid., line 7930-7931: "I will do it, whatever may come of it".

[264] Ibid., line 7933: "the misshapen mouth".

In *Ponzela Gaia*, the first meeting between knight and dragon maiden is quite short, but the consequent interaction between the two takes a considerable greater amount of time and narrative space. Galvano and the serpent have been fighting from dawn until noon, but Galvano is not able to strike a single blow and the serpent sets Galvano's shield and helmet on fire. Galvano eventually dismounts and cries: "laso! Ch'io mi rendo morto"[265]. At this point, Galvano is convinced that he has come across a beast that is simply too strong for him and that he will surely be killed. Upon hearing this, the serpent moves towards Galvano and begins to speak, telling him sweetly "ho cavaliero, prendi conforto"[266]. She continues on. asking him "per cortesia e per amor di dona adonda, seresti de queli de la tavola redonda?"[267]. Galvano's heart is filled with bravery, "vedendo la serpa in sì soza figura"[268], and he replies that he is indeed a member of the Round Table. The serpent then explains that she cannot be killed and as such has already defeated more than a thousand knights. In other words, this enemy cannot be defeated in the way known best by knights: through the use of violence. She then says to him: "ho sire, in chortexia, dome lo tuo nome e non me lo zelare"[269]. This story is a little different from the others, as Galvano can buy his life not by kissing the lady but by telling her his name. She adds that he is given this opportunity "che longo tenpo l'ò abuto ad amare"[270] and promises him great riches if he complies. At this tempting prospect, our knight Galvano decides to insult the serpent and tells her that his name is Lancelot. The serpent sees what he is up to and tells him "tu me ingani a la favela; di arme ho abuto a fare con Lanziloto, tu e'de lui molto più sazo e doto"[271]. Galvano then again thinks that his death is close at hand, and after a further debate of 7 stanzas he finally tells her that he is "da tuti lo liale e lo

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[265] Varanini, *Ponzela Gaia*, p. 4, stanza 6: line 2: "alas that I will die!".
[266] Ibid., 6: line 4: "oh knight, have comfort".
[267] Ibid., 6: line 7-8: "for courtesy and for love of ladies, are you of the Round Table?".
[268] Ibid., 7: line 4: "seeing the serpent in that awful figure".
[269] Ibid., p. 6, 10: line 1-2: "oh sir, in courtesy, tell me your name and do not hide it from me.
[270] Ibid., 10: line 4: "I have loved you for a long time".
[271] Ibid., 11: line 6-8: "you are deceiving me with this story; I once fought Lancelot, you are more wise and learned than him".

aventuroxo chavalier Galvano"[272]. It takes a long time for this knight to accept the fact that the dragon is offering him an easy way out. Galvano is used to killing a dangerous beast, but when the animal suddenly speaks to him in a courtly manor, even calling him "o zilio d'orto"[273], he is bewildered. He keeps insulting and lying to the serpent, really still seeing it as a beast that should not be able to speak. For the reader, Galavano does not exactly come across as a confident knight who is capable of managing tough situations. The dragon maiden is here very clearly a 'humanized' animal as she uses language, but the knight still treats her according to her dangerous and beastly physique.

In *Orlando Innamorato*, the use of language in convincing the knight of kissing the dragon takes a slightly different form. The moment Brandimarte sees the huge dragon, he steps back and puts his hand on his sword. Fiordelisa, too, is aware of convention and tells him to grab his sword. However, the lady of the palace causes confusion when she tells Brandimarte to put it away or "ché tutti ci farai pericolare, a caredemo a un tratto in quell profondo. Or quella serpe ti convien baciare"[274]. She urges him to kiss the dragon, rather than strike it or flee, if he wants to leave the palace alive. Brandimarte, though, is not so sure about this plan and protests "come? Non vedi che e denti digrigna? (…) e tu vôi che io la basi?"[275]. The damsel, however, keeps urging him on, telling him to have no fear, and reluctantly, he takes a step closer. Instead of a speaking dragon, this text has a lady speaking on behalf of the dragon. At no point, however, does this lady reveal that the dragon is really human. Whilst she is there to assure the knight that nothing will go wrong and therewith creates doubt in his mind as to what this monster is, she does not let on about the dragon's true nature. Brandimarte leans down towards the serpent, but then "gli parvo tanto terrible e fiera, che

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[272] Varanini, *Ponzela Gaia*, 13: line 5-6: "the most loyal and adventurous knight Galvano".
[273] Ibid., 6: line 6: "oh lily of the garden". She also seems to take a very male role in trying to convince the knight through courtly speech.
[274] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, p. 74, 26:8, line 3-5: "you will endanger all of us, and we will fall in the abyss! That serpent is what you must kiss".
[275] Ibid., p. 75, 26: 9, line 1-2: "What do you mean? You see those teeth? (…) And you want me to kiss that face?".

venne in viso morto come un sasso"[276]. He tells the lady that if he is destined to die, he really

would much rather do it some other time. Brandimarte is absolutely sure that this serpent will

kill him and he feels that perhaps the lady is playing a game and decides to withdraw. The

lady immediately calls him a coward and tells him that he will fail if he does not listen to her.

The reader is at this point similarly confused and unsure whether Brandimarte is acting as a

coward and if the scene should be viewed comically, or whether the lady really does intend to

trick him and the knight is actually being wise in his hesitation. Then, Brandimarte reluctantly

goes towards the tomb again, "benché e pallido in faccia"[277]. During his walk to the tomb

> L'un pensier gli disdice, e l'altro vôle,
>
> Quello il spaventa, e questo lo assicura
>
> Infin tra l'animoso e il disperato,
>
> A lei se accosta, e un baso gli ebbe dato.[278]

After all the doubts, he finally somehow convinces himself to go for it and he kisses the

serpent, "propiro gli parve de toccare un giaccio"[279]. Again, the knight has to go against his

first reaction in killing or running away from an 'animalized' animal because he receives

signs that this creature may be different from others. Consequently, the dragon maiden

becomes an ambiguous creature and the knight also begins to doubt himself.

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[276] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, 26: 10, line 3-5: "he thought it looked so awfully fierce that his face became as still as stone".
[277] Ibid., p. 76, 26:13, line 3: "though he was pale in face".
[278] Ibid., p. 76, 26:13, line 5-8: "One thought said no! another yes! Frightened by that, assured by this, 'twixt bravery and despair, at last he leaned and offered it a kiss".
[279] Ibid., 26:14, line 2: "it seemed he had touched a piece of ice".

