

## Ending and the Ends of the Collection:

### The Miracle de Saint Alexis

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Because the plays in the Cangé manuscript are arranged in the chronological order of their presentation, the last one, the Miracle de Saint Alexis (1382), might well serve as a useful indicator of some of the distinctive properties and characteristics of the collection at its most mature stage.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in view of the fact that this play is based on a hagiographic vita that had already been rewritten countless times over several centuries, one is prompted to inquire as to whether or not this dramatic adaptation of the legendary biography of Alexis shows any innovative tendencies with regard to the tradition from which it is drawn.<sup>2</sup> If so, the playwright's treatment thereof might yield significant insights into the spiritual and intellectual climate that prevailed in the milieu of the Goldsmiths' confraternity around the time that its theatrical activity was about to end. At issue in what follows is one aspect of this question, having to do with an element frequently in evidence in the hagiographic tradition of Alexis, the image of the turtledove, to which the playwright gives particular prominence in ways that hold implications for the overall meaning of this adaptation of the life of Alexis.

As is characteristic of the texts in this tradition as a whole, this image figures only once in the play. Alexis has just left Rome unexpectedly, abandoning his bride in their nuptial chamber without explaining to her his sudden election of an ascetic vocation. In the paternal household, the bridegroom's parents are overcome with consternation and incomprehension, yet their new daughter-in-law seems to grasp immediately the significance of her husband's strangely enigmatic words upon his departure: ". . . plus au monde ne veult estre," she declares, "Mais s'en va en penance

mettre / En lieu estrange» (v. 957-59) [he no longer wishes to remain in the world and is going off to do penance in a foreign land]. Showing intelligence and forethought, she succinctly informs her in-laws of her intentions:

Ottroiez moy vous deux ensemble  
Qu'avecques vous je demourray,  
Ne que jamais n'en partiray,  
Mais père et mère me serez. (v. 1014-17)

[I bid you both to grant that I shall remain with you and never leave; you shall be as father and mother to me.] Expressing herself better at this crucial juncture than most of her predecessors in the tradition, she vows henceforth to remain with them in pious fidelity, like Tobit's wife Sara, the paragon of the exemplary daughter-in-law in thirteenth-century devotional texts.<sup>3</sup> Displaying candor and full solidarity with them, she lays out in detail her future as she envisages it:

Certes grant charité ferez,  
Que je vous jur je seray celle  
Qui seray com la turterelle  
Qui, quant a perdu son mari,  
Elle en a le cuer si marri  
Que depuis ne va ne ne ganche  
Ne ne s'assiet sur verte branche.  
Pour certain tout ainsi feray :  
Solaz mondain du tout lairay ;  
Ne pense ailleurs mettre m'estude  
Qu'en mener vie en solitude,  
En pleurs, en veillier, et après

En entrer en parfons regrez

Pour celi qui ainsi me laisse. (v. 1018-31)

[Thus shall you do a very charitable deed, and I promise you that I shall be like the turtledove that, having lost its mate, is so broken-hearted that it neither strays nor flees nor sits on verdant branch. Surely shall I forsake all worldly comforts; my sole desire is to devote myself to a life of solitude, weeping and keeping vigil, then falling into deep regret for him who leaves me thus.] Thus she becomes the bereft turtledove that flees the green season and the world's allure, so as better to plumb the depths of sadness in absolute solitude. While this is indeed a rigorous discipline, it serves a positive end – to hold out hope that her spouse will become the mediator of their eternal salvation:

Que Dieu, par sa grace, l'adresse

Et le conduie tellement

Que ce soit a son sauvement

Et que puissons par ses biens faiz

Pardon avoir de noz meffaiz!

Cest a quoy tens. (v. 1032-1037)

[May the grace of God guide and direct him toward his salvation, and may we through his good works have forgiveness for our sins. That is my fervent hope.] The bird's example will help her fill the void, by means of a ritual that will constantly reawaken her consciousness of a transcendent ontology.

Prior to assessing this poignant evocation of the turtledove within the context of the play as a whole, it is worthwhile to glance backward at its significance in other ancient and medieval contexts and at its use in the earlier narrative incarnations of the story of Alexis.

