SAINTS IN THE ROMAN DE RENART

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The *Roman de Renart* is a cycle of 12th and 13th century vernacular tales in octosyllabic verse centering on the interactions between a sly, conniving fox and his acquaintances. Each of three major manuscript “families” of the *Roman de Renart* constitutes a compilation of between 26 and 31 episodes with about 30,000 verses. In each family over 60 different saints are invoked, identified based on examination of their life, legends, and geographic placement. The import and semiotics of the frequent invocation of saints has been neglected throughout the centuries. It deserves study because calling upon a particular saint can encapsulate a rich deposit of narrative, geographic, and symbolic information that the numerous, mostly anonymous, authors manipulated to humorous, ironic, or subversive effect. This dissertation considers the role of saints in high medieval French culture and demonstrates the reasons for the choice of particular saints in selected episodes of the *Roman de Renart*. 
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved brother, Joseph Robert Balombin, and sister, Jane Frances Balombin, each for the role they played in making me who I am today.
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Introduction: Saints in the *Roman de Renart*

On a side street near the soaring Gothic cathedral of Saint-Etienne in Bourges, former capital of the province of Aquitaine and capital of France under Charles VII (1422-1461), the carved portal of a demolished 12th century church extends the continuity of the exterior wall of a recruiting station for the French army and military offices. The tympanum of the portal of Saint-Ursin, honoring the first bishop of Bourges in the third century, has three levels (See Figure 1 in Appendix H).

While the lowest and broadest level depicts the monthly work of the peasants, the mid-level hunting scene focuses on a stag and a wild boar trapped beneath hunters and horses. The top section shows a number of anthropomorphic beasts: an ass as school-master, a crane confidently plunging his beak into a wolf’s (or a fox’s) throat, and a formal procession led by a bear, while two fowl pull the cart carrying an alert fox who eyes them.¹

¹ According to the information plaque associated with the sculpture, it was rare to see hunting scenes or those taken from popular tales sculpted on the tympanum of a church. However, working the earth was considered a virtuous way of life and was often depicted in church sculptures.
The animals on this portal, sculpted in the early 12th century,\(^2\) evoke the medieval *Roman de Renart*, a series of tales written between 1170 and 1250 about the wiles and adventures of the sly fox, Renart, and his relationships with other animals—and humans—in an environment closely modeled on that of medieval French society—rural, village or royal court. While the scene of greatest interest to this study is the third, it is worth noting the possible interpretations of the accompanying scenes as an introduction to the world of this infamous fox. The mid-level hunting scene may refer to the activities of the noble and warrior class, the *bellatores*, while the lower frieze depicts the work of peasants, the *laboratores*,\(^3\) two parts of the tripartite division of society that was to be led by the clergy, the *oratores*. Although rooted in ancient Indo-European tradition, this doctrinal division of responsibilities and privileges was promulgated by bishops, starting with cousins Adalbéron of Laon and Gérard de Cambrai in 1024, in face of the challenge of growing temporal feudal power.\(^4\) The position ascribed to regular clergy in society harkened back to the status and authority of earlier bishops

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who were founders and leaders of their communities during the late antique period in Gaul and then during Merovingian rule.

In the upper level of the portal the depiction of an ass as school-master may be a reference to the ninth century poem, “Learn, Lion” written in Angers, at the monastery of Saint-Aubin, where the ass offers to teach the lion. The character of the donkey, often used to represent medieval clergy because of its presumed intellectual and social humility, was underlined three centuries later in the character Carcophas in the Flemish Ysengrimus (1148), a Latin precursor to the Roman de Renart, who tries to teach a wolf. Earlier interpretations linked this sculpture to the wolf in the Roman de Renart who finds his tail frozen into ice of a pond (“La pêche à la queue”/“Fishing with his tail”—alpha branche III) or the fable of the Loup à l’école, the wolf in school with the ass as teacher. Given the sculpture to its far right, the carving could be seen as having


another connection to the *Roman de Renart*, i.e., Bernard the ass who is a “high priest.” He leads religious ceremonies for the court of Noble the lion king, and is the first to believe Hersent’s excuses for her behavior with Renart (*alpha branche* I of the *Roman de Renart*, "*Le jugement de Renart*"/“Renart’s trial”).

In the middle scene, one whose lesson might be that one gains “nothing but trouble by aiding scoundrels,” a crane plunges its beak into a wolf’s throat. The bird has agreed to pull out a bone caught in the wolf’s throat and, according to the fable of Aesop (or the first century Roman Phaedrus), it foolishly expects a reward—other than its life. In a parallel situation in *alpha branche* XI of the *Roman de Renart* the sparrow Drouin helps relieve Renart’s hunger by throwing down cherries, only to find that the advice he requested of Renart has allowed the fox to eat his eight fledglings. A later rewriting of the popular fable has the

9 A general reference to a *branche* (*alpha* and *beta*) or *unité* (*gamma*) of particular family of manuscripts will be noted with the family identifier. As the critical edition of Ernst Martin, *alpha* family, is used as a base, any *branche* not labeled is from the *alpha* manuscripts. When specific verses are cited, the critical edition is identified.


unsuspecting heron Pinçart eaten by the fox (*branche* XXV, but only in manuscript H)\(^{12}\).

The third scene clearly points to *branche* XVII (*alpha* family) of the *Roman de Renart*, with its inclusion of the bear, Brun, who digs Renart’s grave, and two birds (Chantecler and his wife, Pinte?) pulling a fox—Renart—on a cart. The (feigned) “Death and Funeral Procession” of the fox, a story dated by Jean Dufournet to 1205,\(^{13}\) was obviously written down later than the frieze, pointing to a longstanding oral, or folkloric, source, as well as to the inclusion of fox and wolf tales in the teaching of local churches.\(^{14}\)

What can this portal tell the modern “reader” about the relationship of the tales of Renart the fox and the Roman Church throughout medieval northern France, especially in Ile-de-France, Picardy, Champagne and Normandy, where the tales were written down? As mentioned previously, given the dating of the portal of Saint-Ursin, the story of the fox tricking other animals into believing that he was

\(^{12}\) Scheidegger, *Dérision*, 55.


\(^{14}\) In “La mosaïque de Lescar et la datation des contes de Renart le goupil,” *Revue des langues romanes* 90 (1986)10, Kenneth Varty posits that the mosaic (dated 1130-40) on the floor of the cathedral of Lescar, near Pau, represents the second part of *branche* IX (Martin) where Renart steals the harnesses of Lietart, and Hermeline foolishly attaches herself to the supposedly dead ass, Timer, only to be dragged along.
dead—a story that included a bear, the fox and two fowl, as in *Renart*—was well known before it was written down by clerics.

Second, the regular canons of Saint-Ursin, who directed and paid Girardus—the sculptor who chiseled his name in his work—were aware of the oral fables that were probably spread by the *jongleurs* and circulated among the people, the monasteries, the bishoprics, and probably an aristocratic milieu. Collections of fables from Aesop, Phaedrus, Avianus (fifth century) and others have been found in inventories of monastery libraries, probably to provide exempla—examples of good or bad behavior—in preaching.\(^{15}\) In that way fables easily became appropriate subjects for the portal of a church.

