LOVE, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE YSENGRIMUS AND THE ROMAN DE RENART

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It has to be admitted that love and marriage play a significant part in only a small minority of the twenty-seven or eight branches of the **Roman de Renart**[1], and that they play only a minor role in the best-known source of the earliest branches, the **Ysengrimus.** Nevertheless, within the few branches where love and marriage do have a part to play, it is often a significant part and one that, on the whole, has been neglected by scholars interested either in the treatment of these things in twelfth-century French literature, or in the **Roman de Renart.**

Curiously, it is by and large in the earliest branches of the **Roman de Renart** that one aspect or another of our subject is given some prominence. If we accept (as most specialists in the field have done hitherto) the chronology and order of composition of the branches first argued by Lucien Foulet[2], then the following five branches give to our subject an important part in the story they tell:

Branch II	(Renart et Chantecler; la Mésange; Tibert; Tiécelin; Hersent)—between 1174 and 1177
Branch Va	(La cour de Noble le Lion)—between 1174 and 1177
Branch I	(Le Procès de Renart)—about 1179
Branch Ia	(Le siège de Maupertuis)—1190 or soon after
Branch Ib	(Renart teinturier et jongleur)—1190 or soon after.

This means that three of the ten earliest branches, all probably composed by 1180 or soon afterwards, are relevant to our subject, and importantly so. Furthermore, within the first wave of stories, something relevant to our subject, of minor significance—usually an anecdotal incident—is to be found in three more branches: i.e. in XV (Renart et l'andouille) of c.1177; in III (Renart et les anguilles, et la pêche à la queue) of c.1178; and in IV (Isengrin dans le puits) of c.1178. This means that only two of the earliest group of branches have no material for us: i.e. V (Renart, Isengrin et le jambon; Renart et le Grillon); and XIV (Renart chez le vilain; mésaventures de Primaut) both of c.1178. However, when we turn to the next eleven branches belonging to the second wave of stories, all dated between 1180 and 1205, we find, apart from Ia and Ib, very little relevant to our subject, and then only short incidents—in IX (Renart et le vilain Liétard) of c.1200; in XI (Nouvelles aventures; Renart empereur) also of c.1200; and in XVIII (Mort et procession de Renart) of c.1205. In the third wave, "les épigones de c.1205 à c.1250" as Robert Bossuat calls them[3], scarcely anything relevant to our subject that is new, really new, may be found. One does find, however, earlier relevant matter re-introduced into these stories—and re-introduced is about all it is, for it is scarcely reworked. The only possible exceptions are XXIII, which begins with a Branch I situation but goes on to develop it and introduce a princess whom Renart promises to bring to Nobel as a bride; XXIV which tells of "les enfances Renart" and introduces Adam and Eve; and XXI, described by Bossuat as a "conte grivois, fabliau gaillard, illustrant surtout la ruse féminine"[4]. Feminine cunning is here illustrated by a farmer's wife—as it is elsewhere in some earlier branches. To sum up, love and marriage are treated with originality in varying degrees of quality and importance chiefly in three of the first ten branches of the **Roman de Renart**, and it is on those three branches, and in particular the very first, that this essay will concentrate.

If Foulet's dating of the earliest branches is reasonably accurate, then it is worth bearing in mind that the treatment of love and marriage in them is among the earliest examples in **langue d'oïl**. The one outstanding example which the author of the first extant **Roman de Renart** clearly knew well is the story of Tristan and Iseut, perhaps in a version rather like Thomas's. In addition, embedded within the **romans d'antiquité** were a few famous "romantic" episodes: Dido and Enéas, Lavine and Enéas in the **Roman d'Enéas**; and Hélène and Paris in the **Roman de Troyes.** There may have been some early versions of the Arthurian romances which were to be made famous by Chrétien de Troyes and others, but it is doubtful if Chrétien's stories had been written in the 1170s. Indeed, if Claude Luttrell's persuasive, well-documented argument[5] is correct, Chrétien's romances date largely from the period 1184-1190. Nor were the great twelfth-century **trouvères** yet producing their song-poems about the trials, tribulations and joys of love, though the essence of the courtly love-lyric of the **troubadours** may have been known to the authors of the earliest branches of the **Roman de Renart.** What they would know well would be some Biblical literature and Saint's Lives, some **chansons de geste** (especially the **Roland**), some fables, some dramatic literature and perhaps some song-poems. The prologue to the earliest part of the **Roman de Renart**, if it was written by the author of that part and at the same time[6], bears out many of our assertions:

Seigneurs, oï avez maint conte,
Que maint conterre vous raconte

Conment Paris ravi Elaine
(cf. **Roman de Troie)**
Le mal qu'il en ot et la paine
De Tristan que la Chievre fist
(cf. **Roman de Tristan)**
Qui assez bellement en dist
Et **fabliaus** et **chançons de geste** (my italics)
Romanz de lui et de sa geste (see note 7)
Maint autre conte par la terre... (see note 8)

This then is Pierre de Saint Cloud's summing up of some of the reader-listener's probable knowledge of earlier, relevant literature; relevant, as it will emerge, because it tells largely of warlike activities centred on a few individuals; of conflicts, in some of which the protagonists come into sharper conflict because of their sexual desires and adventures. Pierre then goes on to claim:

Mais oncques n'oïstes la guerre
Qui tant fu dure de grant fin
Entre Renart et Ysengrin,
Qui mout dura et moult fu dure.[8]

(If what he claims was true, it is perhaps worth noting here that he does not reveal until quite a long way on into the story that Renart is a fox and Ysengrin a wolf: they are at first referred to simply by their proper names, and as **barons.)** Pierre continues:

Des deus barons ce est la pure
Que ainc ne s'entramerent jour.
Mainte mellee et maint estour
Ot entr'eulz deus, ce est la voire.
Des or conmencerai l'estoire.
Or oëz le conmencement
Et de la noise et du content,
Par quoi et por quel mesestance
Fu entr'eus deus la desfiance.

In this way Pierre prepares us for a story which will be about a conflict in which sexually motivated adventures play a part, especially by the early references to Paris and Helen, and to Tristan: but he seems to prepare us chiefly for a story in which fighting is prominent, especially by the later references to **chansons de geste,** to "la guerre qui tant fu dure... qui mout dura..."; to "mainte mellee et maint estour"; to **noise** and to **desfiance.**

Almost certainly, it is part of Pierre de Saint Cloud's originality and part of his overall comic design that the kind of conflict he depicts in the story which unfolds is typical of neither a **roman d'antiquité,** nor a **roman courtois,** nor a **chanson de geste;** and that it appears to parody, from time to time, characters, situations, themes, motifs and even clichés typical of them; and that, for most of the duration of the story, Renart does not come face to face with Ysengrin. In this particular, it is quite the reverse of what happens in his chief literary source, the **Ysengrimus**[9], where fox and wolf face each other in hostile encounter at the very beginning. It is also, apparently, part of his originality and comic design — again in contrast to the **Ysengrimus** — that love, sex and marriage (in particular the part played by married partners) are prominent in his story, to a degree exceeded only in the most famous branch inspired by his work: Branch I, **Le Jugement de Renart.**

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Whatever the **Ysengrimus** may be about, it is certainly not love. If we set aside the rape of the wolf's wife in Book V, there is scarcely anything to do with sex. Although Ysengrimus's lady is refered to within the first few lines of this mock-epic poem; and Rufanus the Lion's wife and children are mentioned early in Book III; and Sprotinus the Cock boasts, near the end of Book IV, of mastery over twelve wives, the animal-peers in this work are, apart from the wolf, to all intents and purposes, without wives. This is particularly striking when, at the beginning of Book VI, some lambs are threatened by Ysengrimus, for they are not protected by their mother but by their father, Josephus; no female of the species is mentioned in the whole incident. In the middle of Book V, however, we meet Ysengrimus's nameless wife; Reinardus first insults her, then rapes her. Neither before nor after is there anything in the **Ysengrimus** relevant to the romantic aspects of our subject. We will, however, leave an examination of this 120-line incident on one side for a moment while we identify the way it fits into the economy of the poem.