In the scientific and didactic literature of antiquity and in medieval Latin and vernacular bestiaries,<sup>4</sup> the turtledove represents monogamy;<sup>5</sup> chastity;<sup>6</sup> and chaste widowhood.<sup>7</sup> These virtues are illustrated by a few stereotyped comportments: a preference for solitude;<sup>8</sup> a plaintive call and avoidance of verdure;<sup>9</sup> a predilection for the dry branch and roiled water.<sup>10</sup> As a component of numerous traditions – naturalist, scholastic, biblical, Patristic, the Greek and Latin Physiologus, etc. – its profile varies from one text to another. The Bestiaire of Pierre de Beauvais, from the early thirteenth century, contains a substantial synthesis of its principal characteristics:

There is a bird called turtledove, about which Holy Scripture says: "The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (Song of Songs, 2:12). Physiologus says that the turtledove dearly loves her male companion and lives with him in chastity and is true to him exclusively. If the male happens to be captured by a goshawk or a falcon, thereafter the female never mates with any other male, but desires faithfully the one she has lost and holds out hope for him, remaining for the rest of her life faithful to the memory and desire of her mate. All of you faithful souls, hear this: if such great chastity can be found in such a small bird, whosoever holds the image of the turtledove in his soul will follow the example of its chastity: such is Holy Church, for not once, since Our Lord was crucified, risen on the third day and ascended into Heaven, has she been united with another for even an instant. On the contrary, she desires Him and places her hopes on Him, and perseveres unto the end in the love and charity that she holds for Him. In this regard, Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "He who perseveres for love of me unto the end, he shall be saved." And the prophet David said in the Psalms: "Act as a man, comfort thy heart, and await

the Lord." The turtledove flees the domiciles of mankind; we should likewise flee worldly pleasures and pursue spiritual rewards.<sup>11</sup>

The two parts of this profile, one detailing the comportments and physical characteristics of the turtledove, the other their moral and religious significance, are interrelated by the theme of chastity which is doubly illustrated, literally by the female of the species, and figuratively by the Church. Homologating the cosmos, nature, and the human being, this configuration associates three domains that are both moral and temporal. Mediating between God and man, Nature is represented by the turtledove, exemplary mediatrix between the eschatological trajectory of universal history and the biographical phases of a human life. In contrast, the turtledove is valorized at multiple levels of Christian allegory in the Bestiaire of Philippe de Thaün (ca. 1121-1135): "Signefiance i at. / Par turtre par raisun / Sainte Eglise entendum; / Que umblè et chaste est / E Deus sis masle est ; / . . . / E turtre signefie, / Saciez, Sainte Marie / U sainte anme en verté, / Ço dit auctorité" [There is a deeper meaning: by 'turtledove' we understand Holy Church, which is humble and chaste, and God is its male . . . Know also that 'turtledove' signifies Saint Mary, or in truth the saintly soul, as scripture attests.]<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, in the encyclopedic Le Livre du Trésor (ca. 1262-66) of Brunetto Latini, the turtledove serves merely as a behavioral model for mankind: " Et sachez que la tourterelle porte un tel amour à son compaignon que s'il disparaît pour une raison quelconque, elle ne cherche jamais un autre mari, et elle demeure fidèle au premier, soit par vertu de chasteté, soit parce qu'elle s' imagine que son mari va revenir" [Know also that the turtledove feels such love for her companion that if, for whatever reason, the latter disappears, she never seeks another husband but remains faithful to her first one, either by virtue of chastity, or because she believes that her husband will return].<sup>13</sup>

This last example locates us within the mouvance of the Alexis legend. In much earlier stages of its development, it stressed functions like foundation or renewal of the cult; valorization of the ascetic life as an exemplary model; exaltation of the saint's image as intercessor, etc. Most versions of the legend never explicitly allegorize the turtledove but rather exploit the human characteristics of its profile. In many versions dating from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, interest in the bride increases considerably, along with a greater concern for the question of marriage.<sup>14</sup> In most of the Latin and French versions of the story from this period, the bride, during a conversation either with her mother-in-law or with both of Alexis' parents in which she also expresses her wish to reside henceforth with them, vows to take the turtledove as a model.<sup>15</sup>