Third, whether used as exemplars or not, the canons of Saint-Ursin thought it appropriate to pair references to the devious fox, the teaching ass, and the too helpful crane with scenes of rural life of the *laboratores* and hunting for the *bellatores* at the entrance of a church.\(^{16}\) It is probable that they deliberately chose these depictions to make a point, using the visual arts to communicate church teaching, both of an expected order to society, and of morals shown in popular stories. Proof

\(^{15}\) Le Luel, “L’âne, le loup, la grue et le renard” 66.

\(^{16}\) It is possible that beauty of the sculpture as well as the popular appeal of sculpted animals from fables played roles in saving the portal when the remainder of the church was destroyed in 1799.
of such a co-habitation between the profane and the sacred lies in the fact that few attempts were made to remove such portrayals, except in the case of Notre-Dame-de-Strasbourg, where the scene of the presumed death of Renart, carved in 1298, was removed in 1685.17

The inclusion of Renart in French medieval church sculptural programs, such as the one at Bourges and others at Strasbourg, as well as in Amiens, Lescar, and Modena, Italy, and the frequent citing of saints and religious practices in the Renart stories themselves, suggest that distinctions between monastic or ecclesiastic, and popular culture were not viewed as rigid. In contrast to what Jacques Le Goff describes as strong antagonism between the “official, ecclesiastical culture faced with a ‘culture folklorique’” during the Merovingian period,18 there seems to have been lessened dichotomy between official, clerical views and unofficial, “folkloric” views when it came to accepting stories of the fox in the high Middle Ages. Not all tension dissolved, of course, and can be seen in the juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane that opens the door for interpretation in the Renart.


The tales of the fox were written down or composed by educated clerics or court entertainers during a period when a vernacular, textual “community” was developing. This community was linked by written texts possibly drawn from trouvère performances, hagiographic praise poems (e.g., “La Cantilène de sainte Eulalie”), chansons de geste, and romances, whether hagiographic or secular. The challenge arose of how to blend the often satirical, sometimes scatological art of the fox into the margins of religious life. There was the possibility of using the stories as exempla, coupled with an implicit acknowledgement that challenges to official church doctrine were not intended in the sometimes satirical treatment of sacraments and performed poorly religious practices. One small aspect of medieval vernacular texts was amplified: invocations to saints. The invocations to over 60 different saints, sometimes in the most obscene stories (e.g., branche XXII, “Le labourage en commun” /”Working together” or “How Renart perfected the cunt”) in the Roman de Renart, may have ensured the acceptance of the textual Renart within the walls of the Church and in the courts of medieval society.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the saints in the Roman de Renart and to demonstrate that their use had meaning. Questions that arise are: Why were particular saints invoked? What characterizes the French tales of the fox, in comparison to those of other European societies? Why was this group of saints chosen? Why were
particular saints matched to certain situations in the *Roman de Renart*? What semiotic and cultural links underlie these choices? Did the choice of saints change as different copyists rewrote or reworked the tales throughout the 13th and 14th centuries? Understanding the saints invoked by Renart and his fellow characters adds depth to a reading of the text, as each saint codes stories, legendary powers, geographies, and patronage of different human activities and desires.

In Chapter 1 several aspects of medieval French society that gave rise to the *Roman de Renart* will be considered, including the role of saints in medieval society, the social order (particularly as viewed by the Roman church), and the changing historical context of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Medieval traditions of animal literature and specific sources of *Renart* will be considered to illustrate the derivation of the *Renart corpus* and its place in medieval literature. With the process of composition and reception of this work that led to réécriture, re-writings, a complex set of manuscript witnesses was produced over the course of several decades.

In Chapter 2 I will examine the development and importance of the construct known as “saint” in French medieval society, leading to their “natural” inclusion in the fox tales from northern France, as well as the principal types of saints invoked in the *Roman de Renart*. The contrast
with other western European versions of tales of the fox will also be considered.

Chapters 3 and 4 will examine Renart’s saints from two different perspectives: incidents and attributes from the saints’ vitae (3) and the substantive naming of saints on religious buildings or in the liturgical calendar of the Roman church. Examination of specific incidents will show how invocations to saints were appropriate and added to the import of the textual situation, how the saints may have varied by locality, and how they may have changed with political and ecclesiastical tides or fashions in devotion. It will be demonstrated that the saints were chosen for specific reasons that meant much more than a simple rhyme.
Chapter 1

The Roman de Renart as cultural artefact

Consideration of the Roman de Renart in its complex manuscript tradition will provide a basis for understanding the nature of this popular text. This chapter will examine its historiography. It will also survey the social landscape of France in the High Middle Ages (11th-13th centuries) to establish a context for understanding the cycle of tales.19

In the Roman de Renart, a popular, Old French beast epic and cycle of trickster tales from the High Middle Ages, the schemes of the devious fox, Renart, dominate the intrigue. The tales are about country life and about the king’s attempts to maintain peace among his barons; they are about hunger and the occasional gluttonous feast; they are

19 The naming conventions utilized are as follows: When a published version of the Roman de Renart is cited, it is italicized, as are references to the Renart cycle. The character “Renart” appears in regular type. Particular branches or episodes of the Roman de Renart, such as “Le siège de Maupertuis” are set off with quotation marks. Two spellings, “Renart” and “Renard,” are used in critical texts and studies. I follow the author’s choice when citing.

Secondary sources are cited in footnotes; citations or references to particular verses in one of the four critical editions of Renart manuscripts utilized are included in parentheses in the text. Translations into English of episode, branche or unité (gamma) titles are provided when necessary.
about characters who survive in a society where the rules of law are often evaded. Goodness, as well as food, is often in short supply. A keen wit and an able tongue enable survival. Intelligence, especially when employed against the inept and the foolish, is highly regarded.

The first page of manuscript O (Bibliothèque Nationale française 12583, 14th century) of the Roman de Renart ably illustrates the convergence of themes in the Roman de Renart in another depiction of the false interment of Renart: respect for religion, a parody of religious practices, the importance given to relics, and the fox’s attempts to satisfy his hunger. With the ass Bernard in the lead, holding a cross, Belin the ram and Brun the bear carry a stretcher surmounted by a coffin shaped like a reliquary with three windows. The brown head of the fox is seen popping out of the coffin with the cock Chantecler in his mouth (figure 2).20

The popular, vernacular tales of the fox in France and in other countries draw from earlier, written Roman and medieval Latin beast tales, as well as from folklore and the inventiveness of the authors, who were mostly 12th century clerics, whether monks, deacons, priests or lay canons. Continuing interest in Renart during the Middle Ages and into the modern world--where new editions continue to be published--may be

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20 Aurélie Barre, Le Roman de Renart (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 2-3.
rooted in the trope of opposition between cleverness and brute force (e.g., the story of David and Goliath from the Bible and the confrontations of Renart and the wolf Isengrin in the *Renart*), an inspiration for those who are weaker. On the other hand, William Calin, in *The French Tradition*, holds that the popularity of the *Renart* cycle may be due to its “powerful existential worldview in which mankind is driven by competition, greed, and violence—by the inherent will to dominate and not to be dominated, and to be a master not a slave, a knave and not a fool—and in which love, compassion and Christian faith are largely absent.” However, in contrast to Calin’s final point, evidence of popular religious faith and practices infuses the episodes of the French *Renart* cycle, despite Renart’s “inherent will to dominate” and the greed and violence often foregrounded in the *Renart*. References, and, occasionally, reverence—even from Renart—abound towards popular religious practices, whether seen in characters making the sign of the cross, singing Mass, entering monastic life, going on a pilgrimage, or venerating the relics of a saint. Animals and humans frequently invoke a variety of saints, either directly, utilizing “par” (“by”), or indirectly, calling upon the *foi que [je] doi* (“faith that I owe to…”). The invocations are mostly sincere, signifying on a

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medium background level, but are also added to make an ironic statement.