A simplified view of the **Ysengrimus**[10] reveals a series of incidents in each of which the wolf is made to suffer an injury or an insult chiefly at the instigation of Reinardus, culminating in Ysengrimus's death. The rape of his wife is simply one of many indignities which **he,** in effect, suffers. Thus, if we follow the narrative line only (undoubtedly less important to the author than the frequent and long rhetorical outbursts about corruption in ecclesiastical institutions and practices, the fate of the poor, etc.) we are first told how Ysengrimus intends to devour Reinardus when they meet by chance, but is diverted from his purpose by the fox who draws his attention to a peasant who is passing by with a side of bacon. Reinardus offers to get the bacon, and suggests they share it. The fox tricks the peasant into abandoning the bacon which the wolf seizes and eats up, leaving only the willowstring which had bound it for Reinardus. The Latin poem's narrative line begins, then, with the fox evading a hostile wolf, tricking him but being cheated by him. The reader-listener is therefore encouraged to expect the fox to seek revenge partly because the wolf's original threat **seems**[11] to have been unprovoked, and partly because retribution is deserved for cheating the fox.

A series of events in which Ysengrimus is worsted either directly or indirectly by Reinardus now begins.

Reinardus plans revenge, and is all ready to lead Ysengrimus into trouble when they next meet. This he does by taking the gullible wolf on a fishing expedition, and getting him to use his tail as a line in sub-zero temperatures. The immediate result is a terrible beating at the hands of nearby peasants (alerted by Reinardus) as he sits at the pond-side anchored by a tail frozen into the ice — a tail which he then loses when a peasant woman's axe-blow cuts it off instead of his head. After this, Reinardus inveigles Ysengrimus into a fight with some rams who get the better of him in a concerted attack on him and leave him even more battered and bruised than at the end of the previous episode; indeed, they manage between them to remove most of the tail-less wolf's skin.

These two rounds of revengeful action led by Reinardus are followed by one in which Ysengrimus is at least in part responsible for his own further suffering. Here the sick king of the animals, Rufanus the Lion, summons his animal-barons to attend on him. All come except Reinardus, so Ysengrimus, barely covered with a new growth of fur, takes advantage of the situation by trying to paint Reinardus in a bad light and to put himself in a good one by curing the king with a prescription of mutton and goat flesh. All this does is cause Josephus the Ram and Berfridus the Goat to batter him anew, and, with the connivance of the other animal-barons, to bring Reinardus to court to cure Rufanus. This the fox does, prescribing as part of the remedy, the wrapping up of the king in a freshly-removed wolf-skin — Ysengrimus's.

The pattern which seems to be unfolding is one in which the wolf is first beaten, then mutilated. He is beaten by peasants, and loses his tail; then he is beaten by rams, and loses most of his skin. Now he is beaten by the ram and the goat, and is completely skinned. It may be argued that there is a crescendo in the kind of suffering to which the wolf is subjected, both physical and mental, for he goes from loss of tail, to loss of some skin, then all of his skin: he is humiliated first by peasants, in private, as it were; then by a few animal-peers, in company; then by all the animal-peers, before the king himself.

A new crescendo-like movement follows with the next two major incidents involving the wolf. In the first of these, Reinardus causes Ysengrimus to be trapped in a door by a group of 'pilgrim' animals where they batter him almost senseless; and then, in a second encounter with these pilgrims, Ysengrimus, hoping to obtain revenge, leads his own tribe against them but is yet again worsted—he and all his kind who flee the "battlefield". This incident is separated from the next Ysengrimus-Reinardus encounter by a brush between the fox and the cock (Reinardus and Sprotinus); but the second tussle which brings this second crescendo-like movement to an end is the one in which Reinardus persuades Ysengrimus to join an order of monks where he thinks he will be particularly well-fed. However, the result is yet another beating for him by the outraged monks. Meanwhile, Reinardus has made for Ysengrimus's ancestral home where he has first outrageously insulted the wolf's heirs, urinating and defecating all over them, and then in a separate but closely-linked incident, raped his wife. Thus, in these two fox-versus-wolf episodes, the wolf is battered in both, and both batterings are followed by humiliations — humiliation before his peers on a kind of battlefield, then humiliation through the grievous insults suffered by his immediate family.

A third and final crescendo follows. It begins with a brief episode in which (without any manoeuvring by Reinardus) the wolf — in a brush with Corvigarus the Horse — gets kicked so severely on the forehead that a horseshoe is implanted there. It continues with another brief episode, this time orchestrated by Reinardus, and ending with the wolf's being badly battered and wounded in the jaws, nostrils, forehead and palate by Josephus the Ram. There follows a longer episode in which Reinardus leads Ysengrimus into Rufanus's company and gets the wolf to divide the carcass of a heifer between the three of them, knowing that Ysengrimus would, in his stupidity, fail to please the lion. The result is an angry outburst from the lion in which the wolf is yet again skinned — this time by Rufanus himself. To add insult to injury, the fox is allowed to divide the carcass up in a way which earns him praise in the presence of the shamed and grievously-wounded wolf. The climax of this part of the story is reached with Reinardus leading the wounded, skinned, tailless wolf into a trap from which he escapes only by biting off a paw.

The final episode, a single, relatively lengthy one, is dominated by Salaura the Sow who, with her tribe, fall upon the mutiliated wolf and devour him. Reinardus really has no part in this, except, near the end, when he arrives on the scene and joins in the bitterly comic "mourning" for his dead "uncle".

To sum up, at the narrative level, this epic poem is chiefly composed of a series of encounters between the wolf and the fox; encounters which may be shown to fall into three movements between the initial brush involving the wolf and the fox; a brush which, to some extent, motivates the ensuing encounters in which the wolf is first battered, then mutilated and humiliated. Two sections of the epic may however seem a little out of place, chiefly because they do not feature the two main protagonists. The first of these is the section in which the fox is depicted in a duel with the cock and which

seems (as shown above) to interrupt the second movement of linked episodes; and the second is the final section in which the wolf is devoured by the sow and her kind.

A close reading of the text of the **Ysengrimus** leaves one in no doubt that Reinardus's attack on the wolf's wife was really an attack on him, and on his family honour. The fact that she is nameless supports this view: she is so unimportant as an individual that she is not even worth identifying with a name. Indeed, she is often not mentioned where one might expect her to be mentioned, as at the very beginning of the poem: "One morning, as Ysengrimus was leaving the wood to look for food for his hungry children and himself, he saw... Reinardus."[12] What **is** important is the father-son relationship, the family line. This is most vividly illustrated in a lengthy, bitterly comic outburst towards the middle of Book III when Reinardus whispers into Ysengrimus's ear: "Uncle, what this day will bring us! Are not our ancestors set above us because of the success of their deeds and abilities? We are hardly the shadow of our fathers; but which of them was found worthy of bestowing a skin on a lion?... Because of this, as often as our family-tree is recited, the line will take its source of nobility from you. So great is the glory in store for you today, that you will obscure all the honour of your predecessors with a single triumph. You will be designated the venerable head of the family, and all your posterity will call you their progenitor, and the most distant offspring to be born of you will glory in you, being advanced to such a name by your renown!"[13] The insignificance of a wife and the importance of the father-son relationship (especially in passing on and maintaining family honour), is comically touched upon when Reinardus taunts Sprotinus:' "Up to now I was known as your godfather, Sprotinus; henceforth I utterly renounce you and your family! Go and associate with mice; you're not to be reckoned a cock, since you're completely lacking in your father's excellence. No refinement of yours corresponds to many he had." The crafty cock, now suddenly taken in, says "Why should I seem more contemptible than my sire? I enjoy sole mastery over twelve wives, and none of them dares to touch the least little grain of corn unless she's first ordered to do it by my say-so." The deceiver replies, 'Enough, Sprotinus! Do you, the son of such a father, boast of trivialities...'"