The twofold vow – to emulate the turtledove, and to reside with the husband's parents – occurs in the oldest Latin version of the legend (ca. 950). Following his providential return to Rome after his seventeen-year spiritual quest, Alexis is ensconced in his parents' home, though as yet no one has recognized him as being the poor soul under the staircase.<sup>16</sup> In this version, the fleeting allusions to the bird's behavior show that the Physiologus tradition was already well known.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, in the official Vita (early 11<sup>th</sup> c.) in the Acta Sanctorum published by the Bollandists, this exchange takes place when the bridegroom's absence from Rome is first noticed, and the motifs of chastity and abstinence are prominent.<sup>18</sup> The French versions display a variety of tendencies. In the earliest Anglo-Norman version (ms L, late 11<sup>th</sup> c.), which figures in the Saint Albans Psalter (1123), the bereft bride's double vow is so brief as to risk confusing her two objectives: "Dama, dist ele, jo i ai si grant perte, / Ore vivrai an guise de turtrele : / Nen ai tun filz, ansembl'ot tei voil estra."  
[My lady, said she, I have sustained such a great loss. Now I shall live as the

turtledove; in the absence of your son, I wish to remain with you.]<sup>19</sup> Intent upon keeping the two vows distinct, the anonymous author of the Roumans de saint Alessin (12<sup>th</sup> c.) rewrites and amplifies this passage.<sup>20</sup> In two thirteenth-century versions the bride never evokes the turtledove but emphasizes one of its principal virtues, chastity;<sup>21</sup> in a third, Alexis has just expired when his wife metamorphoses into an exemplary widow-turtledove.<sup>22</sup> In a version from the fourteenth century, the wife, realizing that her husband has left her, sadly resigns herself, like the turtledove, to await his return in solitude.<sup>23</sup> While the distinctive characteristics of both the bride and the turtledove vary in these versions, they invariably associate her two vows – to emulate the turtledove and to reside with her in-laws.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, "the voice of the turtledove" that we hear in these versions is either that of the ideal wife or of the exemplary widow.

As we have seen, our dramatic Miracle de Saint Alexis gives special prominence to the moment at which the bride vows to model her solitary existence on the example of the turtledove. In the context of the play as a whole, however, we become aware that her character is frequently magnified and nuanced in ways that serve to deepen the significance of her election of this emblematic role-model from the natural world. While endowing her with both eloquence and perspicacity, the playwright confronts her with an Alexis who, at least initially, is genuinely concerned with the spiritual formation of this woman of noble birth whom he has just married. Throughout the tradition, the nuptial chamber is the site of the major turning-point in the future saint's existence,<sup>25</sup> as Alexis pronounces a morally-instructive discourse, or chastoïement.<sup>26</sup> Its recurrent themes – avoidance of worldly concerns; chastity; devotion to Christ, etc. – are intended to show his bride the way of salvation. This is the couple's only conversation before his departure, and it anticipates and conditions

the moment at which the bride vows to model her life on that of the turtledove. The latter thus emblematically synthesizes the meaning of the counsel Alexis had previously given her in the privacy of their nuptial chamber.

In the theatrical version of this chastoiement, the young husband extols the virtues of virginity, which prior to the beginning of the thirteenth century is a theme less often developed than that of chastity. In contrast with narrative versions in which virginity is only moderately at issue,<sup>27</sup> the playwright innovates by making a matter of primary importance. In his chastoiement, Alexis calls virginity "[s]uer des anges, tant est haultisme" (v. 757) [sister of the angels, it is so exalted] and enthrones it at the summit of a tripartite hierarchy –

Virginitez a fruit centisme,  
Les mariez n'ont que de trente,  
Les veuves n'ont que de soixante ;  
Ceste passe ces deux estaz. (v. 758-61)

[Virginity yields fruit a hundredfold and surpasses the estates of those who marry, who have but thirtyfold, and widows who have but sixtyfold.]

– and transforms it into a salvific mechanism:

Virginitez de mettre en tas  
Et tant plus d'assembler se paine  
Vertuz, plus est noble sa paine,  
Et com plus en assemble, voir,  
Et plus en veult encore avoir  
Pour tant qu'elle soit de la crainte  
Et de la paour Dieu atainte,  
Ce n'est pas doubtte. (v. 762-69)

[Virginité s'efforce si beaucoup plus vigoureusement de monter et d'accumuler des vertus que ses efforts ne sont nobles, et en effet, plus elle en acquiert, plus elle veut, à ce point qu'elle ne peut être vaincue par la crainte et l'effroi de Dieu, sans doute.]