Each of the three major families of manuscripts, each with about 30,000 verses, of the French *Roman de Renart* invokes the names of about 60 saints, with slight differences between which saints are mentioned, how frequently, and in which branches (see Appendix A). In contrast, no other European version (i.e., Alsatian, Italian, German, Dutch or English) of the tales of Renart the fox includes more than three saints\(^{22}\) in its retelling of particular episodes. Peter S. Noble, in “Saints in the Tristan Legend,” cites Béroul’s *Tristan* for its ten saints, while noting few saints in Chrétien de Troyes’s work (Saints Peter, Paul John, Mary and Sylvester).\(^{23}\) Marie de France mentions only Saints Aaron, Clement and Nicolas.

The extensive invocation of saints in the French *Renart* cycle deserves closer scrutiny. The only study to mention the saints in the *Roman de Renart* was published in 1863: Willem Jonckbloet’s *Étude sur le Roman de Renart*. Jonckbloet\(^{24}\) provides lists of saints from those

\(^{22}\) Geoffrey Chaucer, in the 1390 “Nonnes Preestes Tale”, a version of the story of Chantecler, mentions “Seint Paul” (v. 3441), “seint Augustine” (v. 3241) and “seint Kenelan,” a murdered king of Mercia from the 9\(^{th}\) century (v. 3110, 3112).

\(^{23}\) Peter S. Noble, “Saints in the Tristan Legend,” in *Reading Medieval Studies*, 16 (1990), 199.

episodes of the *Roman de Renart* that he attributes to Pierre de St. Cloud, but without discussion of reasons for the invocation of a particular saint.\(^{25}\) This dissertation proposes to examine the ways saints are invoked in the *branches* of the Old French *Renart* using critical editions and looking at the episodes in their manuscript context. Rather than meaningless interjections, I propose that these invocations to saints are essential parts of the intertextual fabric of the Renart tales. Understanding hagiographic references in these works opens up deeper levels of meanings, as well as offering insights into the complex relationship between religious practices and high medieval French society.

To set the stage for an examination of the saints in the French *Renart* cycle, this chapter will first discuss the process of composition and its reception, which produced a complex set of witness via manuscripts over the course of several decades. Some background on the medieval traditions of animal literature, beast epics, and the specific sources of *Renart* will then be given. Finally, an overview of the role of saints in medieval society and the changing historical context of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries will follow. The rewriting and intertextuality that were part of the creation of *Renart* may show how

\(^{25}\) Jonckbloet also notes no manuscript sources, as his commentary was published before a critical research method was established for medieval manuscripts by Ernst Martin.
invocations to saints sometimes changed with political and ecclesiastical
tides, sometimes varied by locality, and, indeed, might have been
adapted according to trends in devotion.

**Renart’s composition and reception**

The earliest manuscripts of the *Roman de Renart* date to the last
quarter of the 12th century in northern France, with the first story, or
branche, written down sometime between 1174 (or, 1170) and 1177,
according to Lucien Foulet,26 who first used allusions to historical events
and orthographical practices to provide clues to the dating. The vogue of
writing stories featuring Renart seems to have reached its apogee around
the year 1200.27 The *Renart* cycle can be divided into three waves of
branches (alpha family numbering):

--group x, written between 1170 and 1180 with branches I, II, III,
IV, V, Va, XIV, XV;

--group y, written between 1180 and 1205, with branches Ia, Ib,
VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XVI, XVII.

26 Lucien Foulet, *Le Roman de Renard*, 2ème éd. (Paris : Honoré Champion,
1968), 118.

--group z, the final group of branches, written between 1205 and 1250. These are mostly rewrites of the earlier versions: XIII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI.28

The popularity of Renart spread quickly, and the tales that seem to have been most popular, given their inclusion in all manuscript families and in foreign versions, were those that served as the basis of the cycle: the adultery and rape that resulted in enmity between the fox and the wolf and the trial and judgment of the fox. The earlier tales (1170-1205) are mostly focused on clever attempts to gain the upper hand, with Renart operating either as a trickster or the person being tricked, thus eliciting either sympathy or antipathy, resulting in a somewhat ambiguous character.29 Later tales (1205-1250), often derived from the original cycle, as well as the separate morality tales from the 13th and 14th century, take on a more bitter tone in their presentation of revenge, or become didactic allegories. Renart eventually came to personify “... hypocrisy, deceit and evil ...”.30 Per Nykrog, in the “Post-scriptum

28 Jean Dufournet, Le Roman de Renart : entre réécriture et innovation (Orléans : Paradigme, 2007) 8-16. This is the most recent critical chronology. Earlier, slightly different chronologies are provided by Lucien Foulet 118; Robert Bossuat, Le Roman de Renard, 190-91; and Michel Zink, Littérature française du Moyen Age, 221.


1973” to his 1957 *Fabliaux*, comments that news of the atrocities of the Albigensian “crusade” (1209-1213) must have been fairly traumatizing and demoralizing to those who knew about them in northern France.\(^{31}\) This, coupled with the “odd” events (*événement étranges*) of the fourth Crusade (1202-04)—an enterprise that took a detour from its original goal of freeing Christendom’s holy sites from the Saracens to serving the will of the Venetian merchants who provided ships—may have resulted in a French society that became more bitter and pessimistic, as reflected in the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) and 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century continuations of *Renart*.

Between 1250 and 1325 four additional stories appeared as commentaries on contemporary French society: Jacquemart Gielée’s *Renart le Nouvel* (around 1288), Rutebeuf’s *Renart le Bestourné*, and *Le Couronnement de Renart* (the end of the 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century), and then, *Renart le Contrefait* (1320-1340), written by a clerk from Troyes in the 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century.