7.3.2 Group II

In group II, the heart of encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden is the moment when Remondin sees his wife in her hybrid form and the consequent reactions of both characters up until the moment Mélusine transforms. Remondin is initially shocked by what he has seen, then views Mélusine as a monster and later rethinks his ways and sees her as a human. Mélusine first leaves Remondin alone, but then increasingly defends her status as a wife, mother, and worthy member of the community, culminating in an ultimate defence of her humanity and a consequent branding of Remondin as a sinner. As with group I, the negotiations between the degrees of animality are most clear at this point of the encounter, and the status of both characters is in a state of flux.

Firstly, we will examine Remondin's side of the story and deduce his views of himself and Mélusine. After having been together with his wife for many years, Remondin receives a visit from his brother, who asks to see Mélusine on a Saturday. Naturally, Remondin replies that she cannot be seen that day. Remondin's brother then suggests that Mélusine may not want to be seen on a Saturday because she is having an affair. Up until now, Remondin has not given his wife's absences a second thought, but this suggestion is too much for him and he goes to their bedroom in search of her. He discovers that she is taking a bath and finds his way blocked by a locked door. He then takes out his sword and makes a hole in the door with its point. Through this little peephole, he sees Mélusine sitting in a large marble bathtub. Remondin gazes at his wife in the order of a typical courtly love description: he starts from the top, her hair, and then looks down to her feet. He sees that she has the form of a beautiful lady, who is brushing her hair, for the top half of her body "et du nombril en aval estoit en forme de la queue d'un serpent, aussi grosse comme une tonne ou on met harenc et longue durement"[280]. Remondin is shocked by this sight, and immediately laments that "m'amour, or

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[280] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 660, folio 130 rb-130va: "and from the navel down was in the form of a serpent's tail, as big as a barrel of herrings and extremely long".

vous ay je trahie par le faulx enortement de mon frère"[281]. The narrator comments that "lors ot tel dueil a son cuer et telle tristece que cuer humain n'en pourroit plus porter"[282]. He rushes back to his brother and starts shouting at him that "vous me avéz fait, par vostre faulx traitre rapport, parjurer contre la meilleur et la plus loyal dame qui oncques nasquist après celle qui porta nostre Createur!"[283] In fury, Remondin refuses to see his brother any longer and retreats to his bed chamber. He makes a moving lament, stretching over 28 lines, in which he regrets that through his foolishness he will now have to lose Mélusine, and miss her "beauté, bonté, doulçour" but also "tout mon eur, mon bien, mon pris, ma vaillance"[284]. He realises, as many other knights in the fairy lover stories, that he has had good fortune thanks to her and that he will now lose it all. At this point, Remondin has seen his wife's hybrid form, but is more angry with himself and his brother in having broken his promise to her.

A while later, Remondin is told that his son Gieoffroy burned down an abbey with his brother Fromont still inside. Remondin cannot believe this news and immediately rides towards the ruins of the abbey of Mallerés. When he sees that the story is indeed true, he laments that Gieffroy has acted so inhuman and concludes that "je croy que ce ne soit que fantosme de ceste femme ne ne croy pas que ja fruit qu'elle ait porté viengne a perfection de bien. Elle n'a porté enfant qui n'ait apporté quelque estrange signe sur terre"[285]. Suddenly, Remondin becomes aware of the physical signs of monstrosity present in his sons, and concludes that their youngest son is the most horrible of all since he has already killed two of his wet nurses by the age of three. In his anger and grief, he is convinced that Mélusine has tricked him and that her monstrous serpent form has caused his sons to be such monsters.

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[281] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, folio 130va: "my love, I have betrayed you through the fault of my brother's urging".
[282] Ibid., folio 130va: "then he had so much feeling of mourning and such sadness that no human heart could take any more".
[283] Ibid., folio 130va: "through your false and treacherous rapport, you have made me perjure myself against the best and the most loyal lady that was ever born except the one who carried our Creator (i.e. the Virgin Mary)!"
[284] Ibid., p. 662, folio 130vb: "beauty, her kindness, her gentleness … all my happiness, my goods, my renown, my valour".
[285] Ibid., p. 688, folio 136va: "I believe that this woman is nothing but an apparition (phantom), and I do not believe that any of the fruits that she has carried can properly come to perfection. She has not brought one child into this world that did not carry some sort of strange sign".

Remondin now starts to animalize Mélusine and blame her of his son's deeds. When Mélusine finds her husband at the ruins, she tries to comfort him but he lashes out at her. The narrator comments that Remondin knows Mélusine's words are perfectly reasonable, "mais il fu si tresperciéz et oultréz de yre que raison naturelle s'en estoit fuye de lui. Lors parla d'une trescrueuse voix en disant ainsi: "Hee, tresfaulse serpente"[286]. After losing complete control and no longer being able to think rationally, Remondin goes into a hateful speech and tells Mélusine that he blames her for what has happened and that her sons are monsters because of her. Remondin is so confused after seeing her hybrid form that he can no longer think clearly and reacts on instinct in calling his wife a monster. After this action, he has completely broken his promise as he has told others of her secret, but does not realise he has done so.

Of course, Mélusine's perspective of the events is very different. She is, in fact, aware that her husband has spied on her but chooses not to say anything to him. At the ruins of the abbey, Mélusine tells Remondin that he should not blame Gieffroy for his actions, horrendous though they may be, as the monks were sinful and God had punished them through Gieffroy[287]. She adds that "ceste chose soit incongnoissable quant a humaine creature, car les jugemens de Dieu sont si secréz que nul cuer mondain ne les puet comprendre en son entendement"[288]. Mélusine does not see her sons as monstrous figures and tries to convince Remondin that they are actually favoured by God. After Remondin has made his hateful speech, telling everyone that she is a half-serpent, Mélusine is saddened and replies "haa Remond, la journee que je te vy premiers fu pour moy moult douleureuse"[289]. She feels betrayed by her husband, who has violated her trust in walking in on her on a Saturday, in revealing her nature to others and in no longer believing in her as a good wife. She adds that:

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[286] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 692, folio 137vb: "but he felt so pierced and outraged with wrath that common sense left him. Then he spoke in a very cruel tone and spoke thus (to her): 'ha, you false serpent!'"
[287] In Coudrette's version, Mélusine does not make this argument until much later, in her final speech. She agrees with Remondin that their son has acted sinfully, but she also says that he will surely do penance.
[288] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 692, folio 137va-137vb: "this thing is incomprehensible to a human being, because the judgments of God are so secret that no man in the world can comprehend them in his understanding (mind)".
[289] Ibid., p. 694, folio 137vb: "oh Remondin, I rue the day I saw you for the first time".