Alexis revient ici à un modèle culturel bien établi qui classe les femmes en trois états selon leurs vertus : d'abord, les vierges, qui seules seront récompensées cent fois ; ensuite, les veuves, à une moindre récompense de soixante fois, et enfin, les femmes mariées, à une simple trentaine. Répandu pendant le Moyen Âge, ce schéma remonte à saint Jérôme et perdure jusqu'au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>28</sup> Entre le XII<sup>e</sup> siècle et la fin du Moyen Âge, moralistes et prédicateurs invoquent souvent ce schéma.<sup>29</sup> En effet, Alexis s'adressant à sa jeune épouse ne peut que lui faire venir à l'esprit le prédicateur médiéval qui s'adresse à une assemblée de femmes.<sup>30</sup> Pendant cette même période, la perception théologique du mariage comme sacrement consensuel est prévalente, où la procréation légitime la sexualité, tandis que l'union purement spirituelle est tenue pour supérieure.<sup>31</sup> Les versions narratives médiévales de la vie d'Alexis mettent en fait l'accent sur le salut de son épouse, ainsi que sur la supériorité du mariage spirituel non consommé et donc de la virginité.<sup>32</sup>

Ainsi, dans notre pièce, il semble au premier abord que Alexis et sa femme soient un couple bien assorti. Un contraste important devient cependant rapidement évident, car Alexis est incapable de franchise dans cette situation. L'évitement du monde, qui est une caractéristique définitive de son personnage tout au long de la tradition, prend ici la forme d'un comportement qui empêche l'établissement d'une véritable compréhension spirituelle mutuelle entre lui et son épouse. Elle réagit à son éloge de la virginité avec une étonnante perplexité et un scepticisme :

Sire, je m'esbahis forment

De ce que me dites : comment

Garderay je virginité?  
Vous savez bien de verité  
Qu'a vous sui subjecte et soubzmise :  
S'il ne vous plaist, en nulle guise  
Vierge garder ne me pourray,  
Ou vers vous me parjureray.

Dy je voir, sire? (v. 771-79)

[Sire, I am most astonished by what you're telling me: how will I keep my virginity? You know very well that I am subjected and submitted to your authority. If it is not your wish, by no means will I be able to remain a virgin; otherwise I shall break my vows to you. Am I correct, sire?]

Evoking a principle of canon law formalized during the twelfth century but respected for centuries before that, she assumes that a marriage is consummated through carnal union.<sup>33</sup> Instead of seizing this propitious moment for creating a formal and indissoluble spiritual bond between them, however, Alexis side-steps her question:

Sur ce point je vous pense a dire  
Et a respondre une autre foiz.  
Puis que l'un l'autre avons nos foiz  
Donnez, certes je vous accors  
N'a q'une char en noz deux corps,  
S'est voir ce que vous di et moustre ;  
Mais n'en diray ore plus outre. (v. 780-86)

[I think I shall answer your question and talk about this matter some other time.

Because we have exchanged our vows, I certainly grant you that our two bodies are

one flesh and what I tell you and explain to you is true. But I shall say no more about this now.]

What he does say, however, will in retrospect assume great significance: "s'il avient que je soie / Loing de vous par quelque escheance," [If, for whatever reason, I happen to be far from you], he says, these gifts – my ring and silken sash (which are components of the traditional story)– will ensure your "souvenance / Et mémoire de moy . . . / Dont nos cuers en amont conjoignent, / Et Dieux, quant ainsi nous verra / Entramer, avec nous sera" [recollection and memory of me . . . that conjoin our hearts on high, and God, when He sees us love one another, thus will be with us].<sup>34</sup> Alexis thus affirms that their marriage will be spiritual and long-lasting, capable of surviving any unforeseeable "escheance" that might separate them.<sup>35</sup>

Knowing the latter eventuality to be certain and imminent, however, he excuses himself as if for a momentary absence – "Couchiez vous, tandis que g'iray / Un po la hors ou affaire ay. / Pensez de vous desatourner, / Car m'entente est de retourner / Tantost aussi" (vv. 797-801) [Now go to bed, while I go out for a bit, as I have a matter to deal with. Attend to getting yourself undressed, for I intend to return shortly]. With this bogus and banal pretext he initiates his secret departure from Rome, and this flagrantly mendacious behavior radically distinguishes him from his narrative analogues in the tradition, most of whom do not fail to take leave of their brides.<sup>36</sup> These other late medieval narrative versions, as Pinder notes, reflect the fact that the model of legitimate marriage is based on mutual consent and not on carnal consummation. Thus it is necessary to show that Alexis freely and sincerely accepts the marriage and that he informs his bride of his intention to leave, so that she can formally consent that he do so.<sup>37</sup>