Versions in other European languages came quickly: first Alsatian, Heinrich der Glichezâre’s *Reinhart Fuchs* around 1180 (inspiration for Friedrich Goethe’s 12-episode *Reineke Fuchs* in 1793), then Flemish author Willem’s *Van den vos Reynaerde* around 1250, and the Franco-
Italian *Rainardo e Lesengrino*, also from the late 13th century. After his success in France and adjacent countries, *Renart* crossed the English Channel. Chaucer’s *Nonne Preestes Tale*, otherwise known as “Chantecler and the Fox”, appeared in the 1390s. William Caxton’s English translation, *The History Of Reynard the Fox*, based on Willem’s version, was published in 1481. John Flinn attributes several of La Fontaine’s fables (1668-71) and descriptive characteristics not only to Aesop’s work but also to the *Renart* cycle, particularly the use of the term “compere;” the creation of a new family relationship through baptism; the kiss of peace; and the story of the wolf in the well, as well as that of Renart and the crow.32

Contemporary artists were hired to sculpt or paint scenes from the *Renart* cycle on the walls of private homes, as well as on the columns and capitals of cathedrals. Besides Notre-Dame-de-Strasbourg, the cathedral of Modena, Italy has stone sculptures based on the *Roman de Renart*. Joyous animal gargoyles, some depicting animals in the *Roman de Renart*, still adorn the outside of the cathedral in Strasbourg. The story of the fox and the cock is depicted on the portal of the cathedral of Amiens. In the Basilique-Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-de-Vézelay, built

between 1104 and 1215, a fox chases its prey around the base of the 7th column. Examples of Renart’s activities occupy the top section of the 12th century tympanum that remains of the collegial church of Saint-Ursin in Bourges, as noted in the Introduction. Gautier de Coinci (1177-1236), prior of a monastery in Vic-sur-Aisne, Picardy (and a trouvère who wrote lyrics recounting miracles attributed to Mary, the mother of Jesus) reproached priests in 1214 for having scenes of “Ysengrin et sa fame” (“Isengrin and his wife”) painted on the walls of their rooms, rather than choosing to have images of the Virgin painted in their chapels.

In the 13th century Renart extended his fame through exempla, or illustrative stories, provided in preaching manuals, e.g., those of Jacques de Vitry (1160-1240), bishop of Liège and of Acre. Grouped with older fables, the exempla ensured public reception of Renart’s stories.

**Sources of the Renart**

Scholars have noted numerous written sources, both specific texts and literary genres, for the Renart cycle, as well as sometimes highlighting oral tradition. One type or another is often promoted as being most important for the development of the cycle. Beginning in the

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33 “Les Miracles de Nostre Dame”--lyrics set to the tunes of popular ballads.


early 19th century, German researchers such as Jacob Grimm and Karl Voretsch attributed the tales to folklore arising from the popular imagination of that time, usually referring to possible German roots. Paulin Paris cited Aesop’s fables, Latin stories and troubadours, while his son, Gaston Paris, looked specifically at northern European folklore. Léopold Sudre thought that the tales came from Nordic folklore and imagination. Lucien Foulet, in his complex 1914 study, points out the likelihood of written, not folkloric or oral, sources for the Renart cycle. Robert Bossuusat agrees with Foulet, calling the Renart cycle the “fruit” of a Latin culture that hadn’t stopped developing in the monasteries since the Carolingian literary and religious renaissance. Jean Batany, writing 60 years after Foulet, however, replies that popular tradition and literary traditions had co-existed for centuries, and that the use of Latin had not prevented their constant interaction. Aron Gurevich, an historical anthropologist, postulates a medieval “popular” culture that

36 Flinn, Le Roman, 19, 23.

37 “‘une légende vraiment francique, encore plus allemande que la légende carolingienne’”--Bossuusat, Le Roman, 172.

38 Flinn, Le Roman, 23.

39 Foulet, Renard, 566.

40 Bossuusat, Le Roman, 172.

41 Jean Batany, “Renardie et asnerie : La Fontaine et la tradition médiévale” Europe 50, 515 (March 1972) 63.
linked the oral, folkloric culture of the laity to the learned, Christian and Latin culture of the clerical elite,\(^42\) thereby creating a kind of middle ground where ideas were exchanged. This argument avoids the sharp division seen by Le Goff between an “*inférieure*” and a “*supérieure*” culture.\(^43\) Alain Boureau comments that it is arbitrary to separate religious texts from popular texts from the 12\(^{th}\) century onward, because vernacular, secular literature showed evidence of legendary Christian themes due to the *esprit du temps* and the integration of Christianity in the fabric of everyday life.\(^44\)

Specific sources of *Renart* have been identified. One source, the cathedral school in Reims at the time of Bishop Hincmar (845-82), contributed a Latin version of the first century animal tales by Phaedrus. In the 11\(^{th}\) and early 12\(^{th}\) centuries, there was *Ecbasis captivi*, the story of the calf that escapes from the wolf with the aid of other animals; the *Ysengrimus*, the 1148 denunciation of the weaknesses of church hierarchy, where the wolf and the fox are named\(^45\) for the first time; and


\(^{43}\) Le Goff, “Culture Clericale,” 232.

\(^{44}\) Alain Boureau, L’Événement sans fin : Récit et christianisme au Moyen Age (Paris : Belles Lettres, 1993), 19.

\(^{45}\) Jean Batany suggests that the archetype of the lying trickster is identifiable: the second (937-996/999) and fourth—“le Mauvais”—(1012-1055) Fromonide
sections of Petrus Alphonsi’s 11th century *Disciplina clericalis*, a set of moralizing tales drawn from oriental examples. These texts ushered in a new tradition of comic beast epics. A Latin poem, “*Poenitentiarius asini*”, or “*Brunellus*,” written around the turn of the twelfth to thirteenth century, depicts the public confession of sins by the wolf, the fox and the ass—all characters in the *Roman de Renart*—thereby combining animals with religious practices.

The *Renart* tales are certainly not Aesopic fables with a moralizing summary, nor do they follow the allegorical parallels of bestiary animals (following the Greek *Physiologus* where each beast is assigned a role). The *Renart* tales comprise a transgressive parody of the literary epic and of contemporary society, with an eponymous animal “hero” who has two quests: one, an ongoing search for food, and the second, a desire to gain an advantage over his *compères*, sometimes for fun, sometimes being mean-spirited. Whether inspiring vague human parallels or precisely

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counts of Sens were named Reginardus/Rainardus/Renart. In plots against the archbishops of Sens and the kings of France, e.g., Robert II (996-1031), as well as their vassals, they came to represent resistance to the centralizing authority of the king. Batany also mentions a judicial assembly held at Varennes in 890 where both a “Renart” and a “Tibert” were in attendance. A “good” nephew named “Renart” (the abbot of Saint-Pierre-le-Vif) of the first count Renart of Sens may have contributed to a somewhat ambiguous portrait in oral tradition of characters named “Renart.” In “Renart et les modèles historique de la duplicité vers l’an mille,” *Proceedings: Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium, Münster 1979*, ed. Jan Goossens and Timothy Sodmann (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1981), 7-12.
naming and mocking specific institutions and social types,\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Renart} is sometimes regarded as \textit{sui generis}, with few other rivals in its class of beast epics.

A tradition of epic poetry in northern France inspired aspects of the \textit{Roman de Renart}. The \textit{chansons de geste} reflected the interests of the military aristocracy that began to establish itself after the disintegration of the Carolingian empire. Without a centralized state, with the exception of Christianity unified through Roman pontiffs and the local bishops and abbots, the knight remained the nobleman—or the brigand—\textit{par excellence}. The oral and written epic poetry that evolved during this period of French history favored his social values. In codified form, the poems represented the heroic ideals of the ruling chivalric class.\textsuperscript{47} The formulas are amply mocked in the \textit{Roman de Renart}, which relies on the systematic transgression of all social and political codes.\textsuperscript{48} In an ever-changing play of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characteristics, animals sometimes spur on their “horses” (\textit{“molt esperone son cheval,” Martin II, 645}). Yet some of the questions raised in the 10\textsuperscript{th} century \textit{Song of Roland} are still apt in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century and can be seen

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Henderson, “Animal Fables,” 162.
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\end{footnotesize}
in the *Roman de Renart*: How can a central authority tame the barons? Where does power reside? Where is loyalty due?  