If wives are mentioned, as often as not it is to draw attention to their role as child-bearer. Thus, when Rufanus the Lion's queen is first referred to, it is by Reinardus in his explanation of the way he divided the heifer's corpse up: "... The next is to be given to the queen. She ought to be taken care of; she's lying at home, weak from her new offspring." Thus, when Reinardus makes deliberately for Ysengrimus's home (bent, presumably, on mischief) it is to the family home, the ancestral home he goes: "Meanwhile Reinardus... bent his course to... where the mightly Ysengrimus had his lair from the days of his forty-fourth grandfather. And there his attention is first for the wolf's heirs: 'Of what sire, wolflings, do you believe yourselves to be born?...'" Once sure he has his arch-enemy's children before him, and that their mother is lying at some distance away, still weak from the experience of childbirth, be begins a fiercely ironic speech: "'How lucky it was that your mother bore you so that your loyal race might not lack posterity...' ...Then, raising his leg and pouring forth a stream from both openings, he said 'Here's a milk-soaked rusk — doesn't it taste good? Lap it up, dear little cousins, lap it up!... in return for your father's services, accept mine!'" When the mistress of the house discovers what has happened and attempts to punish the intruder, she is first pelted with dirt and stones, then, as a result of getting stuck in the entrance to the fox's den, she is raped by him.

As is apparent from these quotations, Ysengrimus is "uncle" to Reinardus; but right from the beginning, Nivardus makes it plain that this is only a pretend relationship. When wolf and fox stumble on each other in the opening lines of the Latin poem, the fox cries out "May the prey he looks for fall in my uncle's way!" and the poet goes on with an authorial observation: "Reynard used the inaccurate term 'uncle' in order that the other might always put the trust in him he would in a kinsman." This uncle-nephew 'relationship' is then developed through the poem so that either the one or the other refers to it with varying degrees of irony, one of the bitterest being by the fox in the passages quoted above as the wolf faces the threat of being skinned to help cure the sick lion. This irony reaches its wickedly comic climax as the fox rapes the wolf's wife: "And then the base adulterer, showing little concern for his uncle's marriage bed, mounted the immobilised lady. 'Someone else' he said, 'would do this, if I didn't; it's better therefore that I should do it than some passer-by on the sly. If the love of a stranger is less than that of a relation, I'm closest to you, in terms of both kindred and friendship; let my affection appear in my services. I don't want anyone else to have the cheek to cuckold my uncle while I'm alive.'" The last ironic use of this motif, comes, fittingly, at the end of the poem, just after the wolf's death. "Alas, sweet uncle, are you dead? Ah, dear uncle, are you in the tomb without me? Unite me with my uncle! Lift the stone from the wretch! I shall die with my uncle..."

If the author had not intervened at the beginning of the poem to explain why Reinardus calls Ysengrimus "uncle", the reader-listener might have

been deceived into believing that, in this strange world, there really was a blood relationship, though he might have guessed from the way wolf and fox bandy the terms "nephew" and "uncle" that there was something odd here. However, there are moments when these two animals almost seem to be taken in by their own use of the terms, and the reader-listener certainly would be without that early authorial comment. For example, when Ysengrimus is trapped by the tail in frozen ice and sees the peasant horde descending on him, he cries out to Reinardus: "Give a hand to your old uncle!" And moments later, when he fears the fox will abandon him to his fate: "Are you so devoid of family feeling?" he asks, and all without a trace of irony. This self-deception, at least by the wolf, is developed to the point where, when he is in a particularly difficult situation, he pretends he is not Ysengrimus, but wondrously like him, and cries out "Would that I were your uncle..."

A pretend relationship is extended by Reinardus to Sprotinus the Cock, as a passage quoted above illustrates, but here it is a spiritual — that of godfather — rather than a blood relationship which is claimed. Even so, it is sufficient to intensify the drama, and to bring in the subject of family honour and status in society — a subject which Sprotinus uses to good effect, pretending to be degraded by the fact that he is taken captive by a fox who allows himself to be taunted by vulgar peasants. "Alas for the shame which will settle on my race for ever! I release the fates from any concern on my life; I'm concerned for the shame brought on my ancestors and my children. Their nobility suffers from my disgrace in that I'm led away captured by a lower-class enemy, I whose nobility goes back ninety generations — whereas in the old days, had I been a prey, the triumph would have been won by a fox born of ancestors comparable to mine!" His ruse works. Reinardus "puts down the cock to defend his high birth..."[13]

In the **Ysengrimus** the important family relationship is that of father-son; wives are simply child-bearers, the means by which sons are produced; but members of families owe each other respect and support; and their honour is all-important.

In the earliest branch of the **Roman de Renart,** Branch II, family relationships play an important role right from the start; but here the relationship brought into sharp focus is that of husband and wife, a wife with a name and a character all of her own — Pinte, wife of Chantecler the Cock. And to intensify the drama which unfolds, Renart claims the relationship of first cousin to Chantecler, a relationship which the Cock gullibly accepts.

'Chantecler' ci li dist Renart,
'Ne fuïr pas, n'aiés regart!
Molt par sui liez, quant tu es seinz:
Car tu es mes cosins germeins.'
Chantecler lors s'asoüera... (303-7)[14]

Dist Chantecler: 'Renart cosin,
Volés me vos trere a engin?' (319-20)[15]

Clearly the "uncle" of the Ysengrimus has been adopted and adapted by Pierre de Saint Cloud; here the uncle is Chantecler's father, Chanteclin, and not Ysengrin:

'... chantez, cosin!
Je saurai bien, se Chanteclin,
Mis oncles, vos fu onc neant.' (333-5)[16]

The outcome is well-known. Curiously, the important role given to family honour in the **Ysengrimus** is played down in the ruse to which the cock resorts in order to escape the fox, though there is a hint of it. Chantecler rather invites Renart to indulge in one more of his notorious taunts.

'Conment' fait il, 'sire Renart,
Dont n'oëz quel honte vos dïent
Cil vilein qui si vos escrïent?
Costans vos seut plus que le pas.
Car li lanciez un de vos gas... (420-4)[17]

Pierre de Saint Cloud transfers the question of family honour to the husband-wife relationship, and in particular makes the wife, Pinte, very conscious of it in a delightfully comic way. It is here that Foulet's analysis of Pierre de Saint Cloud's debt to the **Ysengrimus** does less than justice to the French poet's originality, though he has, in some finely argued pages, shown how Pierre was influenced by the order in which Nivardus arranged the fox-versus-cock and subsequent episodes up to and including the fox's raping of the wolf's wife. Foulet explicitly draws attention to many an original aspect of Pierre's poem. He shows how the Mésange episode is modified from Nivardus' account of Reinardus' second attempt to dupe Sprotinus, though he does not point out that, in the first attempt, the godson is transformed into a cousin (thereby shifting the "uncle" relationship), nor that in the second attempt the godson is transformed into the mother of godsons, another female "relation". Foulet speaks of the apparently original addition of the Tybert episode, though he does not go into the fact that Ysengrin is depicted here not as an "uncle" but as "un compere" (line 702)[18]. He shows how the Tiecelin episode is drawn into the series, and how the insult to the wolf's cubs and the raping of his wife have been considerably modified. But in all of this there is a glaring omission, a resounding silence. There is not a single word about Pierre de Saint Cloud's creation of that remarkable woman, Pinte.

Nivardus sets the fox-versus-cock episode within the tale he tells of the animals' pilgrimage. Though

he justifies its inclusion, one has the clear impression of an author unable to resist drawing into his story a well-known fable which is really irrelevant. After repulsing the wolves' counter-attack, two of the eight pilgrims, Sprotinus the Cock and Gerardus the Goose, decide to give up their pilgrimage, and in particular to part company with Reinardus, for they have noted just how cunning and dangerous he has proved himself to be in his dealings with Ysengrimus, and are afraid for themselves. They therefore break away from the main party in spite of Reinardus's attempts to detain them. The fox goes after them, but finds only the cock sitting in a granary. He tries to persuade him to rejoin the pilgrimage, but fails. Then in order to put the cock off his guard, he begins a new tack. He recalls that he is Sprotinus's godfather, but pretends he wants nothing to do with him any more, or his kind, especially since his father was so superior a cock. It is here that Sprotinus at last admits to a wife: indeed, to twelve! And that is all we find in Nivardus's poem about a wife to the cock.