Is this divergence a lapse on the part of the playwright? More plausible, it would seem, is that it introduces a deliberate modification into the tradition, one more in keeping with the conventions of the dramatic *Miracle of the Virgin "par personnages."* For what distinguishes this Alexis from his precursors also brings him closer to many other protagonists in the *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, human beings who, sometimes even despite noble objectives, sooner or later find themselves in an extremely difficult situation. The constraints of the genre necessitate that the protagonist's status become problematic. Of course, this dramatic Alexis fulfills the objectives of his ascetic vocation, which are ultimately sanctioned by conventional interventions of the Virgin, accompanied by her celestial cohort (vv. 1682-1765; 2296-2368). Problematic, on the other hand, are his concealment of the fact that he is about to begin an ascetic existence elsewhere and his flight without leave. What these flaws serve admirably to bring out is the hundredfold merit of the bride-turtledove. For it is she who intuitively penetrates the enigma behind her spouse's bizarre departure, who renews faith and hope in the household of her in-laws, and who, despite her husband's truncated spousal counsel, will succeed in keeping to the rigors of an exemplary spiritual discipline.

This emphasis is confirmed in the playwright's deft handling of the very end of the story. Considerably abridging the traditional conclusion, which was profoundly didactic and emphasized the collective significance of Alexis' spiritual quest, the playwright instead highlights the wife's perspective. A very brief exchange between emperor and pope suffices, in the way of closure, to set into motion the transposition of the holy man's relics to his tomb, which necessitates a procession and thus provides a means of leaving the stage. These reductions facilitate attribution of the last speech of any consequence, a long meditation delivered over the saintly body, to the

"turtledove," whose eloquence, initially anchored in deeply human feelings, now rises to a peak of sublimity. First she casts herself as a "povre veuve" [poor widow] (v. 2612); she was cruelly misled: "Ne cuiday pas en verité / Que partir de moy se vouldist / A celle heure, si comme il fist" (vv. 2619-21) [I never really believed that he wanted to leave me at that moment as he did]. Yet she was touched by the mnemotechnic virtue of the gifts he gave her:

. . . et si me donna  
Cest anel et ceste sainture,  
Et me pria par tresgrant cure  
Que pour s'amistié les gardasse,  
Afin que quant les regardasse,  
J'eusse de li remembrance,  
S'il n'y estoit, et souvenance.  
Or est fait . . . . (v. 2623-30)

[And yet he gave me this ring and belt and urged me to cherish them for love of him, so that, when I would look at them, I would remember him, if he were not present, and so I did . . .] She has an excellent recollection of the chastoiement – "doulcement m'araisonna," v. 2622) [he counseled me gently] – and especially of the main emphasis – "tant de bien me dist / De l'estat de virginité" (vv. 2617-18) – which became the foundation of her subsequent devotion as she determined that

. . . touz les jours le ploreray,  
Et pour s'amour me garderay  
Vierge touz les jours de ma vie.  
Jamais ne quier avoir envie  
D'omme nul a mari avoir,  
Mais touz les jours pleureray, voir,

[I shall weep for him every day and for love of him remain a virgin all the days of my life. Never shall I desire to take any man as a husband, but every day I shall truly mourn his demise.]

Thus ends the play, with personal sentiments that contrast sharply with the conventional sententious reflections on the hereafter that conclude earlier versions of the life of Saint Alexis. Gone is the spiritual fervor of throngs of Romans swarming around the holy body, as are the countless miracles worked among them by the relics. The ultimate valorization of the saint as an intercessor who will promote eternal salvation for the public as well as for his family has also disappeared. Instead, we hear the voice of the turtledove, praising conjugal fidelity and chaste widowhood, in a long final speech unprecedented in the tradition and redolent of homiletic oratory. Furthermore, in this closing synthesis of the moral impetus of the play she underlines her perdurable relationship of spiritual solidarity with Alexis and accords particular importance to having preserved her virginity. Thus we see that the tripartite model he invoked in the nuptial chamber is precisely the model she subsequently illustrates throughout the balance of the play: she is a virgin, then a wife, and finally a widow, yet still and always a virgin. In her, the feminine trinity achieves an ideal unity.