"las, mon amy, se tu ne m'eusses fausee je estoye gectee et exemptee de paine et de tourment. Et eusse vescu cours naturel comme femme naturelle et feusse morte naturelement"[290]. It is clear that Remondin has acted wrongly and he immediately expresses his regrets for both his actions and words. At this point, Mélusine is still seen as an 'animalized' human, but Remondin also realises his mistakes as a sinful man. Mélusine says she can forgive Remondin and prays that God can forgive him too, but she can no longer stay with him. They kiss and faint in each other's arms. Interestingly, the members of the court now speak and sigh "nous perdons aujourd'uy la plus vaillant dame qui oncqus gouvernast terre"[291]. The community mourns over the loss of Mélusine as she was a worthy member. At this point, Remondin mostly feels sorry for what he has done to Mélusine because he loves his wife so much. He is rather overwhelmed by the pain he has caused her than he is convinced that she is really human. Mélusine, in Remondin's eyes, now becomes a 'humanized' animal.

When Mélusine comes to, she begins her lengthy final speech which goes through several stages. In the first stage, she addresses herself to Remondin and tells him that his lineage will die out, but that he should not worry about his sons as Gieoffroy will be a valiant knight and, though she will soon depart and never see Remondin again, she will still at times return to take care of their youngest children. During this part of the speech, Mélusine puts emphasis on her role as a mother and the founder of a noble lineage. Then, at the second stage, she directs herself to the barons and tells them to immediately kill her son Horrible after she has departed, because he will grow up to be a monstrous killer. This announcement seems a bit odd and once again seems to support Remondin's original claim that their children are monsters and that this has been passed on to them through their mother. Mélusine's status here is ambiguous, both for Remondin and the reader, and she appears to hover between

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[290] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, pp. 694-696, folio 138rb-138va: "Alas, my love, if you had not wronged me, I would have been saved and exempted from pain and torment. And I would have lived (life with a) natural course as a natural woman (a human) and would have died naturally".

[291] Ibid., pp. 696-698, folio 138vb: "today we have lost the most noble lady that has ever governed lands".

human and monster. At this point, Mélusine climbs onto a windowsill and commences the final stages of her speech, said to be addressed to Remondin but witnessed by all the others.

Mélusine's final speech once and for all removes any doubt about her true nature. First, she reminds Remondin of their history together and the great deeds they have accomplished. Secondly, she addresses herself to the wider audience and laments that she will have to leave her wonderful lands. At this point, Mélusine has proven her worth as a wife and mother, but with this speech she adds her value as a worthy and contributing member of the community. Then, she continues to say that:

je vueil bien que vous sachiéz qui je sui ne qui fu mon pere, afin que vous ne reprouvéz pas a mes enfans qu'ilz soient filz de mauvaise mere ne de serpente ne de faee. Car je suiz fille au roy Elinas d'Albanie et la royne Presine, sa femme, et sommes .iii. seurs qui avons esté durement predestines et en griefz penitances.[292]

This announcement is made to the whole group, but is also intended to reassure Remondin once again. She had told him before that she was a king's daughter and she now shows him that he should have trusted her. In this part of the speech, which comes very close to her final transformation, Mélusine argues that she really was human all along. Remondin's sin is even greater now that he has sinned against a fellow human. Finally, she jumps out of the window into the outside air and "et lors se mue en une serpente grant et grosse et longue de la longuer de .xv. piéz"[293]. Interestingly, the narrator comments that whilst Mélusine stood in the windowsill "ys est la fourme du pié toute escripte"[294]. Her lasting image is that of a human

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[292] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 702, folio 140rb: "I would like for you to know and who my father was, so that you will no longer reproach my children that they are sons of a wicked mother nor of a serpent nor of a fairy. For I am the daughter of king Elinas of Albany and queen Presine, his lady, and I am one of three sisters who have been harshly predestined (who suffer a harsh destiny) and grievously punished".
[293] Ibid., p. 705, folio 140rb: "and now she turned into a big fat serpent, longer than fifteen feet".
[294] Ibid., p. 704, folio 140rb: "it is forever inscribed with the form of her foot".

footprint, showing that she was really human after all. She may have turned into a serpent but she is really a human inside, stuck in a hideous monstrous form. Mélusine will from now on literally embody how her husband has treated her: as an 'animalized' human.

7.4   Status after the Encounter

7.4.1   Group I

After the encounter, both the knight and the dragon maiden of group I definitively establish their respective identities as 'humanized' humans and re-attain a clear status. The dragon maiden proves to the knight that she was human all along and, in the end, the knight takes her into the chivalric community, proving that they have both become fully human.

Firstly, directly after the encounter, when the problems posed by the dragon maiden's hybrid body have been resolved, the dragon maiden is presented as a human. In *Le Bel Inconnu*, Guiglain has fallen asleep on the table and he awakens the next day to find himself lying beside a beautiful lady. The narrator describes this lady according to familiar courtly conceptions, noting that no writer or storyteller can truly describe her incredibly beautiful appearance "tant le sot bien nature ovrer, c'onques si bele n'ot el mont, de bouce, d'iols, de vis, de front, de cors, de bras, de pies, de mains"[295]. After this, the narrator goes into an elaborate description of the clothes worn by this beautiful lady, saying for example that "moult estoit riches ses mantials (…) la pene fu et bone et fine; et si estoit de blance ermine"[296]. This description goes on for some length, roughly 25 lines or so, and helps to establish this lady's identity both as fully human and as a lady of noble birth. In the *Lanzelet*, the dragon maiden similarly does not transform immediately. After having received the kiss,

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[295] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, pp. 115-116, line 3242-3245: "so well had Nature done her work, that in the whole world there had never been anyone with such a beautiful mouth, eyes, face, brow, body, arms, feet, and hands".
[296] Ibid., p. 116, line 3255-3258: "her mantle was very expensive (…) the lining was well made and fine, and it was (made out of) white ermine".

the dragon flies off in search of a clear body of water. There, the dragon "badet sînen rûhen lîp, er wart daz schœneste wîp, di ieman ie dâ vor gesach"[297]. The knights ride towards the newly transformed lady and find her fully clothed, but "wâ siu ez næme, dêst uns ungeseit, wan daze in wudner dâ geschach"[298]. This dragon maiden too is clearly presented as human after her transformation, and she is all dressed up and ready to go.