In Pierre de Saint Cloud's poem there is no hint of a pilgrimage. The well-known fable, expanded to about 100 lines by Nivardus, has become part of a 450-line mini-epic in Pierre's poem; and at the heart of it is a domestic drama in a "noble" family, that of Sire Chantecler le Coc. His hen-lady wife, Pinte, plays a clear-sighted, engaging role. It is above all her good common sense that makes Chantecler such a pompous fool; and since he in due course fools the fox, it is she who gives this tale so much of its comic depth and complexity. The "noble" setting is first created by a few deft verbal touches in the description of the farmyard setting. The peasant-farmer **(un vilain** — 1.31) is **li sires Constans des Noës** (1.30) and **Dant Constant** (1.49). He lives in a **hostel** which is **bien garni** (1.35). It is surrounded by oak stakes and a hawthorn hedge which, in effect, make it a **forteresce** (1.49). When we first meet the cock he is **Mesire Chantecler** (1.81) who walks **moult fierement** (1.85); and whose father, we shall learn, had the heroic-epic ability to sing so loud he could be heard a whole league away. When the cock's wife is introduced, we are told she is "Pinte.. qui plus savoit, celle qui les gros hués ponnoit" and "pres du coc juçoit a destre" (11.89-91)[19] — deliberate echoes of heroic-epic clichés (the wisest counsellor, the one who struck the biggest blows, the king's right-hand man). Thus we enter a world somewhere between that of the **chanson de geste** and the **roman courtois.** Pinte it is who reports to Sire Chantecler that Don Renart has penetrated Mesire Constant's defences; but the cock refuses to believe her. "Par ma foi, jel vi; et loiaument le vous affi" (11.101-2)[20] she assures him, in proper courtly style. But she is brushed aside. Then Chantecler has a dream which scares him, and compels him to confide in his wife. She tells him not to be silly — but in proper, courtly language: "Avoi! fait Pinte, Baus dos sire..." (1.177)[21]. He insists on telling her his dream, and urges her to interpret it. She does. She tells him it means he is in danger of being captured by the fox. He promptly ridicules her interpretation, and not very politely, either. His rough rebuke — "... molt par es fole. Molt as dit vileine parole..." (11.261-2)[22] contrasts sharply with her more courtly tones. She remains adamant, but courteous. "Sire... s'il n'est si con vos ai dit, je vos otroi... je ne soie mes vostre amie" (11.270-3)[22]. The wife who is called, or thinks of herself, as her lord and husband's **amie** vividly brings to mind what are now thought of as the courtly love-poet's clichés; and some famous lines in Chrétien de Troye's **Erec et Enide.** Pinte, of course, turns out to be right, and Chantecler wrong; and as she sees her husband fast disappearing from view in Renart's jaws, she cries out, still playing the role of courtly wife and lady: "Lasse, dolente, con sui morte! Car, se je ci pert mon seignor a toz jors ai perdu m'onor!" (11.366-8)[23]. It is in this way that Pierre de Saint Cloud brings in the theme of family honour, the theme so differently but prominently treated by Nivardus. Although Chantecler does escape, we are not allowed to see him reunited with his wife, and are thereby deprived of what might have been a satisfying climax to this story of a vainglorious, lordly husband and gentle, courteous wife, created and placed by Pierre de Saint Cloud at the very beginning of his **Roman de Renart.**

There is also, alongside this husband-and-wife story, yet another very brief one to which it may be worth while drawing attention. In the **Ysengrimus,** Reinardus is already half way to his destination with the captured Sprotinus when, by accident, he is spotted by a group of peasants who decide to give chase. In the **Roman de Renart** it emerges that the poultry are the special concern of "la bone feme del mainil" (1.369)[23] — presumably Constant des Noes' wife. As she goes out to call the hens in for the night she sees Renart making off with Chantecler. She cries out so that the farmhands playing a ball game nearby come running to her, among them her husband. They ask her what is wrong, and she tells them. Thereupon her husband exclaims:

'... pute vielle orde,
Qu'avés dont fet que nel preïstes?'
'Sire' fait ele, 'mar le dites...' (392-4)[24]

The comic contrast between the language and the whole manner of this husband and wife are even greater than those between Chantecler and Pinte. And there is a pointed, delightfully comic contrast between the way the two wives see the consequences of Reynard's capture of Chantecler. For "la bone feme del mainil" he is simply a cock she has lost to

the fox:

'Lasse, con m'est mal avenu!'
'Coment' font il. 'Car j'ai perdu
Mon coc que li gorpil enporte' (389-91)[24]

but for Pinte he is her husband, her lord and the symbol of her social status:

'Lasse dolente, con sui morte!
Car se je ci pert mon seignor
A toz jors ai perdu m'onor' (366-68)[23]

Although Pierre de Saint Cloud makes little more of this farmer-and-his-wife scene than the briefest of comic interludes, he has here created the second of two wives within this ancient fable material; wives whose fortunes were to grow with each retelling of this tale, culminating in Chaucer's Pertelote and his Dame Malkyn, and the many delightful drawings, paintings and sculptures featuring "a povre wydwe" at the moment of crisis.

★ ★ ★ ★

If we pass over the Mésange, Tybert and Tiécelin episodes, none of which has much that is relevant to our subject (no husband for the Mésange, no wife for either Tybert or Tiécelin — though the latter will gain one to good effect, in later branches of the **Roman de Renart**); if we pass over these episodes and come to the last one in Branch II, to the episode which features the wolf's wife Hersent, we find much of interest. Foulet has briefly analysed and commented on this episode, chiefly to show how much the French owes to the Latin[25]. He draws attention in particular to the way Pierre de Saint Cloud modifies his model to invent a scene in which Hersent more or less seduces Renart in the presence of her children, and has this happen before the children are grievously insulted by Renart. However, Foulet's comments on this modification leave room for argument and other remarks invite contradiction. For example, near the beginning of his general comparison and assessment of the two poems he asserts: "il y a moins de logique" (dans le français) "que dans le latin. Dans la seconde partie de l'épisode, Hersent violentée à la face de son mari reste bien comme chez Nivard fidèle d'intention à la foi conjugale..."[26]. The French is less **logical** than the Latin? The wolf's wife remains at least **faithful** to her conjugal vows? To take the latter point first: is this how to interpret Nivardus's and the she-wolf's last words as Reinardus enjoys her? — "she, warming to the game said, "Reynard, you show more courtesy than your public reputation credits you with. If you had as much strength as skill, you'd be declared a trusty servant with the ladies; I'd hardly have to be urged to enter your house if only your doorway were a little wider.' History relates that she enjoyed the sport, and so the adulterer cuckolded his uncle."[27] Here Foulet is simply wrong. Furthermore, these words are surely the inspiration for the most original part of Pierre de Saint Cloud's story (that is, if he is indeed the author of Branch Va), for this long development of the poem is in some considerable measure concerned with the question of what constitutes rape. Is a woman really raped if she appears to encourage a man to make love to her with the object of leading him into a trap, and although forced into sexual intercourse ends by admitting she enjoys the love-making, and hopes for more?

A little earlier Foulet also glosses over an important difference between the French and the Latin poems. Comparing the two he writes: "On se rappelle comment le loup et la louve se lancent à la poursuite du goupil, comment Isengrin s'égare et Hersent s'engage imprudemment dans l'entrée du terrier de Renard et ce qui se passe ensuite: la situation est exactement la même que dans **l'Ysengrimus.**"[26] No! In the **Ysengrimus,** on leaving the monastery, the dazed wolf "blundered through places he knew well as if he was on unfamiliar paths, and he didn't come to himself until he stood where his wife was stuck fast, wedged tight up to the middle of her body. He got the wretched woman out, and they recounted Reynard's crimes to each other, swearing they should be expiated by a cruel death."[27] Clearly Pierre de Saint Cloud deliberately departed from his model here in order to have Ysengrin witness Hersent's being taken, **completely against her will**; to cause her husband further humiliation; to make possible the fox's taunts both of the wolf and of 'courtly' conduct; to make possible the cruelly comic scene of the outraged husband insulting and beating an outraged wife; and to motivate the profoundly original Branch Va.