**Authorship**

It is not known who originally wrote—nor those who copied—most of the 28 tales (31 episodes, following manuscript C); there were, perhaps, twenty separate authors, of varying skill levels. The two self-named authors are Pierre de Saint-Cloud and the Norman Richard de Lison. Pierre began the cycle with what is known as *alpha branche* II, containing five stories, some of which were borrowed from older fables, one that is his own. His name refers to a commune in Ile-de-France. Richard wrote the story, “*Les Vêpres de Tibert*”/“Tibert’s Vespers” (*alpha branche* XII), for his “connestable,” that is, the chief officer of a household or town. A third author refers to himself as a priest of La Croiz-en-Brie, near Troyes (“*Renart et le vilain Liétard*”/“Renart and the peasant Lietard”, *alpha branche* IX). As for the remainder of the tales, their authors may have come from one of several groups: clerics who had taken the lower orders, i.e., they had not yet been ordained deacons or priests, had limited liturgical authority, and may have worked in


aristocratic households as “chaplains,...archivists, court functionaries, secretaries, official readers;”\textsuperscript{51} second, \textit{jongleurs} who functioned as court entertainers \textsuperscript{52} (possibly Pierre de Saint-Cloud, given the lack of religious references in most of his tales); or, third, lay canons in one of the numerous schools associated with bishoprics (Chartres, Paris and Reims were among the most renowned\textsuperscript{53}). Dorothy Kullman says that “clerics” or “clerks” were generally trained laymen who worked for a monastery, or perhaps for a parish that belonged to a monastery. \textsuperscript{54} These men did not expect to have a career in the church, perhaps because of church rules, perhaps because, as Evelyn Birge Vitz notes, there was an abundance of clerics at the time of the writing of the earlier branches of the \textit{Roman de Renart} (1170-1205). \textsuperscript{55} The writers’ manipulation of versification and


\textsuperscript{52} Jean DuFournet, \textit{Le Roman de Renart, entre réécriture et innovation}, Medievalia No. 64 (Orléans: Paradigme, 2007), 10.


\textsuperscript{54} Dorothea Kullmann, “Réécritures expérimentales? Quelques reflexions sur le rôle de l’Eglise dans la production épique du XIIe siècle”, \textit{The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France}, ed. Dorothea Kullmann (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009), 77.

\textsuperscript{55}Evelyn Birge Vitz, “La liturgie, le \textit{Roman de Renart} et le problème du blasphème dans la vie littéraire au Moyen Age, ou les bêtes peuvent-elles blasphéméer?” \textit{Reinardus} 12 (1999): 222-3. In the \textit{Roman de Renart}’s later branches there are traces of bitterness against the Roman Church, perhaps due to an inability to obtain positions.
classical references in the *Roman de Renart* based on their study of rhetoric could have been seen as a contest to show their intellectual prowess or to provide the challenge of identifying allusions to current events or known personalities, such as saints.

Given the frequent references in many *branches* to Latin phrases, Church liturgies and rites, saints and relics, Cluniac Benedictine monks may have also written or copied stories. It is less likely that the Cistercian monks participated, as they followed a stricter interpretation of the Rules of St. Benedict, and their leader, Bernard of Clairvaux, decried the depiction of fanciful animals in churches. 56

One can only conjecture whether the authors wrote for their own amusement, 57 for fellow clerics, for the local aristocracy, 58 or for the travelers who may have stopped at a monastery for shelter. Lucien Foulet says that the *Roman de Renart* “a été écrit pour la foule et c’est la...” - Jean Dufournet, introduction, *Le Roman de Renart [Branches I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, X, XV]* (Paris : Garnier-Flammarion, 1970), 15.

56 Bernard, the saint and militant leader of church orthodoxy, spoke out against the use of animal images in churches. He may appear in the *Roman de Renart* as the ass who speaks sententiously and foolishly as the high priest.


most critics would agree that the Renart tales appealed to a wide range of people, starting with the clerics themselves, and not just “the crowd,” given the extensive popularity of the tales, and the number of longer (14) or partial (16) extant manuscripts.

Despite the sometimes bawdy and scatological aspects of the tales, the clerics would probably have encountered few restrictions on what they wrote for their own amusement. Combatting heresy, particularly the Waldensians and the growing Cathar movement in central and southern France, was at that time a greater concern of the Roman Church hierarchy than vernacular tales that posed no threat to orthodoxy, even while impugning weaknesses in local secular priests. R. Anthony Lodge and Kenneth Varty borrow from Mikhail Bakhtin in seeing the Renart cycle as a kind of carnival, one that functions as a “ritualized breaking of taboos [and] an authorized release of tension” from religious and feudal codes. One might conjecture that after a long day of copying cartularies (deeds), liturgical writings, and charters (official grants of rights and privileges), a cleric or canon might have

59 Foulet, Renard, 18. “The manuscript was written for the common people, and the common people have ensured its success.”

mixed in a parody of some of the human foibles observed among the nobility, the lay people or those claiming some form of religious life.

**The manuscript tradition**

Created over almost an 80-year period, the *Roman de Renart* is extant in three major manuscript families in extended, 30,000-line groups of poems rhymed in octosyllables, the same form as medieval vernacular hagiographical romances and the *chansons de geste* that glorified the warrior caste. Its complex manuscript tradition reflects its popularity, as well as the significant degree to which it was open to alteration by its copyists and *remanieurs*, those who chose the order and grouping of tales.

As Eugene Vance notes, “The tendency of the oral epic narrative... is to be inconclusive, to be open-ended, and to lead to new beginnings.”61 Aurelie Barre comments that writing in the Middle Ages maintained the variability of orality; any “hard” copy version was fluid, open to changes produced in oral versions, and its text could easily shift in a kind of “polyphony” 62--also noted by Jean Scheidegger63—o

61 Vance, *Roland*, 89.


63 Scheidegger points out that having multiple *branches* in multiple families telling the same story somewhat differently places *Renart* on a horizontal axis of stereography. A polygraphic vertical axis reflects the final version passed on in a manuscript that has been written, copied and arranged with others in a particular order and accessed by a reader. Introduction, *Dérision*, 18.
heteroglossia, a diversity of voices, as proposed by Mikhael Bakhtin. Later *remanieurs* made slight revisions—or major additions—to the stories, and compilers arranged *branches* into an order that made sense to them (e.g., *gamma* family manuscripts C and M that start with the birth of Renart), or supported a particular theme, e.g., the Chantilly manuscript, “*La Connaissance de Toutes Choses 1250,*” that utilizes a few *Renart* stories (manuscript K) as *exempla* to support the theme of a return to a Christian life.64

There are 14 mostly complete manuscripts and 16 partial manuscripts preserved in France, England, the U.S., Italy and the Vatican.65 Classification of the three major families of compilations and manuscripts was based on textual analysis completed in the late 19th century by Ernst Martin66 and Hermann Büttner.67 The sixteen partial manuscripts are incomplete and fragmentary, usually providing text of a


single branche that was probably important to a particular scribe or patron.