In *Lybeaus Desconus*, the dragon maiden does not actually transform as such, but "off the worme tayle and wynge, swiftly fell hir froo"[299]. The distinctive draconic body parts merely fall off, revealing the human figure underneath. In describing her return to the human in such a way, the narrator creates an image of a woman who has been forced to put on a temporary serpent suit that comes up to her neck. Lybeaus was brave in facing the giant serpent and he did not accidentally kill another human being. The lady is described as the fairest woman Lybeaus has ever seen, "but she was moder naked, as God had hir maked: the[r]for was Lybeous woo"[300]. Although this dragon maiden is clearly human, she is found lost and naked and appears to have reverted back to an almost childlike state. She needs to be nurtured back into the human community. In *Ponzela Gaia*, immediately after Galvano has revealed his true identity "la serpa, che l'oldiva molto volentieri, di quela forma s'àno strafigurata"[301]. She transforms right away and the narrator describes her looks as "più bela cha una roxa verzieri (…) una donzela dilicata"[302]. She offers him her love and tells him she has longed for him for a long time. Galvano is only too happy to embrace her and he seems relieved that she now has a human form. In *Carduino*, the serpent also turns into a beautiful damsel straight after the kiss and her description is lavish: "una donzella legiadra e adorna e

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[297] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, p. 446, line 7937-7939: "bathed its rough body, (and) it became the most beautiful woman that anyone had ever seen".
[298] Ibid., p. 446, line 7952-7953: "it is not told where she took them from, because it happened as a miracle".
[299] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 199, line 2086-2087: "the serpent's tail and wings quickly fell off her".
[300] Ibid., line 2091-2093: "but she was completely naked, as God had made her, which made Lybeaus feel sad (for her)".
[301] Varanini, *Ponzela Gaia*, p. 7, 13: line 1-2: "the serpent, who listened to him very willingly, transfigured her own form".
[302] Ibid., p. 7, 13: line 2-3: "more beautiful than a rose in an orchard (…) a gentle damsel".

tutta angielicata: del paradise uscita pare ella, d'ongni bellezza ell' era adornata"[303]. The other enchanted animals also revert to their original form. Again, the lady is immediately described as a human and so are her fellow citizens. In *Orlando Innamorato*, the dragon also transforms immediately after it has been kissed by the knight. The narrator also describes this lady's beauty in a typical courtly love description; she has golden hair, fair skin, rosy cheeks, but dark eyes. At this point in the story, the ladies have become human. All of the dragon maidens wanted to escape the animal form because they considered a human status as the better option.

After having regained her human form, the dragon maiden explains what has happened to her to show the knight that she was always human in the first place and was enchanted into becoming a literal embodiment of the 'animalized' human. Blonde Esmerée, in *Le Bel Inconnu*, makes a long speech in which she says to be the daughter of king Gringras and shows her gratefulness to Guinglain in rescuing her. She explains how an enchanter and his brother came to her city and enchanted all its inhabitants. They also locked up the lady in a chamber of her palace, where, she explains, "quant il m'orent tocé d'un livre, si fui senblans à une wivre"[304]. She was kept in this guise for some time, and eventually the enchanter tried to force her to marry him. When she refused to do so, he cursed her to stay in the guise of a serpent forever until the noblest knight of Arthur's court would come to her rescue. The reader is expected to feel pity for her and she is now much more human; her fragile human state has increased by her becoming of the animal. It is interesting to note that the lady says she took on the appearance of a serpent, but that she did not fully become one. Underneath the dangerous beastly exterior, she was still human inside, quietly suffering until a knight would come to release her. She explains to Guinglain that "la Guivre qui vos vint baisier (…) ce fui

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[303] Rajna, *Carduino*, p. 41, 64: line 3-6: "a damsel, graceful, fair, and completely like an angel: Paradise brought her forth, with every beauty she was adorned".
[304] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 118, line 3315-3316: "when he made me touch a book, I took the appearance (resemblance) of a serpent".

je, sire, sans mentir"[305]. She was the dangerous serpent all along, and she could not imagine someone would dare to kiss her in this animalistic form and so decided to kiss the knight herself. She was, after all, really an 'animalized' human.

Lybeaus is given a similar speech by the lady of Sinadoun and she, too, explains what happened to her: "two clerkys (…) thorowe ther chauntement, to a worme they had me wente, in wo to leven and lende"[306]. The lady could only be released form her animal form by being kissed by Gawain or one of his kin. Naturally, this lady in the *Lanzelet* is also grateful for her rescue. Her explanation of her hybrid form comes a bit later, when Lanzelet takes her back to Karadigan and she tells the whole court what happened to her. For the reader, however, the dragon maiden's true background story comes from the narrator himself, who says the lady "hiez diu schœne Elidîâ, von Thîlen eines küniges kint"[307]. The narrator explains that she committed a grave deed, though he does not explain what it was, and that she was turned into a dragon as a result of her sinful actions. This dragon maiden was also an 'animalized' human. Galvano, in *Ponzela Gaia*, also hears the dragon maiden's background story. She reveals that she is the daughter of the fay Morgana and that her name is Ponzela Gaia. Altough she does not say who turned her into a dragon, Larrington argues that "it seems likely that Morgan was responsible for her daughter's transformation into a serpent, intended to preserve her virginity until she met the man who was destined and worthy to be her lover"[308]. Again, the dragon maiden explains that she was an 'animalized' human during the encounter. The dragon maiden in *Carduino* does not explain how she came to be in her recent animalized state. However, there is of course no real need for her to do this since Carduino already knew all about her from the dwarf's explanations. Nevertheless, he is still relieved to now see those

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[305] Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 119, line 3348-3350: "the serpent that you were kissed by (…) it was I, sir, without lying".

[306] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 199, line 2098-2105: "two clerks (…) have turned me into a serpent through their enchantments (so that I would) live forever in misery".

[307] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, p. 448, line 7990-7991: "is called the beautiful Elidia, the only child of king Thule".

[308] Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 86.

words affirmed: the dragon really was an enchanted human lady. In *Orlando Innamorato*, the narrator reveals the lady's identity and he does so immediately: "questa era Febosilla, quella fata, che edificato avea l'alto palaccio, e il bel giardino e quella sepoltura, ove un gran tenpo è stata in pena dura"[309]. The narrator comments that Febosilla is a fay and cannot really die, but when she has lived for a thousand years she is forced to assume the shape of a serpent until she is kissed by a brave knight: this dragon maiden was also an 'animalized' human.

Secondly, after the dragon maiden has physically become human again, she is absorbed into chivalric society and the knight, too, has finally established his place in the Arthurian world. The reason for the dragon maiden's eventual human form is mostly found in the structure of the stories of group I. These stories all work with a circular structure, where the knight begins at Arthur's court, receives a quest and rides out into unknown territory, and eventually again returns to Arthur's court. The stories begin with order, then dissolve into chaos, and eventually return back to order. The dragon maiden becomes part of this need to re-establish order and so she becomes human, no longer a monstrous form, and is even taken into Arthurian society. The dragon maiden, like the story, goes through a circular structure of order-chaos-order when she is human, is turned into an animal, and eventually returns to her human state. Nevertheless, even though the stories are themselves circular, the development of the knight within it is in fact linear. The knight begins as a character of no renown, sometimes even without a name, who eventually establishes his identity as a worthy knight and, later, also as a respected member of chivalric society. The dragon maiden encounter takes place at a crucial stage within the knight's personal development, often just after he has become a worthy knight and has found his personal identity, but before he is settled into the

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[309] Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato*, p. 76, 26:14, line 5-7: "she was a Fay named Febosilla, and she had built the noble palace, the lovely garden and the tomb, where she'd been suffering so long".

greater community. The dragon maiden episode is important for these stories as it supports

both the general circular structure of the narrative and the knight's linear progress within it.