This brings us back to the suggestion that the scene in Ysengrin's castle-hall is, in Pierre's poem, less **logical** than it is in Nivardus's. Along with this judgement are a few others which may be considered faulty. "Il est un peu déconcertant de voir Renard faire la cour à la mère et rosser les petits presque en même temps. La vérité est que l'auteur placé entre deux conceptions différentes et presque contradictoires de l'épisode est sans doute assez embarrassé lui-même. D'une part Renard, ennemi d'Isengrin, est bien déterminé à se conduire dans le terrier du loup comme en pays conquis; d'autre part amoureux de la louve, il doit se concilier les bonnes grâces de cette épouse infidèle..."[28]

First, there is no evidence whatsoever in **this** poem that Renart was in love with Hersent, though there is evidence to suggest **she** was fond of him. There is also ample evidence that Renart already hated Ysengrin. One may therefore assume that, by making love to his wife, especially in the presence of his children, Renart was simply getting at his enemy. Pierre also tells his tale in such a way that Hersent suddenly has a reason to be very angry with her husband and to let Renart make love with her as a way of

giving vent to that anger.

Whereas in the **Ysengrimus** Reinardus deliberately makes for his enemy's home, in the **Roman de Renart** a very hungry Renart stumbles on it by chance, and is totally unprepared for what happens. His first reaction when he realises he is in his arch-enemy's home is one of fear, and he hides behind a door (1.1055)[29]. But Hersent spots him, smiles (encouragingly?) and asks him who he is looking for (1.1060). Fear continues to reign in Renart's breast (1.1061-3) — not the normal reaction of a man who has just come across the woman he loves, especially when she seems to be making welcoming noises! In fact, Hersent reproves him for not visiting her; but Renart remains terrified. Perhaps he is expecting Ysengrin to appear at any moment. Then he blurts out (now guessing, perhaps, that Ysengrin is away) his excuses for not calling on her. It is because her husband watches out for him, and hates him — but unjustly. There is neither as yet nor further on any hint that Renart is feigning fear, or that what he goes on to say is invented on the spur of the moment in order to deceive Hersent. It is now that Renart tells Hersent that Ysengrin lets it be known that he is having an affair with her:

'Je vous ains, ce dist, par amors...' (1089)

What is more, Ysengrin goes up and down the land complaining about this to his friends, making it public knowledge, and offering money in exchange for help to do harm to Renart. One senses (but no text confirms) that Renart's fear is passing, and calm cunning is taking its place. One senses the portrayal, through the dialogue which ensues, of a man turning to his advantage an unexpected opportunity.

'Mais dites moi de ce que monte
De vous requerre de folie?' (1094-5)

he asks, having guessed no doubt that there might well be some point, that he was manoeuvring the lady into reacting angrily against her husband. Hence he continues:

'Certes je nel feroie mie,
Ne tel parole n'est pas belle' (1096-7)

If Renart was manoeuvring, he was successful. Hersent is indeed angry. She burns and sweats with anger that her husband should say such things. Or does she feign this anger? This reported grossly discourteous conduct of her husband's (reported by Renart!) makes her feel (or allows her to pretend to feel?) righteous indignation as the victim of unwarranted slander (1.1104). She concludes, therefore, that if that is what Ysengrin says, then so be it, and she invites Renart to make love to her (11.1107-10)[29]. The logic here, even in its ambiguity, is admirable. And so it continues. Renart suddenly relaxes, and nearly bursts with joy (1.1114). He makes love with a willing Hersent (11.1116-7) but no sooner has he had his way with her than his deep-seated fear of Ysengrin returns, fear lest he be discovered there by him (1.1112). Nevertheless, he cannot resist the temptation to take even further advantage of the situation, so he urinates over the cubs (1.1122), eats everything in sight (1.1124) — reminding us that it was a **hungry** fox which stumbled on that place — then throws what food he cannot eat out of the door (11.1125-6) and pushes the cubs out of their bed (1.1127), insults them, beats them (1.1128) and calls them bastards (1.1130), rejoicing in the realisation that Hersent is now powerless, for she is "s'amie qui ne l'en descovera mie" (11.1133-4). Only then does he go, leaving the cubs weeping (1.1135)[29].

The seeds for the long, hard war between Renart and Ysengrin have been sown, and they are not simply the seeds of an adulterous lover! Pierre de Saint Cloud had included in the outrage committed by Renart an attack on Ysengrin's family home and in particular his heirs. The importance of upholding family honour in twelfth-century French society is well known, and Renart's uncalculated attack has resulted in a devastating blow to the wolf-family's honour. If Ysengrin had gone about engineering anti-Renart feeling before because of imagined affairs with his wife, what will he do now? Furthermore, as it will be revealed in Branch Va that Ysengrin is the king's **conestable** (1.297)[30], it is not any aristocratic family's honour which has been impugned, but one that is close to the king. It is therefore almost inevitable that the king will sooner or later be involved in the ensuing struggle for revenge. Here, however, we have an unusual complication, for it is a rift between a husband and his wife that is immediately responsible for the dishonour; and because of the way the story is told it seems as if it is the grossly discourteous conduct of the husband outside the family home that is responsible — at least in part — for that rift. His failure to respect her, to refrain from gossiping about her, gives her the reason — or the excuse — for being unfaithful. It is, of course, the insulted Constable's heirs who first seek revenge; it is they who reveal who was responsible for the state of the wolf's den; and it is perhaps worth recalling that they first complain about the insults **they** have suffered — not he, or their mother. It is almost as an afterthought that they tell him he has been cuckolded! It is also perhaps worth recalling the angry words Ysengrin hurls at Hersent:

'Pute orde vilz, pute mauvese' (1177)

and the reasons he advances to justify this vulgar language:

'Je vous ai norrie a grant aise
Et bien gardee et bien peüe,
Et uns autres vous a foutue' (1178-80)[31]

Clearly, for Ysengrin the sexual satisfaction a husband gets from his wife is earned by the simple fact of keeping her. Her punishment will be to be thrown out of the conjugal bed (and therefore out of the house as well?):

'Jamais ne gerrez a ma coste,
Quant receü avez tel oste...' (1187-8)[31]

unless she submits totally to his will. On this situation one of the **Roman de Renart's** better critics, R. Bossuat, writes: "l'amour d'Ysengrin pour Hersent le rend aveugle, et les protestations de l'épouse infidèle le persuadent qu'elle est innocente."[32] This is most doubtful. There is no textual proof of his love for his wife—only doubt about it. And it is not his wife's protestations of innocence, but her readiness to submit to Ysengrin and join him in his intention to obtain revenge, to seek Renart out, declare war on him and act accordingly that makes him refrain from beating her up (1.1189-91, 1200-14)[31].

Here then, we have the makings of a conflict between families, between the wolf clan and the fox clan—but as yet there is no fox clan, only a fox, only Renart. The text goes on to tell us that Ysengrin makes Hersent swear never to refrain from attacking Renart whenever she has an opportunity (11.1207-9). As is well known, that opportunity presents itself soon afterwards, but goes sadly wrong when Hersent outpaces Ysengrin in the chase and gets stuck in Renart's castle entrance. This second assault on the wolves' honour sets the seal on their war—to begin with, a private family war but (as in some **chansons de geste**) one which becomes a much bigger war, involving many families and plunging the whole animal peerage into conflict. This is what justifies the reference at the beginning of the prologue to the story of Paris and Helen; this is what makes Pierre de Saint Cloud's story so original, however much he has drawn on the **Ysengrimus** and on fables in the Branch II part of his story. And at the heart of this is adultery and rape.

It is interesting to reflect at this point that Pierre de Saint Cloud begins and ends the Branch II part of his poem with fairly extensive husband-and-wife scenes: Chantecler and Pinte, Ysengrin and Hersent. The wives are very different—the one being loyal, faithful and concerned with honour, the other disloyal, unfaithful and not at all honourable. It is doubtful, however, if this contrast was intended. If it was, Pierre ought surely to have had Chantecler reunited with Pinte after his misadventure, and had the cock acknowledge his wife's wisdom. And he would surely have had to have Pinte tempted in some way too! In short, though Pierre goes quite a lot further than Nivardus in portraying married couples, and giving to the wives quite lively personalities, he could have gone a lot further, in particular by providing more spouses (e.g. for the tit, the cat and the crow) and especially by endowing the fox with a wife. But perhaps the strangest modification of his source is his decision to undo the uncle-nephew relationship, thereby depriving himself of the opportunity to parody the Tristan-Iseut-Marc relationship—strange indeed, given his reference to the Tristan legend in his prologue.