The first French compilation of Renart’s adventures in modern times was that of Dominique Méon in 1826. In his four-volume edition, 32 stories are gathered “comme un roman”—in the modern sense of the word—with a chronological order, transitions and references that do not exist in any single manuscript. Méon used all manuscripts available to him to produce a single reading, with manuscript C as a base. Méon’s work revived interest in medieval manuscripts, particularly the Renart cycle.

The first scholarly edition of the Roman de Renart that followed a particular family of manuscripts was that of Ernest Martin, published between 1882 and 1887. He used manuscript A (Bibliothèque Nationale française 20043, 13th century) with 15 branches as his main source, but with emendations from a variety of other manuscripts. A significant contribution made by Martin was in defining the families of manuscripts.

68 Fukumoto et al., introduction, xv.

69 Foulet, Renard, 98.

70 Méon’s work may have aided Renart’s return to respectability. Inclusion on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, the Roman church’s ecclesiastical prohibition of literary works, probably dated to the late 1500s or early 1600s in response to Protestant criticism of liturgical practices in the Roman church which aligned with Renart’s. This prohibition was lifted in 1843. Presence on the Index may have contributed to the lack of Renart editions during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries, not only a lack of interest in the tales.
(alpha, beta, and gamma), assigning sigla and numbering the branches in alpha family. This work continues to serve as the basis for research, both for its numbering and its mostly alpha text, written in northern France, i.e., Normandy and Picardy.

The work of Mario Roques on beta family manuscripts opened a new view of the cycle, as beta manuscripts include changes in episode contents, numbering, and, sometimes, saints. Roques used manuscript B (BNF 371, Cangé) as a base, along with shorter manuscripts K (Chantilly 472) and L (Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 3335) in beta family to produce a six-volume critical edition (1948-1963). The final branche, “Renart Empereur,” of manuscript B, the Cangé manuscript, was published in a critical edition by Félix Lecoy in 1999. Given a different 13th century base manuscript, its production in Ile-de-France, and the effects of different copyists and remanieurs, the ordering of the beta branches is altered from that of Martin and the alpha redactions.

Naoyuki Fukumoto, Noboru Harano and Satoru Suzuki (1983) chose to work on manuscript C (BNF 1579), Méon’s base manuscript, from family gamma, a 14th century hybrid of alpha and beta families,

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71 Fukumoto et al., introduction, xvi.


also from Ile-de-France. However, Fukumoto and his associates maintained the integrity of the gamma family, looking for clarifications only in the other gamma manuscript, M, in contrast to Méon who incorporated phrasings from the other manuscripts available to him at that time. Having an all-gamma edition allows for the consideration of differences in tone that start with the opening placement of a description of the fox as being born “evil,” rather than beginning with a trial that highlights ambiguous motivations and claims of truth. Extended commentary on religious practices, e.g., eating a host or selling a priest’s vestments is also notable.

A critical edition of the later, composite--i.e., similar in some aspects to alpha, some to beta, some to gamma manuscripts--14th century manuscript O (Bibliothèque Nationale française 12583) of the Roman de Renart has recently been published by Aurélie Barre. A later redaction--sometimes with original phrasing and word choices--“O” was the only one of the 14 major manuscripts that had not been accorded a critical analysis before 2010. Figure 2 (see Appendix H) of “La Mort et la procession de Renart,” appears on the first page, although the first story is that of Renart’s trial.74 In a shorter version (20,000 lines) than the

74 Barre, Renart, 3.
three major families of manuscripts, only 23 saints are invoked, and then only by the animals.

**Animals and expected behaviors**

Animals and their behavior have long been used to illustrate human foibles. The *Roman de Renart*, with 31 separate tales (*gamma* division of chapters, called *unités*\(^75\) rather than *branches* which contain multiple stories in *alpha* and *beta* families), was composed by a variety of writers who played with expected roles, using both animals and humans and reflecting the daily life that they observed. The *Physiologus* of the ninth century that assigned particular human characteristics to specific animals was imitated in the bestiaries that became popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Attributes such as “cleverness” for the fox became well known. The clever fox is a liminal figure that hides in the hedgerows and could represent either the disregarded voice of wisdom or the flatterer and libeler.\(^76\) A fox living by its wits may have been a sympathetic figure to the writers who were living by their intellect in monasteries, feudal courts and bishoprics.\(^77\) Translating observed

\(^75\) Fukumoto et al., introduction, xxxiv.

\(^76\) Batany, “Renardie et asnerie,” 69.

situations in daily life into animal adventures in vernacular literature may well have provided a recognizable and useful outlet for expressions of human desires or activities, especially for those living under ecclesiastical rules. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says,

> Animals offered … forms both dynamic and disruptive through which might be dreamt alternate and even inhuman worlds. In animal flesh could be realized some potentialities for identity that might escape the constricting limits of contemporary race, gender, or sexuality. Animals were fantasy bodies through which denied enjoyments might be experienced and foreclosed potential opened to exploration.  

The duality of human nature takes life in the creation of an alternate reality with animals placed into human situations and discourses (anthropomorphism) in alternation with a return to zoomorphic characteristics. Many instances of social commentary exist when the animals mimic legal or liturgical practices, providing parodies of the proceedings. Renart’s character may have allowed the clerics or celibate monks to dream of adventures, revenge or relationships, while commenting on society.

Jill Mann, when considering literary animals from Aesop to Reynard in England, says that animals “remove any expectations of psychological individuality or moral complexity... because their actions...

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can be assumed to be dictated by nature.”79 In a beast epic such as the *Roman de Renart*, where animals become the principal actors, they can easily receive the reader’s forgiveness for having eaten other animals—Renart eats the hen Pinte’s sister and four brothers, as reported at Renart’s trial in *branche* I—because of their animal nature. Being animals in an imaginary rural landscape, humor is as likely a reaction as amazement or disgust as a reaction when reading about Renart’s enjoyment of sex outside the limits of a sanctioned (same-species) coupling with Hersent the female wolf (in *branche* II, “Renart et la louve”) or with Fère, the lion queen (in “Renart Empereur”—*branche* XI, as well as the earlier “Siège de Maupertuis”—*branche* Ia).

Playing with established societal roles, all animals in the *Roman de Renart* are depicted as both important barons (*bers, pairs, bellatores*) in the lion’s court and simple characters searching for food and support in the forest. The humans with whom they interact are usually either *laboratores* or *oratores*, the other two parts of the *ordo*, the tri-partite concept of earthly life as a miniature of the heavenly kingdom.80 An


orator might be a respected monk (such as Bernard de Grantmont who hears Renart’s confession in “Renart médecin”-branche X) or might be an unlettered village priest, really a vilain, a laborator with a wife (branche XV), whose marriage was regarded as improper, especially after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.81

The animal bellator appears when King Noble the Lion and the other peers seek to bring Renart to justice from his “castle” (branche Ia—“Siège de Maupertuis”) or during the judicial duel between Isengrin and Renart (branche VI—“Le duel judiciaire”). An occasional reference to spurring on a horse mimics the actions of a hero of a chanson de geste. Naturally, the animals, especially Renart, overstep the bounds of individual action by flouting the two essential rules of knighthood, loyalty among nobles and goodness towards the weak, and so become recognized as examples of “renardie”.82

Economic and political changes, changes in religious life

The Roman de Renart is a conscious cultural and literary artefact of its time; it reflects and parodies that society and its literature. Building on the momentum of several moralizing antecedents discussed earlier,