The Miracle de Saint Alexis thus exalts a woman who, in the absence of her spouse, consecrated her absolute fidelity to his family when it took her into its bosom, and who in the end remains eternally faithful to her spouse, despite his shortcomings precisely with regard to her. This image of womanhood is entirely consistent with that of the Alexian legendary tradition as a whole, which depicts a wife fully submitted to the patriarchal symbolic order. It also corresponds to a widespread late-medieval image of the exemplary wife in Christian society: a pious woman who is

both submissive and protected.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the unprecedented magnification of the role of the virginal spouse-turtledove in this Miracle may be due in large part to the specific textual community in which it originated, the restricted, homogeneous milieu of the Parisian Goldsmiths.<sup>39</sup> Robert L. A. Clark has shown that this play, destined – as were all of the others – for a well-to-do sector of the middle class that was acutely aware of its moral and social commitments, frequently valorizes the practice of charity in an urban milieu, as for example in the long and detailed opening scene depicting, as if en abyme, a banquet for the poor given by Alexis' parents (vv. 1-183) and their observations with regard to almsgiving (vv. 2537-43), highlighting the charitable objectives of the confraternity.<sup>40</sup> Their supreme exemplar of charity, and of mediation between the mortal and the sublime, was of course the Virgin Mary, the female Patron of their entire dramatic enterprise. Thus at the end of the collection we arrive at a significant convergence of two highly complementary views of ideal womanhood, as the celestial Mediatrix throughout the Miracles and the spouse-turtledove of the final play together create a powerful association of the transcendent Feminine Ideal and an image of of ideal womanhood prevalent during the later Middle Ages.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ref to Kunstmann

<sup>2</sup> On the development of the legend prior to the first Anglo-Norman version, see Perugi, pp. 10-165; and Christopher Storey, An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Alexis Studies (La Vie de Saint Alexis), Genève, Droz, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Tobit 10 : 12-13. According to Robert de Sorbon, Gilbert de Tournai, Jacques de Voragine, Vincent de Beauvais, and others, Sara was the ideal daughter-in-law. See Silvana Vecchio, "The Good Wife," in A History of Women in the West, éd. Georges Duby et Michelle Perrot: vol. 2: Silences of the Middle Ages, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 105-35, esp. pp. 105-9.

<sup>4</sup> See Gabriel Bianciotto, Bestiaires du Moyen Age (Paris: Stock, 1980), pp. 7-17, and Florence McCulloch, Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 178-79.

<sup>5</sup> See Francesco Sbordone, Ricerche sulle fonti e sulla composizione del Physiologus greco (Naples: Torella, 1936), pp. 129-38 ; Marcel Bataillon, "La tortolice de Fontefrida y del Cántico espiritual," Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica, 7 (1953), 291-306, esp. p. 293, et T. Peach, "Sources et fortunes d'une image: 'Sur l'arbre sec la veufve tourterelle'," Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 48 (1986), 733-50, esp. pp. 736-37.

<sup>6</sup> This characteristic is emphasized in Patristic writings, notably in hexameral literature. See Bataillon, pp. 294-95, et Arthur B. Groos, Jr., "'Sigune auf der linde' and the Turtledove in Parzival," Journal of English and German Philology, 67 (1968), 631-46, esp. pp. 634-35.

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<sup>7</sup> In Patristic commentaries and in the Latin Physiologus, version B, the turtledove as widow is a figure of the Church faithful to the resurrected Christ. See Bataillon, pp. 294-96; Peach, pp. 737-38, and McCulloch, Bestiaires, p. 178. See also Barthélemy l'Anglais, Tractatus de proprietaribus rerum, 12, 34, De turture.

<sup>8</sup> Isidore de Séville, Etymologiae, XII, vii, 60, cit. in Peach, p. 738.

<sup>9</sup> « . . . nec unquam in viridi ramo residentem pospicias, ut tu ab eo discas voluptatum virentia virulenta vitare ». Saint Bernard de Clairaux, Sermones in Cantica, sermo LIX, on the Song of Songs, 2:12, in Migne, PL, CLXXXIII, 1064 ff.

<sup>10</sup> See Bataillon, pp. 296-300, et Peach, "'Sur l'arbre sec'," p. 735 et passim.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Modern French by Gabriel Bianciotto, Bestiaires du Moyen Age, p. 53.

Our translation.

<sup>12</sup> Le Bestiaire de Philippe de Thaün. Texte critique, ed. Emmanuel Walberg (Paris and Lund: H. Welter, 1900), vv. 2557-61; 2570-73.