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When we turn to Branch Va and think of it as a continuation of Branch II, a side of Hersent's character quickly emerges which does invite comparison with Pinte. Here the twice-outraged Ysengrin heaps vulgar abuse on Hersent for a second time (11.258-9)[33], but it is she who, in spite of her own anger and distress, manages to be fairly reasonable (unlike the she-wolf in the **Ysengrimus**, she is not shown to enjoy the intercourse she has with Renart when stuck in the entrance to his castle). She quietly goes over what has happened, and suggests they go to King Noble the Lion and lay before him their complaint. (No doubt it is the office her husband holds there that makes her think of this; and no doubt it is her awareness of his great physical strength that prompts her to remind him that, if the matter is to be resolved by armed combat, they are bound to win (11.280-1)[34].) Ysengrin is quickly quietened by these words, admits he was stupid to hurl abuse at her (11.284-5), and commends her for her advice (1.286). Both wives then, Pinte and Hersent, play the role of adviser to their husbands. Pinte offers sound advice, but it is rejected, fairly brusquely, with dire consequences. Hersent's advice is questionable—after all, she got very angry earlier on when Renart reported how her husband gossiped about her: now she is in effect advising her husband to declare publicly, before the King himself, the shame they have suffered—doubtful advice which Ysengrin accepts relatively graciously, considering how vulgarly he is capable of treating her; but following it will do him no good. (Is it too far-fetched to suggest that Pierre de Saint Cloud is also offering his listener-readers a couple of portraits of stupid husbands for comparison and contrast?). And as we enter Branch Va we note the "poetic" justice meted out to Hersent. If we had reason to doubt her angry reaction to the reported disrespect Ysengrin had for her, she has now paid quite a price for it—her home has been vandalised, her children insulted, and she herself has been taken against her will and then subjected to a fierce verbal attack by her husband.

United in adversity, Hersent and Ysengrin go to Noble's court to complain. It is only now that Pierre de Saint Cloud reveals that Ysengrin is **conestable** (1.297), i.e. a senior administrator at the royal court. Ysengrin first accuses Renart before the assembled peers of raping his wife and then of attacking his

children and covering them with shame; in short, with an attack on his family. In making this accusation Ysengrin points out that marriages have been protected by royal decree:

'Vos feïstes le ban roial
Que ja mariage par mal
N'osast en freindre ne brisier' (319-21)[35]

and does his utmost thereby to involve the King in his quarrel:

'Renars ne vos velt tant prisier
N'onques ne tint por contredit,
Ne vostre ban ne vostre dit.' (322-4)

For a moment it looks as if Pierre de Saint Cloud recalls the blood relationship (ironically) claimed by Renart with Ysengrin:

'Renars ne dote mariage
Ne parenté ne cosinnage...' (327-8)

but these lines may be references to Renart's claim to be related to Chantecler and the Mésange. In any event, Renart is accused of being no respecter of the bonds of kinship, a charge which would be appreciated, presumably, in twelfth-century France's clannish feudal society. Hersent joins in the accusation, and adds that Renart has always sought her, both before she was married and with even greater ardour since she was married. Apart from the success he enjoyed when she was stuck in his castle entrance, he was always rejected by her, she claims. Hersent begins to emerge a thoroughly immoral character. We now know she is lying, and begin perhaps to doubt the genuineness of the anger when she invited Renart to make love to her. In effect, she confirms that what her husband was reported to have been saying about her was not entirely without reason.

The King's immediate reaction is a faint smile (1.389)[36] and to ask the question:

'Aves vos...plus que dire?' (390)

Clearly Ysengrin is taken aback by this reaction, as is Hersent when asked if she has ever returned Renart's love for her (11.394-7). Her short, sharp denial is followed by another disconcerting question:

'O me dites donques
Por qei estiez vos si fole
Qu'en sa meson aleez sole,
Puis que vos n'estiez s'amie?' (398-401)[36]

The King is clearly implying that rape is only rape if there is no encouragement, and here the circumstances might suggest there was encouragement. Hersent defends herself by saying she was not alone—her husband was close by (11.402-8). What, exclaims the King, your husband was close by yet Renart raped you in his presence? (11.410-12). Ysengrin explodes at the implied criticism (11.414-24). But the King is unmoved. As Pierre de Saint Cloud says:

li roi par sa grant franchise
Ne velt sofrir en nule guise
Hon fust en sa cort mal mené
Qui d'amors fust achoisonné (425-28)[37]

Obviously Pierre is making fun either of the courtly code of love in so far as it tolerated adultery, or of the loose living which went on in aristocratic circles, or of both. If this is not plain enough, he now continues with this authorial pronouncement:

(Noble) quida que non feïst.
Sachez, volentiers le guerpist
Envers Renart de sa querele
Dont mesire Ysengrins l'apele.
Et con il vit qu'il volt tencher
Si conmença a agencier... (429-34)[37]

And he has the King say:

'Ce' fait il, que Renars l'amot,
Le quitte auques de son pechié.
Se par amor vos a trechié
Certes prouz est et afeitiez (436-39)[37]

(One wonders if Pierre de Saint Cloud is suggesting, through irony, that "galenterie" is really trivial compared with "preudhommie"?) Even so, says Noble, Renart must submit to the laws of his land (11.440-4).

In Branch I, **Le Jugement de Renart**, where the story goes over this particular ground again before developing differently, the King asks similar questions and maintains a similar attitude towards Renart and adulterous love. The irony, the criticism is even clearer there than it is here for, at the equivalent point in Branch I the King says:

Ysengrin, leissiez ce ester.
Vos n'i poés rien conquester,
Ainz ramentevez vostre honte.
Musart sont li roi et li conte,
Et cil qui tienent les granz corz
Devienent cop, hui est li jorz.
Onques de si petit domage
Ne fu tel duel ne si grant rage. (45-52)[38]

To return to Pierre's poem, Va. The King is portrayed here as one who tries to take the matter seriously if only to bring peace to two feuding families. It is perhaps significant that he first asks a papal legate, a camel, to give his view of the matter—i.e. allows the Church to speak first. The papal legate's verdict is given in italianate French which renders it laughable. As far as one can ascertain, he begins by saying that the accused should be interrogated and, if unable to justify his action, should be punished as the King sees fit, for a violated marriage ("un matrimoine violate") is a serious crime. Then, assuming Renart to be guilty, he goes on to say that if the fox does not make proper reparation to Ysengrin, the King should confiscate all his property, stone him

and burn him. He then meanders on about the importance of maintaining law and order, and tells the King that, if he cannot maintain law and order, he should retire to a monastery. In short, the papal legate passes the buck back to the King. Evidently the Church has no answer for at least this particular example of (alleged) rape. Failed by the Church, the King turns to the State, and asks his barons to pronounce on the matter. He says:

'Alés...vos qui ci estes
Li plus vaillant, les granor bestes!
Si jugiez de ceste clamor,
Se cil qui est sopris d'amor
Doit estre de ce encopez
Dont ses conpainz est escopez.' (499-504)[39]

Here Pierre de Saint Cloud, through the King, puts his finger on one of the most vexed problems in rape cases: can one of the two be **totally** innocent?

Here we have one of the earliest stories in French which uses an argument about marital infidelity as a powerful dynamo for advancing a long and detailed comic plot—the first full-length comic plot to rest on such a foundation. At the same time it makes serious points, and asks—implicity rather than explicitly—many a serious question, being the first in the field to present a charge of rape. For example, the first baron to take up the King's invitation, Brichemer the Stag, maintains that a single witness is not enough for a proper verdict to be reached, especially if that witness is the husband or wife of the accused (11.520-38)[40]. Other barons speak in support of Ysengrin, notably Brun the Bear, but we soon learn that he has a grudge against Renart. Implicitly, Pierre de Saint Cloud seems to be suggesting the need to have impartial jurymen. Even so, Brun makes some interesting remarks relevant to our subject. For example, he suggests that Renart should be castrated, arguing that this is the normal punishment for a man who rapes the wife of another[41]—and this penalty should be exacted irrespective of the moral status of the woman, whether she be simply a "femme facile" or a prostitute (11.821-32)[42]—and all the more so because the cuckolded husband knows his wife has been raped (11.833-5). Then two friends of Renart's argue a particularly serious point:—that a man may not be condemned without his being heard. And it is this argument, coupled with the one that an unsupported, biased witness's testimony is insufficient to find a man guilty of a serious crime, which wins the day. The barons' debate comes to an end, then, when Brichemer the Stag suggests that Renart should therefore appear before them and swear on oath that he had not committed the crimes of which he is accused; and that Ysengrin should thereupon renounce his declared intent to wage war on Renart.