82 Batany, “Renardie et asnerie,” 72.
the *Renart* cycle sprang up just before Philip II Augustus became king of France (1180) and began to centralize power decisively, as well as reclaim northern Frankish territories held by England, that is, Normandy, and the Anjou, Maine, and Touraine regions located south and west of Paris. Louis VII (1137-1180), his father, maintained a mostly peaceful reign in the areas surrounding Paris and Ile-de-France, while intervening where possible outside the royal demesne and participating in the second Crusade. In the *Roman de Renart* this is reflected in the character of the lion king, Noble. He is successful in his campaign against the Saracens (*branche* IX, “*Renart empereur*”), but his attempts to rein in his errant “baron,” i.e., Renart, are not always successful. He is ready to forgive a baron because of his “love” for him (Renart) or if an appropriate excuse (or ransom, as Hermeline offers in *branche* Ia, “*Le Siège de Maupertuis*”) were to be offered. In this way, *Renart* also sets up a parody of weak literary kings, such as Marc (*Tristan et Iseut*) and Arthur (the *matière de Bretagne*) who fail to control the actions of those nearest to them, particularly their wives.

83 The Franks wanted to see themselves as “noble,” as offspring of Trojan leaders from a far-off place and time.

84 “*Rois Nobles choisi le tresor, /Devant lui et d’argent et d’or. /Del avoir fu molt covoitoz*” v. 2063-65. King Noble chose the treasure in front of him and silver and gold that he had much coveted.
In the latter part of the 12th century, as a result of a greater level of peace under Philip Augustus and improvements in agriculture, the population began to grow, and living conditions became more tolerable. According to Georges Duby, the rate of progress between 1180 and 1220 has never been equaled in the lands that constitute modern France.85 One can see relative prosperity in the stories of the three somewhat comfortable peasant-farmers, Constant de Noes (“Renard et Tiecelin”, “La cour et l’escondit de Renart”), Bertaut (“Le partage de proies”) and Liétard (“Brun, Renart et Liétart”), with their small farms sheltering a few hens, geese, cows, and a cock. Cities as centers of commerce were just developing, and the bourgeois residents of towns were beginning to increase. However, the possibility of disette, the scarcity of food or famine, continued both for Renart and his companions in the countryside, as well as for those in the cities. Dufournet notes a terrible famine in western Europe in 1196-97.86

Despite the problems, the Roman de Renart (up until approximately 1205 in the earlier branches) places its characters in a kind of happy interregnum from the feudal relationships of the 12th and early 13th centuries. In the tales there is no explicit discussion of

lordship, although there is a general respect shown for Noble, the king. Renart provides the sole exception, similarly to the Counts Renart of Sens (see Note 45, page 22). One is reminded of the efforts made by the monks of Saint-Denis, especially under Abbot Suger (1081-1151), to elevate the importance of the French king and support a centralized and centralizing power. Their success was partially based on Suger’s reinterpretation of the relationship between the abbey and Louis VII as between the saint (not the abbey) and a feudal vassal, thus according to Louis VII’s kingship a special spiritual character.87

Monasticism thrived, a beneficiary of the renown of Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercians in the mid-12th century, combined with the large number (2,000) of “daughter” Benedictine communities of Cluny, the respect (or the possibility of a societal role) accorded to religious life, and the consequences of the monastic reform movements starting in the 11th century. Papal reforms clarified the responsibilities of religious life and encouraged poverty, chastity and obedience to Rome, while combatting simony, the search for prebends and control of investiture. Sanctifying religious life was linked to sanctifying the world: those called to religious life needed to give a good example of a holy life in light of their role as human intermediaries with the divine.

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Monks and monasteries play key roles in the *Roman de Renart*'s rural society, particularly in the story of Isengrin (and Renart) in the well (*branche* IV, “Ysengrin dans le puits”). The monastic structure of self-sufficiency fit well into a rural society, especially when an abbey controlled large tracts of arable or grazing land donated to it. Nobles seeking salvation via prayers for their souls often donated land to monasteries to honor patron saints, either of the monastery or their personal sainted hero. The importance of the soul at rest after death also attracted the presence and vows of older members of the warrior class who had spent their lives in slaughter and wished to do penance—which Renart proposes to do, but is not successful (*alpha branche* VI, “Le duel judiciaire”/”The judicial duel”) because of his animal penchant for eating the monastery’s hens.

**Christianity and society**

The Christianized society that gave birth to the *Roman de Renart* had begun to value intelligence, not just rote learning, to provide opportunities for economic growth, and to organize daily life. In Robert Bartlett’s view, this occurred thanks to the diminishing occurrence of petty warfare and Viking raids after the 11th century. In this European world of “peasant communities” during the Middle Ages Christianity

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provided a common language, a “certain global unity of forms of thought and speech between the 11th and 15th centuries,” outside of which no idiom would be successful for centuries. While the Christianization of many levels of society may have been superficial, with adherence to dogma surviving only at a very rudimentary level, Christianity gave medieval people the certainty of their essential place in history—as Christians, if not a particular ethnic group or nation, whose development was to come later. Christians were part of the ongoing plan of God leading to a New Jerusalem—the heavenly culmination of life on earth. Christians’ time on earth, in whatever station of life where they found themselves, was to be marked by a triumphant ending in another sphere. Those who had already achieved this status, i.e., the saints, were considered to be helpmates and guides.

The saints’ function in the medieval world was quite different from that of modern society. In the Middle Ages saints were regarded as “important intermediaries between God and their fellow humans,” as historian Joseph H. Lynch put it. Devotion to the “holy dead” was

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“particularly intense” throughout the Middle Ages, given a culture that, according to historical anthropologist Aron Gurevich, was “permeated with religious notions, with faith in the supernatural and in the power of magic.” The saint became a popular hero in medieval society, thanks in part to reminders from religious authorities, shared tradition, and oral and written descriptions that often resembled those of romance or warrior heroes in medieval society.

The construct of “saint” in the Middle Ages, “the creation of other people’s perceptions and expectations,” could be seen as flowing from the immense power and influence of the Roman Church. The Church was an economic power, a political force and a sociological phenomenon, besides offering a sense of place in the universe and the hope of salvation. The Roman Church also provided a measure of administrative and societal stability throughout recurrent bouts of “private” warfare led by greedy warlords in a society with weak, unstable central governments. It was monks in Aquitaine who initiated the first

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93 Gurevich, Medieval Popular Culture, 222.


95 Lynch, Medieval Church, 256.
periods of peace, e.g., the peace (“Pax Dei”), and then truce of God (“Treuga Dei”) that forbad warfare during the weekend, on holy days and during harvest, with the support of local bishops and some of the aristocracy.96

In the physical world, as in the Renart cycle, the symbols and ceremonies of Christianity were everywhere: buildings, monastic estates, associated personnel who were “recognizable ... by their tonsure and clothing”.97 Time was structured around Sundays, feasts, and saints’ days; the year was marked out by the great religious festivals, especially, for Renart, Ascension and Pentecost (return of good weather), Easter and Christmas. In the Renart cycle there is acknowledgement of temporal as well as of spiritual power, e.g., going to Rome to see the pope as a last resort for the sinner.