In *Le Bel Inconnu*, the dragon maiden encounter takes place midway through the story

and forms a bridge between l'Inconnu's quest for a personal identity and his subsequent

acceptance within the larger chivalric community. After the serpent has retreated back into the

cupboard, but before l'Inconnu discovers that the serpent was actually human, a voice tells the

unknown knight who he is and who his parents are. L'Inconnu, or Guinglain as the reader

now knows, learns of his true identity at this point in the story. Guinglain discovers that he is

the son of Gawain, a noble lineage for a knight, and that the quest could have only been

completed by Gawain himself or a knight of his kin. It is at this point that Guinglain finds his

place in the world of chivalry, where being of noble birth is both a virtue and a prerequisite.

But, although Guinglain has now found his identity in terms of finding out his name and his

lineage, he has yet to find his place within the larger Arthurian society. However, after the

serpent has become human, she offers him her hand in marriage. This is the moment for

Guinglain to become a worthy member of Arthurian society by marrying Blonde Esmerée[310]

and becoming a king. The dragon maiden is later taken into the chivalric community by the

knight, and the knight has similarly been enabled to establish his identity as a 'humanized'

human through the encounter with the dragon maiden.

In *Lybeaus Desconus* the encounter does not occur midway through the story, as it

ends soon after the dragon maiden has become human, but it still provides a turning point

between the knight's quest for personal glory and his placement within the community.

Lybeaus is also offered the dragon maiden's hand in marriage and he gladly accepts. After

Lybeaus has gone back to court to tell his story, he sends the lady of Sinadoun "a robe of

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[310] At Arthur's request, but the narrator says Guinglain would have rather married the Pucelle aux Blanches Mains. See the narrator's final speech in Hippeau, *Le Bel Inconnu*, line 6103-6122.

purpyll riche, pillured with pure grice (…) kerchewes and garlandis ryche"[311]. Her process of humanization is completed; she receives clothes and is married to Lybeaus, ensuring her place beside her lord in Arthurian society.

In the *Lanzelet*, the encounter between knight and dragon maiden occurs towards the end of the story and therewith makes a slight exception. Lanzelet has already completed his quest for an identity a long time ago and he has already married his lady and found his place in the Arthurian world. We must, however, not forget that this is not just any knight but Lancelot, the man often portrayed as the best knight of all[312]. The dragon maiden encounter serves, in this case, to prove that Lanzelet is not just a good knight, but the best. Lanzelet does not just take nine knights with him for no reason, but they serve both to prove how brave Lanzelet is as opposed to their cowardice and as witnesses to his deed. After Elidia assumes her place in chivalric society, where she becomes an expert judge on the issues of love, the narrator is sure to keep mentioning that Lanzelet is the best knight of all for having finished her quest. This dragon maiden quest could from the beginning really only be completed by the best knight of all and, though the dragon maiden becomes a 'humanized' human, the greater focus in this text is on the ultimate humanization of the knight.

This focus is even greater in *Carduino*, where the obtainment of a 'humanized' human status is much greater for the knight than for the dragon maiden. Before going to Arthur's court, Carduino was living in the woods and considered himself to be no different from an 'animalized' animal. Later in life, he came to be seen as the quintessential Wildman or an 'animalized' human. After realising there are other human beings in the world, Carduino sets out from his animal world into the human world in order to associate himself with other humans. Carduino's quest to prove himself as a knight is also a quest to prove himself as a 'humanized' human. After rescuing Beatrice, who is said to be an 'animalized' human from

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[311] Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 203, line 2145-2148: "a robe of rich purple, lined with grey fur, (…) rich handkerchiefs and garlands".

[312] This is for instance done by Malory in *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

the start, Carduino comes back to Arthur's court, marries Beatrice, and is accepted into chivalric society. In the end, Carduino has finally found his place among the most 'humanized' humans of chivalric literature, measuring his own identity by their standards. The dragon maiden's humanity is no surprise in this story, as she is branded as an 'animalized' human before she is even seen. Instead, the true development into a 'humanized' human is here undergone by the knight, but it is facilitated by the dragon maiden encounter.

In *Ponzela Gaia*, the encounter occurs at a very early stage in the story. Nevertheless, it proves to be a crucial episode. After she has become human, the dragon maiden and the knight spend the night together, until Galvano wakes up and suddenly remembers the competition he is in. From this point onward, the story become very similar to that of *Lanval* and *Graelent*, where a fairy lover helps a knight but he is not allowed to reveal her identity to others[313]. Ponzela Gaia agrees to help him and offers Galvano a ring with which he can summon her whenever he needs her, but he cannot tell anyone about her as Morgana will surely punish her for helping a knight. Galvano's reward for having passed the dragon maiden quest is not only this beautiful lady but also an opportunity to become a great knight. The unexpected encounter with the dragon maiden has opened up a whole range of possibilities. He rides back to court and summons the lady, who has taken her serpent form once more, and wins the hunting competition and so proves he is better than the other knights. Ponzela Gaia plays a large part in the rest of the story, which is of course named after her, but she remains human. After several years, after Galvano has freed her from her mother's prison, he finally takes her back with him to Arthur's court. Through all of this, they both become members of the chivalric world and prove their status as 'humanized' humans.

In *Orlando Innamorato*, the situation is a little more complicated. Febosilla is grateful for being turned into a human again, but since Brandimarte already has a lady who is right

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[313] See Predelli, 'Monstrous Children of *Lanval*', pp. 543-522.

there with him, she does not offer him her hand in marriage but instead offers to enchant his horse or armour. Febosilla then asks Brandimarte if he can escort the lady of the palace, who told him to kiss the serpent, to Syria. This lady, Doristella, is a king's daughter and she is her father's sole heir. It seems that the tasks and functions performed by only one dragon maiden in the other texts is here divided over two different ladies. One of them is enchanted into a dragon and the other is the king's daughter who is stuck in an enchanted palace besieged by enemies. After Brandimarte promises to escort Doristella, Febosilla disappears from the story. Since the role of the dragon maiden is here divided over two ladies, one of them is left behind after becoming human again and the other is returned to society. Doristella then tells Brandimarte and Fiordelisa her background story. Doristella explains that the knight killed by Brandimarte in the courtyard of the enchanted palace married her against her will and he locked her in the palace. After some time, the three reach Syria and Doristella is brought back to her father and Teodoro, the man she loves. At this point, they also discover that Fiordelisa is Doristella's sister, who was taken from her family a long time ago. Then, Brandimarte and Fiordelisa, and Doristella and Teodoro, get married. The lady of the palace is brought back into society, but Febosilla is not. Nevertheless, both ladies are humanized and, most of all, the knight also finds his place in chivalric society by marrying a king's daughter. The placement of this episode also forms a bridge between the knight's quest for a personal identity, after having just been converted, and his quest for a place within chivalric society.