Eventually, as is well known, Renart agrees to come to court, and to swear the oath demanded of him; and in the manner determined by Ysengrin, under the presidency of Roonel the Dog. Meanwhile, Ysengrin plots with Roonel who agrees to pretend to be at death's door when the ceremony takes place. Ysengrin will insist that Renart take the oath with his paw on the teeth of the apparently expiring dog, having agreed with the dog that he shall then spring to life, as it were, and seize Renart by the throat. To be doubly sure of getting the fox, Roonel plans to have his whole clan lying in ambush nearby. Ysengrin also organises his friends and relations so that, on the day of the ceremony, they are assembled openly, banners flying in the valley, while Renart, cunning and cautious, has assembled his friends and relations on a hillside, opposite Ysengrin's allies. Thus they are grouped like armies drawn up for battle—and battle there is; for just as Renart steps forward towards the outstretched Roonel to make his oath, he sees the dog's flanks heave as he breathes. Renart suddenly retreats, and pandemonium is let loose. Then battle is joined—but Renart, badly wounded, escapes to the safety of his castle-den.

It would have been more satisfying, perhaps, if Renart's wife had featured in this story of Pierre de Saint Cloud's, if she had been there, at Maupertuys (Renart's "castle") to receive him, with their sons, to care for him and restore him to health—for this is what happens on similar occasions in subsequent branches of the **Roman de Renart;** and it is what happens at the end of Branch I, which is, in many ways, a reworking and retelling of Pierre's poem. There, at the end of that branch, when Renart returns home, its author tells us:

Sa feme a l'encontre li vient,
Qui molt le dote et molt le crent.
Troi filz avoit la dame france...
Trestuit il vienent environ,
Si le prenent par le giron
Et virent les plaies qui senent.
Molt le dolosent et conpleignent;
Totes li levent de blanc vin,
Si l'aseent sor un cossin...
La dame le fist bien baignier
Et puis vantuser et sener
Tant qu'il refu en la santé
Ou il avoit devant esté. (1601-20)[43]

It is a pity an ending of this kind was not provided by Pierre de Saint Cloud to his poem because, if it had been, it would have completed a picture of the benefits a valiant husband could expect from a well-disposed and presumably respected wife. Pinte did her best, Hersent did her worst, each for understandable reasons. Both were scorned, both treated with harsh words, and both husbands, Chantecler and Ysengrin, suffered as a result. But Renart, unfaithful

in love, could have been shown here as he is in subsequent branches, to be faithful to his wife in every other way. He provides for his wife and children, he looks after them, and he is looked after by them, handsomely, devotedly. The ending supplied by the author of Branch I to his story makes one wonder again about King Noble's comment on the commonplace nature of marital infidelity. It reinforces the impression one gets from all the early **Roman de Renart** stories that a husband and his wife and children have more important things to bother about than sentimental matters—their social status, standing and property in a militant, land-owning society. However, Pierre de Saint Cloud shows that the partnership between a husband and wife can be important, that it can be broken by adultery, and that when it is broken, the trouble which may ensue may be bad not only for the family, but also for society at large. If the **Chanson de Roland** illustrates in the grand style, and without any significant reference to love or marriage, how a private family feud can bring about general and public disaster, Pierre de Saint Cloud's **Roman de Renart** does the same in comic style, and by pointed reference to sexual desire and the marriage bed. Above all, Pierre is an entertainer; but as he entertains, he seems bent on showing how difficult it is to bring justice to bear in cases of adultery and family feud, perhaps because he did not believe in the total innocence or total guilt of any one of the parties involved.

★ ★ ★ ★

In this essay a few glimpses have already been given of what follows in the first wave of **Roman de Renart** stories, especially in Branch I. Here, by way of a conclusion and as an introduction to subsequent developments, are a few more of the significant points relevant to our subject.

Branch I is, in large part, a reworking and retelling of Va—of what happens when Ysengrin and Hersent lay their complaint before Noble and their peers. This branch seems to develop part of Pierre's (ironic?) argument, that adultery is unimportant, that it is a commonplace triviality in aristocratic circles. Damage to property, and breaking the feudal monarch's laws, are much more serious matters.

In the early stages of this tale there are quite a few hints of parody, with Hersent repeatedly offering to be tried by boiling water, or hot coals, recalling Iseut's protestations of innocence. Even so, its author, like Pierre de Saint Cloud, fails to invoke the uncle-nephew "relationship" of the **Ysengrimus**.

Pinte re-appears in this tale, and plays an even more important role than in II/Va, for here she turns up with her husband Chantecler, at the head of a funeral procession, just as Nobel has dismissed Ysengrin's complaints and insisted on peace between the feuding families. Pinte's arrival with the dead, mutilated body of her sister, murdered by Renart, and her eloquent speech about the fox's repeated, murderous attacks on her family force Noble to change his mind and pursue Ysengrin's and others' complaints about Renart. This intervention is brilliantly done and so impressed authors of subsequent branches of the **Roman de Renart** that they imitated it on a number of occasions (notably in Branch Ia). Indeed, this entry of Pinte's sets the fashion for the use of a sorrowing wife/mother/sister as a **dea ex machina** to set in motion a new set of events.

This story also includes, in the episode given over to Tybert, the first of many appearances of a priest and his concubine in the **Roman de Renart**, largely to make fun of them in one way or another, usually bawdily. Here the priest loses a testicle, and his concubine is sorely troubled at the thought of the consequences. Just as Pierre's prototype of Dame Malkyn is to be developed and made truly famous in time, so is this concubine, especially in the Dutch reworking of this incident at the end of the Middle Ages, and in Caxton's translation in 1482.

Finally, it is here that, belatedly, two more wives make their first appearances, wives who in subsequent stories are to play significant parts. First, it is the turn of Noble's wife, Queen Fière (Fere). Just as Renart has obtained the King's pardon to go to Jerusalem as a pilgrim and is about to set off, she suddenly appears from the shadows:

Ma dame Fere l'orgellose,
Qui molt estoit cortoisse et bele. (1438-9)[44]

She asks him to pray for them, and offers to pray in return for him. He is glad at this, and sensing that she is attracted to him, no doubt, he presses his luck and asks for her ring; and she gives it to him. The second wife to appear for the first time, and even more belatedly—right at the very end, in lines 1601-20, is his own wife. On this we have already commented above. She is so slight a figure, however, as to be unnamed.

In Branch Ia, the **Siège de Maupertuis**, one is struck by the fact that nearly every crisis is caused or resolved by a wife. At the heart of it is another rape—this time of a Queen, of Fière. She also helps him out of the trouble he gets into through this piece of lèse-majesté by furnishing him with a letter which has the magic property of protecting whoever has it from death (1.1913-24)[45]. Then, as Renart is about to be hanged, out of the blue his faithful wife appears at the gallows with their three sons, weeping and pleading for mercy. It is perhaps the ransom they offer the King rather than the tears which do the trick, but Renart is pardoned. Then, just as he relaxes with his family

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Que devant lui voit ameisnie:
Celui bese et cestui enbrace,
Car ne voit chose, tant li place...) (2095-9)[46]

up comes Dame Chauve the Mouse (and many another of the mouse clan) carrying the body of her husband, murdered by Renart, wailing, lamenting, and demanding justice. Once more the King regrets his decision, Renart is endangered, and once more he escapes with a ruse.

It is perhaps worth noting that, when Renart thinks he is about to be hanged, he dictates his last will and testament, leaving his chief properties to his elder son and his wife (in that order: see 11.1969-84)[47]. When his cousin Grinbert the Badger asks if he is going to get anything, Renart says he may have all he left his wife if she should remarry—he has little doubt that she will soon forget him, and marry again. And there follows a fairly fierce general condemnation of women, of widows:

Qar, quant li om est en la biere,
Sa feme esgarde par deriere:
S'ele veit home a son plaisir,
Ne puet pas son voloir tessir,
Con plus recoie et va tremblant,
Qu'il ne li face aucun senblant. (1999-2004)[48]

to which he adds

Tot autretel fera la moie,
Jusqu'au tiers jor raura sa joie (2005-6)

underestimating, it would seem, the great loyalty she is about to demonstrate in coming to the King to seek his pardon.