<sup>13</sup> Brunetto Latini, Livre du Trésor, cit. in Bianciotto, Bestiaires du Moyen Age, p. 210, trans. mine.

<sup>14</sup> See Janice Pinder, "Transformations of a Theme : Marriage and Sanctity in the Old French St Alexis Poems," in Shifts and Transpositions in Medieval Narrative : A Festschrift for Dr Elspeth Kennedy, ed. Karen Pratt (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 71-88.

<sup>15</sup> Although the turtledove normally serves as an exemplary model for female characters, in the Vie de Sainte Euphrosine it is eponymous protagonist's fiancé who takes it as a behavioral model. See Florence McCulloch, "St Euphrosine, St Alexis, and the Turtledove," Romania, 98 (1977), 168-85.

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<sup>16</sup> In some versions, this dialogue takes place before Alexis has returned to Rome, while in others it does not occur until after his death, when his autobiographical account is read in public.

<sup>17</sup> "Non mouebor de loco isto, donec sciam, ubi peregrinatus est dilectus meus, sed ero similis turturi : inquirens <socium> suum per aridam uel decurrentia aquarum et alium non querens, et singulariter facta est omnibus diebus uite sue." See Ulrich MÖlk, "Die älteste lateinische Alexiusvita (9./10. Jahrhundert): Kritischer Text und Kommentar," Romanistisches Jahrbuch, 27 (1976), pp. 293-315, cit. p. 308.

<sup>18</sup> "Sponsa vero ejus dixit ad socrum suam: Non egrediar de domo tua, sed similabo me turturi, quae omnino alteri non copulatur, dum ejus socius captus fuerit; sic & ego faciam, quousque sciam, quid factum sit de dulcissimo conjuge meo." "De Vita S. Alexii Confessore," Acta Sanctorum, XXXI Julii, vol. IV, 251-53, Brussels, 1780, p. 251.

<sup>19</sup> La Vie de Saint Alexis, ed. Maurizio Perugi (Geneva: Droz, 2000), p. 172, vv. 148-50.

<sup>20</sup> The Vie de Saint Alexis in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: An Edition and Commentary, ed. Alison Goddard Elliott. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), ca. 1187, from a 13<sup>th</sup> c. ms, p. 106, str. 34, vv. 422 – 434.

<sup>21</sup> See ms M2, Carlisle, the Cathedral Library, in The Vie de Saint Alexis, ed. A. G. Elliott. p. 160, str. 25, vv. 281-85. There is no mention of the turtledove in ms. R, BNF fr. 25408, vv. 332-38. See Gaston Paris, "La Vie de Saint Alexi en vers octosyllabiques," Romania 8 (1879), pp. 163-80.

<sup>22</sup> Ms. Hz, BNF fr. 2162, 13<sup>th</sup> c. A Critical Edition of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries Old French Poem Versions of the 'Vie de Saint Alexis', ed. Charles E. Stebbins (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1974), p. 58, str. LIV, vv. 1077-84.

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<sup>23</sup> Stebbins, ms. T, p. 115, vv. 558-62. She expresses the same intent in the Legenda aurea (1261-1266) which, like ms. L and its congeners from the twelfth century, abridges this passage, thus underlining the uncertainty about the bridegroom's fate: "Sponsa uero ad socrum suam dixit: 'Donec audiam de sponso meo dulcissimo, instar turturis solitaria tecum manebo.'" Jacques de Voragine, Legenda aurea, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2 vols. (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), vol. II, p. 622. Approximately fifty years prior to the performance of our play, Jean de Vignay translated the Legenda Aurea: "Et son espouse dist au pere de son mari : 'Je remaindray avecques toy seule comme la tourtelle, tant je oye nouvelles de mon tresdoux espoux.'" Jacques de Voragine, La Légende dorée, édition critique, dans la révision de 1476 par Jean Batallier, d'après la traduction de Jean de Vignay (1333-1348) de la "Legenda aurea" (c. 1261-1266), ed. Brenda Dunn-Lardeau (Paris: Champion, 1997), p. 610.

<sup>24</sup> See also Louise Gnädinger, "An guise de turtrele," in her Eremitica : Studien zur altfranzösische Heiligenvita des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), pp. 69-82.

<sup>25</sup> The length and content of this scene varies considerably. For example, in the Latin versions and the manuscripts of the earliest Anglo-Norman version it is quite succinct (as, for example, in ms. L, ed. Perugi, str. 14, vv. 66-70), whereas in the twelfth-century version it is amplified considerably (ms. S, ed. Elliott, str. 14-24, vv. 138-317). See also Pinder, pp. 76-78; 80-85.