7.4.2   Group II

In the second group, the anxiety created by the dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body is resolved by her final permanent becoming of the animal. Although both knight and dragon maiden in the first group end the encounter with a clear status, this is not so for the dragon maiden in the second group. The final status of Mélusine remains ambiguous until the end.

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Again, we will first turn to Remondin, who goes from being an 'animalized' human through his own fault to a 'humanized' human with God's help. After Mélusine has left him, Remondin occasionally hears that Mélusine's serpent form has been spotted. Each time, Remondin rushes over to see her, but he never succeeds. The narrator says that Mélusine occasionally returns to take care of her children[314], which she seems to do in human form, but only her young children get to see this. To all others, she appears as a serpent. After having heard Mélusine's final speech, Remondin deeply regrets what he has done and he follows her advice in killing Horrible and taking care of his youngest sons. This time, instead of looking to himself, Remondin blames Gieffroy for the loss of his wife. In Remondin's eyes, Gieffroy is an 'animalized' human because of the sins he has committed. The narrator then turns to Gieffroy, who pursues a giant and comes to the mountain where Mélusine once locked away her father. King Elinas has since died and Presine has made him a beautiful tomb, upon which the story of their family is written. Gieffroy now learns his mother's true identity and he discovers Remondin's betrayal, instigated by his own uncle. Gieffroy decides to make things right and rides out to find his uncle, telling him "faulx traitre, par ta faulse jenglerie ay je ma mere perdue. Or l'as tu comparé"[315], and avenges his mother's unjust treatment.

Soon, Remondin hears of Gieffroy's deed and decides to reconcile with his son. They meet, Gieffroy apologizes to his father and Remondin tells him that he is going on a pilgrimage, during which time Gieffroy will have control of his lands. Gieffroy then tells Remondin what he has discovered about his mother's lineage. This meeting is the turning point for Remondin, as he sees that his son does battle for good and that his wife was telling the truth about her humanity. After completing his pilgrimage and coming to Rome, Remondin confesses to the Pope and is given advice as to how he should do penance. Remondin decides to retreat into a hermitage to spend the rest of his life in the service of God.

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[314] Coudrette details that she breastfeeds them: *Mélusine*, p. 253, line 4395-4396.
[315] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 724, folio 145rb: "false traitor, through your false games I have lost my mother. Now I will do the same to you".

Gieffroy, too, confesses himself to the pope, and father and son later meet each other again and all is forgiven between them. Just as Mélusine predicted, Gieffroy has become a noble and virtuous knight. After some time, Remondin becomes ill and is visited by several of his sons. Suddenly, Mélusine is once again seen. When the brothers see her in her animal form, they cry and Mélusine "en guise de serpente, et quant elle vit ses enfants plourer, si ot grant douleur et gecta un cry grant et merveilleux"[316]. They remember the prediction that was made a long time ago and know that a male member of Mélusine's bloodline is to die soon. Mélusine sets off into the direction of Remondin's hermitage and the omen is correctly interpreted to mean that Remondin is about to die. In the end, he dies a saintly death as a hermit. Remondin acted as an 'animalized' human in betraying Mélusine, but he has redeemed himself and dies a 'humanized' human. Before the encounter, Remondin was already an example of a 'humanized' human, but through the encounter his status was challenged and he had to push forward and look for the one thing missing from his status as an ideal knight: the religious life. Remondin's progress had come to a halt just before the encounter, but by means of the dragon maiden's challenge he has become an even greater 'humanized' human in combining the worldly and the religious life.

Mélusine's final status, on the other hand, is more ambiguous. Clearly, after she transforms into a complete serpent, she has become an 'animalized' human. When she jumped out of the tower, everyone witnessed how she had made "en guise de serpente (…) trois tours environ la forteresse et a chascune foiz qu'elle passoit devant la fenestre, elle gectoit un cry si merveilleux et si douleureux que chascun en plouroit pitié"[317]. She then turns and flies off into the direction of the Lusignan castle. The rest of her story is now told by the narrator, who elicits a great amount of sympathy for Mélusine in the reader. He relates that Mélusine haunts

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[316] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 770, folio 155va: "in the guise of a serpent, and when she saw her children cry and, as if she had great pain, let out a great and marvellous cry".
[317] Ibid., p. 704, folio 140va: "in the guise of a serpent (…) three turns around the fortress and every time she passed by the window, she let out a cry so marvelous and so painful that everyone cried out of pity".

the castle in serpent form and that people from the surrounding area can sometimes hear her wailing shrieks of lament. He continues to say that people are confused at her sight "car ilz voient la figure d'une serpente et oÿent la voix d'une dame"[318]. Here, she resembles some of the dragon maidens in group I, as she appears to be a 'humanized' animal to the onlooker who does not know her background story. Towards the end of the story, the narrator relates that Mélusine is spotted several times, but this time not to announce the death of an important male of her noble lineage, as her direct descendants have all died, but "quant la dicte forteresse doit changier seigneur, la serpente s'appert trois jours devant"[319]. The enemy of Jean d'Arras' patron, Cresewell, for example, is one day in bed with his concubine when "apparoir presentement et visiblement devant son lit une serpente grande et grosse merveilleusement, et estoit la queue longue de .vii. a .viii. piéz"[320]. The concubine, Cersuelle, says that this serpent was once a beautiful and just lady and Cresewell asks the serpent to prove this. Mélusine obliges and transforms her face back into human form. Cresewell sees that "elle avoit esté mout belle"[321]. However, Mélusine can only do this for a very limited time and soon becomes a complete serpent again. Mélusine appears to be a 'humanized' animal. However, the narrator spends much time emphasizing that Mélusine is a human woman who has, unfortunately, been trapped in the body of a scary serpent. Thanks to the narrator's efforts, she becomes an 'animalized' human.

Throughout the story, the narrator has great sympathy for Mélusine and invites the reader to feel the same way. But if the narrator likes her so much, what, then, is the reason for Mélusine to be given a physical 'animalized' form? Part of this outcome is determined by convention, as the narrator has made clear from the beginning that his story will fall within a

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[318] Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 706, folio 140 vb: "because they saw the figure of a serpent and heard the voice of a lady".