She is still not named.

In Branch Ib (**Renart Teinturier et Jongleur**), wives at last play really major roles. At first Renart holds the stage as he falls into a vat of yellow dye and assumes the guise of an English **jongleur**; then Renart and Ysengrin as they raid a peasant's house, but in which Ysengrin is totally emasculated by the peasant's dog; then Ysengrin and Hersent. Here, in a scene in the wolves' home, Ysengrin's loss is gradually discovered by Hersent, and he pretends he has lent his male parts to a nun. There is here a hilarious, fabliau-like would-be love-making scene, lamentations by the deprived Hersent, and many a sly dig at the supposed sexual needs of women. Finally Hersent deserts her husband—husband now only in name. The poet then turns to Renart and his wife who is at last christened and rejoices in the name of Hermeline. Or rather, he turns to Hermeline and a cousin of Grinbert's called Poincet, with whom she is living now that she considers herself a widow as all of two weeks have passed since Renart was last seen by her. They would have married already if they had been able to find a **jongleur** to perform at the feast. So it comes about that Renart fiddles at his wife's second wedding, to which the "single" Hersent also comes. She even helps prepare Hermeline for her wedding night. But Renart, of course, disposes of Poincet, and reveals himself to a disconcerted Hermeline and Hersent. He abuses and beats his wife, and throws both women out of the house. Thus the final, uproariously funny scene is entirely the wives' as they first bemoan their lot, then quarrel. Hersent calls Hermeline a "camberere qui conmunax est a garçons" (11.3084-5)[48], and says she herself is more or less pure, having slipped from grace only once, and then accidentally, with Renart. Hermeline seems to learn of this for the first time (where can she have been?!) and gets furiously jealous. A magnificent verbal fight ensues, then fisticuffs and worse. A passing pilgrim separates them, and sends them home to their husbands.

Although the part played by love, sexual desire, marriage and family-units grows relatively rapidly from one branch to another in the first wave of **Roman de Renart** stories, looming large in the artistically polished Branch I, and culminating in the deliciously comic Branch Ib, Pierre de Saint Cloud's story, Branches II/Va remains in so many ways, in spite of all the possibilities he fails to exploit, the most original and comically profound of them all.

NOTES

[1]See 'Tableau chronologique des branches du Roman de Renard' in **Le Roman de Renard**, R. Bossuat, Hatier-Boivin, Paris, 1957, pp. 186-7 for a list of all the branches and their grouping, etc.

[2]See 'Le Roman de Renart' in the **Bibliographie de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes**, fasc. 211, Paris, 1914, chapter 2. Foulet's findings are in effect summed up in the 'Tableau chronologique...' referred to in note (1) above.

[3]See p. 187, **op. cit.** in note (1).

[4]See p. 144, **ibid.**

[5]See **The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance...**,Arnold, London, 1974.

[6]Foulet argues (ch. 10) that Branch II plus Va is the earliest part of the **Roman de Renart**, and (ch. 11) that its author is Pierre de Saint Cloud. However, we have serious reservations about the authorship; see A. Lodge and K. Varty, "Pierre de Saint Cloud's **Roman de Renart**; Foulet's thesis re-examined", in **Proceedings of the Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium**, Münster, 1979, ed. J. Goossens and T. Sodmann, Böhlau, Cologne, Vienna, 1981, pp. 189-95.

[7]Tilander thinks this should read

Romanz d'Yvain et de sa beste

but this is controversial; several interpretations are possible. See his **Remarques sur le Roman de Renart**, Göteborg, 1925, and earlier, "L'Auteur des branches II et Va et Chrétien de Troyes", in **Romania**, 44 (1915-17), pp. 258-60. We also have reservations about the editorial implication in the fifth line of the Prologue that someone called La Chievre composed a Tristan story. A. Lodge will shortly publish a detailed study arguing that this is another misinterpretation of the text by Foulet, and one that has had considerable repercussions.

[8]I quote the text from **Le Roman de Renard**, as edited by Jean Dufournet, Garnier-Flammarion, Paris, 1970. Here from p. 177.

[9]Foulet makes much of this; see especially his ch. 7.

[10]The text of the **Ysengrimus** was first carefully established by Ernst Voigt: **Ysengrimus** (herausgegeben und erklärt), Halle, 1884. It has long remained the only reliable edition but it is rare. A new edition is about to be published, with a very careful translation into English and scholarly study of the poem by Dr. Jill Mann of Girton College, Cambridge University, England. I here gladly acknowledge her help in providing me with a typescript copy of her translation from which I quote. If I give rather a long resumé of the **Ysengrimus**, it is partly because I am aware that it is still little-known and rarely read; and partly because it helps put Pierre de Saint Cloud's debts and his innovations into clearer perspective than I believe they have been put hitherto.

[11]In fact, however, the wolf's hostility towards the fox is based on the fact that the fox's attack on his family has already taken place. There is a difference between the chronological and narrative sequence of events, which is perhaps best described by Elina Suomela-Härmä in her recent study **Les Structures narratives dans le Roman de Renart** (Helsinki, 1981), p. 157.

[12]I quote from Jill Mann's as yet unpublished translation (see note 10). Unfortunately I am unable to give precise page or line references.

[13]See the preceding note.

[14]Quoted from Jean Dufournet's Garnier-Flammarion edition of the **Roman de Renard**, Paris, 1970 (here, p. 188). Dufournet's edition follows ms. A (B.N. f.fr. 20043) as published by Martin, 1882-7.

[15]See the preceding note.

[16]See note (14); here p. 189.

[17]**Ibid.**; here p. 192.

[18]**Ibid.**; here p. 202.

[19]**Ibid.**; here pp. 178-80.

[20]**Ibid.**; here p. 181.

[21]**Ibid.**; here p. 184.

[22]**Ibid.**; here pp. 186-7.

[23]**Ibid.**; here p. 190.

[24]**Ibid.**; here p. 191.

[25]See note (2); here p. 129.

[26]**Ibid.**; here p. 136.

[27]See note (12) above.

[28]See note (2); here p. 132.

[29]See note (14); here pp. 215-17.

[30]I now quote from the 10/18 edition of the **Roman de Renart**, edited and translated by M. De Combarieu du Grès and Jean Subrenat, Union Générale d'Editions, Paris, 1981, tome 1; here from p. 242. These editors also use exactly the same ms. and printed text as Dufournet (see note (14)); however, Dufournet's edition does not include Branch Va.

[31]See note (14); here p. 219.

[32]See note (1); here p. 17.

[33]See note (30); here p. 240.

[34]**Ibid.**; here p. 242.

[35]**Ibid.**; here p. 244.

[36]**Ibid.**; here p. 248.

[37]**Ibid.**; here p. 250.

[38]See note (14); here p. 66.

[39]See note (30); here p. 254.

[40]**Ibid.**; here pp. 254-6.

[41]There is a fair amount of evidence from different parts of Europe that castration was a legal punishment for rape. In the **Lay of Havelok the Dane** (edited by B. Dickins and R.M. Wilson, Bowes and Bowes, London, 1951, p. 37, 11.83-6) we read:

> And wo-so dide maydne shame
> Of hire bodi, or brouth in blame
> Bute it were bi hire wille,
> He made him sone of limes spille.

A note on these lines (op. cit., p. 177) reads "On loss of testicles as a legal punishment for rape, cf. **Chronicle** 1086E, 'Gif hwilc carlman haemde wiđ wimman hir unđances, sona he forleas þa limu þe he mid pleagode.'" The **Chronicle** referred to here is the **Peterborough Chronicle**—see the edition by C. Clark, O.U.P., 1958, p. 12.

[42]See note (30); here p. 272.

[43]See note (14); here pp. 117-8.

[44]**Ibid.**; here p. 112.

[45]**Ibid.**; here p. 127.

[46]**Ibid.**; here p. 133.

[47]**Ibid.**; here p. 129.

[48]**Ibid.**; here p. 130.

[49]**Ibid.**; here p. 169.