<sup>26</sup> See Donald Maddox, "Avatars courtois d'un genre de discours clérical: le chastoiment," in Courtly Literature and Clerical Culture, ed. Christoph Huber et Henrike Lähnemann (Tübingen: Attempto Verlag, 2002), pp. 161-73.

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<sup>27</sup> In R, an octosyllabic version from the end of the twelfth century (ed. Paris, vv. 214-20); in Hz, a thirteenth-century version in alexandrine stanzas (ed. Stebbins, vv. 263-65 ; 267-81); in the Legenda aurea (ed. P. Maggioni, p. 621, l. 8); and in the French translation of the latter by Jean de Vignay and the revision of the latter (1476) by Batallier (ed. B. Dunn-Lardeau, p. 610).

<sup>28</sup> Saint Jerome, Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei, PL 26, col. 92. See Jacques Dalarun, "The Clerical Gaze," in Klapisch-Zuber, History of Women, p. 29. On the schema's fortunes during the fifteenth century, see Geneviève Hasenohr, "La vie quotidienne de la femme vue par l'Eglise: L'enseignement des 'Journées chrétiennes' de la fin du Moyen Age," in Frau und spätmittelalterlicher Alltag, ed. Heinrich Appelt, (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), pp. 19-101, et Carla Casagrande, "The Protected Woman," in Klapisch-Zuber, History of Women, pp. 82-83.

<sup>29</sup> See Casagrande, "The Protected Woman," p. 73, who cites, among others, the contributions of Jacques de Vitry, Gilbert de Tournai, Vincent de Beauvais, Saint Thomas d'Aquin, and Jacques de Voragine; and Frugoni, "The Imagined Woman," in Klapisch-Zuber, History of Women, p. 336-38.

<sup>30</sup> On this type of audience, see Casagrande, "The Protected Woman," pp. 79-84.

<sup>31</sup> See Gabriel Le Bras, "Le mariage dans la théologie et le droit de l'Eglise du xie au xiiie siècle," Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, 11 (1968), 191-202.

<sup>32</sup> See Pinder, pp. 71-88.

<sup>33</sup> In the Decretum Gratiani (ca. 1150) marriage is perceived as fully consummated through *commixtio sexus* (causa 27, quaestione 2). See Jacques Poumarède, "Mariage," in Dictionnaire du Moyen Age, ed. Claude Gauvard, Alain de Libera and Michel Zink (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), p. 882.

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<sup>34</sup> Miracle de Saint Alexis, vv. 790-96; my underlining.

<sup>35</sup> On Latin and French lives of Alexis and the theological view of marriage through spiritual union alone, see Baudouin de Gaiffier, "'Intactam sponsam relinquens' : à propos de la *Vie de Saint Alexis*," Analecta Bollandia, 65 (1947), 157-95.

<sup>36</sup> Although this detail is unclear in the extremely brief scene in the nuptial chamber found in the first French version (mss. LAPV), in all of the more recent narrative versions but one (ms. R), the bride, despite her reticence, gives him her permission to leave permanently. See also Pinder, "Marriage," pp. 84-85.

<sup>37</sup> Pinder, "Marriage," p. 82.

<sup>38</sup> See the article by Carla Casgrande, "The Protected Woman," esp. pp. 87-104.

<sup>39</sup> On the notion of "textual community," see Brian Stock, The Implications of Literacy : Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), "Textual Communities," pp. 88-240; idem, Listening for the Text : On the Uses of the Past (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), "Textual Communities : Judaism, Christianity, and the Definitional Problem," pp. 140-58.

<sup>40</sup> Robert L. A. Clark, "Charity and Drama: The Response of the Confraternity to the Problem of Urban Poverty in Fourteenth-Century France," in Le Théâtre et la cité dans l'Europe médiévale. Actes du Vème Colloque international de la Société Internationale pour l'Etude du Théâtre médiéval, ed. Jean-Claude Aubailly and Edelgard E. Dubruck [Fifteenth-Century Studies, 13] (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1988), pp. 359-69. He identifies three themes emphasized in the fortieth play: voluntary poverty in imitation of Christ; the poor as intercessors on behalf of their benefactors; and the feeding, housing and clothing of the poor (p. 365).