[319] Ibid., p. 810, folio 164va: "when a different lord took over the rule of the fortress, the serpent appeared three days before".

[320] Ibid., pp. 810-812, folio164va: "a marvellously big and fat serpent presently and clearly appears in front of his bed, and she had a tail longer than seven or eight feet". Three days after this, Cresewell surrenders the fortress to Jean de Berry.

[321] Ibid., p. 812, folio 164vb: "she was very beautiful".

tradition of women who are turned into serpents. Another reason is found in the text's overall themes and tone. Throughout the Mélusine story, the focus has been on man's deeds as opposed to his physical appearance, which allows both Mélusine and her sons to be valued as humans. This is why she is able to, paradoxically, be an animal in physical appearance but a noble human woman in personality. In the end, Mélusine may look like a beast, but Remondin has acted like one; a far worse fate. Another good reason is found in the text's main structure and purpose. This story is, unlike those of group I, a linear story: it clearly traces both the onset of the famous House of Lusignan and its eventual decline. It can, therefore, not have the same circular structure as is found in group I, and so this story moves from order to chaos but never back again. Mélusine also goes from an ordered human state, to a more chaotic animal-human hybrid state, to complete chaos in her animal form. As the main purpose of Jean d'Arras' text was not just to tell the story of the House of Lusignan, but also to establish Jean de Berry as the rightful heir to its lands[322], this linear structure of decline is important. On the one hand, these ancestors have to be presented as noble characters who establish a wonderful lineage, but on the other hand the decline of this lineage has to be highlighted and explained so that room is created for a new family to take over. The eventual step from chaos back to order is not made within the literary work, but was to take place in the medieval real world. This curious mixing of intentions is why Mélusine in the end becomes a woman who has lost her physical humanity and is driven out of human society, but who is still connected to the chivalric world and should be considered a noble lady and a wonderful human being.

Near the end of the tale, the narrator assures his readers that his story is based on historical facts, and if the reader were to visit the areas he writes about, he will find them much the same as he described. Surely, Mélusine herself is still there, at her castle Lusignan, forever caught in animal form, lamenting her tragic fate.

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[322] See Vincensini's introduction to Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, pp. 22-24. Coudrette's version was written for similar reasons, but for a different patron.

8- Conclusion

To conclude, this study has examined the dragon maiden as an animal-human hybrid monster and as she is found in medieval literature. The main question I have attempted to answer is: <u>Which meaning does the medieval dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body carry?</u> To this purpose, I have combined features from Monster Theory with concepts from Animal Theory in examining this monster's role in identity formations of the human and the animal and the boundary between these two. I have first looked at the general medieval background of thoughts on humans and animals. Then, I have examined the ways in which Derrida's degrees of animality are present in the literary chivalric world and how the dragon maiden may challenge these. Finally, I have looked at specific examples of the encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden to see how she both challenges and confirms familiar notions.

Firstly, I have attempted to answer one of the smaller questions: in what way does the dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body reflect medieval ideas about what makes a human and what makes an animal, and how does she play with definitions of the boundaries between the two? An examination of medieval thoughts on humans and animals, and which of them is superior and why, showed that medieval Man is on top of the medieval worldly hierarchy and that he is even favoured by God. Medieval definitions of what make a human are made by defining what makes an animal and which features make Man superior. The result of this is that intelligence and free Will, but also clothing, language, and the community, are all defining aspects of a human as opposed to the animal. A consequence of this type of Anthropocentric thinking is that Man is not just human by virtue of his human body, but further has to act like one in order to be perceived as truly and fully human. If a man were to act like a beast in, for example, killing or hurting another human being, he is

likened to an animal and loses many of his rights as a human. Nevertheless, this sinful man can be redeemed through the grace of God and re-attain a perfect human status.

The idea that what makes a human is more than just a body returns with the dragon maiden encounter. We have seen that, in group I, the dragon maiden in her transformed state can show signs of humanity either by using body language in mimicking submission similar to human prayer, or by using actual language in confusing the knight by speaking as a human would. In this way, she looks like an animal but acts like a human. In *Lybeaus Desconus*, the dragon maiden has an actual physical human head, but she shows no signs of humanity in the way she acts and consequently the knight is terrified at her sight. It is the confusion of a beast that acts like a human that makes the knight reconsider his actions and has him doubt whether or not he has a right of access to this animal's body in killing it. Furthermore, when the dragon maiden has become human again, this state is made clear by her use of clothing, language, and final absorption into the chivalric community.

In group II, there is also a focus on the difference between looking like and acting like an animal. Mélusine may eventually become the animal, but Remondin is left with the knowledge that he has acted sinfully in betraying Mélusine and causing the downfall of his noble House. Also, the bodies of Mélusine's sons also shows signs of monstrosity, but these physical attributes pale in comparison to their graceful and bold personalities so much that they become worthy members of the community and marry king's daughters. In the end, though, Remondin is able to redeem himself, as is possible only for humans, by devoting the rest of his life to God. Interestingly, although Mélusine is a part of the chivalric community and is described as a lady who wears fine clothing and uses courtly language, she loses these things when she becomes the animal.

In all, the dragon maiden both confirms and challenges medieval ideas about humans and animals, and the boundaries between the two. The split between the dragon maiden's

human and animal properties is not always clear, but it is nevertheless always there. Although she challenges both the knight's and the reader's ideas about humans and animals and their place in the world, the ultimate purpose of the dragon maiden encounter still is to find out who really is the human in the story and who, ultimately, comes out on top.

Furthermore, I have looked at a more focused question: in what way does the medieval dragon maiden play with ideas or anxieties about the boundaries between humans and animals as they are found in medieval chivalric literature? Does she challenge or confirm these ideas? Within the specific context of the medieval literary chivalric world, the home of the dragon maiden, Derrida's degrees of animality are clearly present and help create an order and a hierarchy among beings in this idealized world. The degrees of animality within this literary chivalric world are fixed and this is the reason why an animal-human hybrid monster such as the dragon maiden causes so much anxiety in challenging convention. Since this monster is made up not only of animal and human body parts, but further also acts human, the monster causes great confusion and anxiety for the knight who encounters it. According to convention, most of the knight's enemies are either 'animalized' animals, such as the dragon which he is allowed to kill without any objections, or 'animalized' humans, such as the giant whom he is also allowed to kill because it has lost its status as a true human. The dragon maiden falls within all four degrees of animality at different points in the story, and so the knight cannot rely on convention but has to make his own judgements about what to do with this creature. The dragon maiden therefore exposes this conventional treatment of different beings in the literary chivalric world and challenges both the knight and the reader to rethink them.

This all comes back most clearly in group I, where the completion of the challenge posed by the dragon maiden leads to a fully 'humanized' human status for the knight itself. This dragon maiden is first presented as an 'animalized' animal but soon shows signs of

humanity, and so becomes a 'humanized' animal. After being made fully human again, the lady explains that she was in fact an 'animalized' human, and she is then taken into chivalric society to become a 'humanized' human. These notions also return in group II, where the animal-human hybrid monster is suddenly not found somewhere at a location outside chivalric society, as with most monsters, but she is actually at the heart of the community. When the knight first sees Mélusine in her animal-human hybrid form, he does not know how to react but immediately knows that things are only going to get much worse. When Remondin later hears of the horrible deed of his son, he snaps and decides that Mélusine is an 'animalized' animal who is responsible for the monstrosities found in their sons. Remondin cannot accept Mélusine's hybrid state and he wants to resolve the tension by deciding in which category she should be placed. Mélusine's later defence makes Remondin reconsider her as a 'humanized' animal, a lady who means to do well but is still a monster at heart, but Mélusine pushes her defence even further and argues that she is a real 'humanized' human. After she has transformed, becoming the literal 'animalized' human, Remondin regrets his actions and eventually sees that he himself has acted as an 'animalized' human. In the end, whilst the dragon maidens in group I all become human, Mélusine remains an ambiguous character who is animal on the outside but human on the inside.

The dragon maiden plays with ideas and anxieties about the boundaries between animals and humans found in medieval chivalric literature because she is a creature that cannot be neatly placed within the degrees of animality. During her hybrid state, she challenges conventional ideas because she makes it difficult for both the knight and the reader of the story to place her. However, this hybrid form does not last and she eventually becomes either human or animal, so that the tension created by her hybrid form may be relieved. This is most true for group I, but in group II a slight anxiety about Mélusine's state remains.

I have also considered the following question: can the medieval dragon maidens found in literature be seen as a group? I have discovered that this question is intimately tied to another: how does this group of dragon maidens differ from other monsters? The dragon maidens found in medieval literature can be seen as a group not only because they share their hybrid form, but also because they have a narrative structure in common. The encounter between the knight and the dragon maiden in both groups clearly goes through three different stages: the status before the encounter up until the first sight of the monster, the status during the encounter, and the eventual resolve in which the dragon maiden becomes either human or animal. Before the encounter, the status of both characters is clear, during the encounter the status becomes unclear and the negotiations between the degrees of animality are shown most clearly, and at the end of the encounter the status again becomes clearer.

In a way, the dragon maiden's hybrid body is reminiscent of that of the werewolf but, when comparing the narrative structures of both groups of dragon maidens with that of the werewolf stories, there are some interesting differences. Whereas in the werewolf story, a human becomes an animal-human hybrid monster and is then turned back into a human, this is not true for all dragon maidens. In fact, the dragon maiden stories have something in common with each other, but can also individually be compared to different parts of the werewolf stories. The two groups of dragon maidens conform to different parta of the werewolf stories and, consequently, the anxiety caused by the dragon maiden's hybrid body is much greater than that of the werewolf. The knight and the reader are much more uncertain about the dragon maiden's real state and this makes the dragon maiden a unique monster.

Also, I have examined: how, if at all, do the encounters between a knight and a dragon maiden contribute to the themes, motifs, purpose, and structure of the literary texts in which they feature? In group I, for both the knight and the reader, the dragon maiden story is a

circular process from order to chaos and back to order, similar to the story's main structure. Her process from human to animal and back to human mirrors the overall circular narrative structure. But, the progress of the knight within this narrative is linear and the encounter with the dragon maiden is found at a crucial stage within his development. More often than not, she forms the bridge between a knight's quest for personal development and the establishment of an identity, and the eventual establishment of a communal identity. In other stories, she may come at a different point in the knight's development, but she always contributes to the knight's linear climb to the top. As these stories all revolve around a quest for identity, the dragon maiden encounter forms a wonderful challenge for the knight who wishes to prove himself as the ultimate 'humanized' human. The episode is, therefore, not just random or meaningless, but is an important part of the stories' structure and main theme.

In group II, the narrative structure is more linear than that of the first group and consequently Mélusine, the dragon maiden who here also mirrors the overall structure, never makes her final step back to humanity. The reason for this is found in the story's main purpose and themes, as it tells the decline of the House of Lusignan but also present these ancestors as noble characters. This combination causes Mélusine to take her final animal form, but also allows her to be viewed as a human inside. Her eventual ambiguity further contributes to the narrator's overall value of deeds over physical appearance. In this group, too, the dragon maiden is a crucial part of the story's structure, purpose, and main themes.

At last, we return to the main question: which meaning does the medieval dragon maiden's animal-human hybrid body carry? We have found that the dragon maiden's monstrous animal human hybrid body has meaning, both within the smaller context of the stories in which she is found, but also within the wider context of ideas about humans and animals in the medieval world and chivalric literature. The dragon maiden exposes these ideas

and shows that the boundary between man and animal is arbitrary and dependent on circumstances. Most of all, though, the eventual decision on which status a being has is dependent on that of another: the human is defined through use of the animal, and the knight's status is defined through his view on the status of the dragon maiden. The dragon maiden is, in the end, a true monster indeed, as she is not just there for ornamentation, but her presence reveals important ideas about the way medieval man defined itself as opposed to animals and the way in which the literary chivalric world normally operates on this basis. The greatest revelation of all, however, is that the dragon maiden only temporarily challenges ideas about the difference between humans and animals. Unlike one of the main arguments made in Monster Theory, this monster does not break boundaries but is eventually tamed and, though she challenged the norm for some time, in the end the stories are still all about the human.

In our modern Western world, the distinction between man and animal has become increasingly slimmer and the divide between man and animal seems to be clearer in the human mind than it is in Nature. Nevertheless, Man still insists on defining itself as different from animals. Take, for example, modern ideas about DNA research, in which humans are said to be 98% similar to some great apes, but the thought of being called a monkey is truly appalling to any human. Certainly our civilized behaviour is much more superior to these brutes? Although the arguments of what exactly makes Man different for the animal may have changed over time, the need for defining mankind as different and superior is, as we have seen, also present in medieval times. So, in the end, who knows? Perhaps we have stumbled upon a fundamental part of the way in which humans have gone through their own process of identity formations after separating from the rest of the beasts. Perhaps we have discovered that this idea is so infused in our human society that it even returns in medieval romance. And perhaps, then, the animal-human hybrid monster that is the dragon maiden can never really be allowed to break the mould but only makes us aware of its presence.

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