The religious practices that overlaid society, a pervasive “presence of salvation”98 in everyday thought, easily became a leitmotif even in

96 Dominique Barthélemy, L’Ordre seigneurial XIe-XIIe siècle (Paris : Seuil, 1990), 57.

97 Lynch, Medieval Church, 302.

medieval beast literature. In the *Roman de Renart* communicating with
the sacred is highly regarded--although its methods are often parodied.

It almost goes without saying that during the Middle Ages in a
Christianized Europe social bonds were immixed with religious meaning.
For example, the most valued relationships in the *Roman de Renart*
appear to be those of *compère* and *commère*, that is, a godfather or a
godmother, religious relationships established in the Christian baptismal
ceremony. These appear at least four dozen times in the *alpha* family of
manuscripts.99 This spiritual kinship created a new, close network of
friends and allies. It was regarded as so real that the medieval
restrictions against incest applied100--not that Renart would honor that
pledge. Renart, often cynically, calls his enemy Isengrin the wolf
“*compère*” when he wants a favor, as when Renart tricks Isengrin into
lowering himself into a well (*branche* IV, “*Ysengrin dans le puits*”) in order
to free himself. Hersent, the wife of the brutish Isengrin, refers to a close
relationship of *commère* and *compère* with Renart before enjoying sexual
relations (*branche* II, “*Renart et Hersent*”). This episode is key to the


100 Lynch, Medieval Church, 277.
intrigue in much of the remainder of the Renart cycle, because the enduring enmity of Isengrin towards Renart is based on it. The animals in the Roman de Renart make great use of the saints, often invoking a saint’s name when approaching a new activity. The greatest number of intercessions to saints in the Roman de Renart appears in the earlier stories, the 19 branches (alpha numbering) believed to have been composed between 1170 and 1205. Invocations to sanctioned cultural and spiritual heroes of the time, either as “foi que doi” or “par” to a particular saint, sometimes contrast strongly with the occasional raunchy scene, as in the later branche XXII, “Le labourage en commun”/ “Working together.” Given their frequent appearances, one might wonder about the function of saints in these sometimes ribald tales that depict a society often held together by connivance and animal vitality. Are the saints’ names used in a spirit of irony, as they appear in parodies of social structure? Do they reflect the esprit du temps and the training received by the clerical authors? Should their use be dismissed as “insincere”? Were they used to assure acceptance of the written

101 An appeal is made to Saint Sampson, a Breton abbot, by king Connin (a name with multiple meanings, ranging from that of a Breton warlord, to “rabbit,” to a part of the female anatomy) as he prepares to mutilate the hide of three animals for parts for his “sculpture.”

102 Gabriel Bianciotto, introduction, Le Roman de Renart, Lettres Gothiques (Paris: Librairie Générale française, 2005), 44.
tales by ecclesiastical authorities? Examining the background and popular legends of the saints can offer a deeper understanding of the late 12th and early 13th century *Roman de Renart* and its use of saints.

The development of the construct of sainthood and ways in which saints came to be seen as “alive, active and interested in the welfare of their fellow human beings”\textsuperscript{103} –as reflected in the *Roman de Renart*, and its contrast with other western European tales of the fox—will be examined in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 will also consider the types of saints who are invoked in the *Roman de Renart* and possible sources and reasons for their inclusion.

\textsuperscript{103} Lynch, Medieval Church, 268.
Chapter 2

The name of the saint and the horizon of expectations

The number of saints invoked in the medieval Roman de Renart and the possible reasons for the use of their particular names are topics that have not yet been addressed when examining the framework that underlies the Renart cycle. The educated clerics (and, possibly, court entertainers and jongleurs) in northern France who produced the Roman de Renart drew from a variety of literary sources ranging from the courtly romances (of which Tristan, a trickster, was a popular hero) and chansons de geste, to ancient and contemporary fables. There were also liturgical texts, tales with religious references (e.g., the Ysengrimus), martyrologies, and hagiographies meant to inspire, edify and inform their audience. Evidence of their intention to draw from the first group is provided in the opening discourse of branche II, believed to be the first (1170-1174?) written down in an extant manuscript:

Seigneurs, oï avez maint conte,
Que maint conterre vous raconte
Comment Paris ravi Elaine,
Le mal qu’il en ot et la paine,
De Tristan que la Chievre fist,
Qui assez bellement en dist
Et fabliaus et chançons de geste.
Romanz d’Yvain et de sa beste
My lords, you have heard many tales,
That many a storyteller has told you
Of how Paris took Helen,
The trouble and the pain that he had from this,
Of Tristan about whom La Chèvre wrote,
Who talked about him quite beautifully
And fabliaux and chansons de geste
Stories of Yvain and his beast
Many others all over the land.¹

Here there are opening references to a variety of genres and stories,
which the author assumes are familiar to his audience: the beginning of
the Trojan War (caused by a man desiring a woman); the adventures of
the amorous trickster, Tristan, developed from the matière de Bretagne,
(with a reference to the Renart²); Chrétien de Troyes’ courtly romance of
Yvain and his lion (1173); the short, comic fabliaux popular during the
Middle Ages; the deeds of noble warriors recited in the chansons de
geste. The likelihood of oral transmission of stories is noted by terms
such as “raconte.”³ This prelude is directed to an aristocratic audience,
“seigneurs,” whom Paul Wackers believes to be the most likely audience

¹ All translations are my own.

² “Tristan set mot de Malpertuis,” (“Tristan shows much from Maupertuis”) in
wikisource.org/wiki/Tristan_Béroul. Maupertuis is the name of Renart’s
foxhole, sometimes referred to as a castle.

³ However, Jean Scheidegger sees such “marques d’auralité” as stylistic ways of
awakening or holding the reader’s attention. Dérision, 155.
for the Renart cycle, although the term might also be one of ironic effect directed towards an audience in the marketplace, as well as to clerics.

In effect, the narrator, here assumed to be Pierre de Saint-Cloud, is establishing a horizon of expectations for the reader or listener, as would a jongleur introducing his tale in the marketplace or a ménestral in an aristocratic assembly. This speech would be an extension of the narrator's thoughts and his expression in the social domain, wherever that might be—in an ecclesiastical institution, in an aristocratic court, or with a diverse public on a market day. The individual writer/narrator assumes that there is a social or collective understanding of his or her references, a sharing of meaning, drawn from “memorial strands” that comprise the “vast memoria” that Wlad Godzich postulates as existing in oral societies such as that of medieval France, where a select few were literate. Providing the common, underlying, cultural and literary type

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7 Godzich, foreward, to From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages by Eugene Vance, Theory and History of Literature, vol. 47, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xv.

8 Godzich, foreward, xiv.
and style references assumes a kind of dialogical relationship with the reader/listener who adopts the proper frame of mind for understanding the stories which are about to be told. Implied is an added relationship between the literary world created by the *Roman de Renart* and that of the reader or listeners’ everyday life, one that would include references to religious practices or to saints. For readers of later eras, that horizon of expectations might be different, and possibly more difficult to establish, as meanings that may have been apparent to many a 12th century or early 13th century listener/reader—present through hypertextuality or references—might lost without further acquaintance with medieval literature or culture.

In another prologue, that of the fourth *alpha branche* (1178), “Isengrin and Renart in the Well,” a different speaker, author, or copyist alludes to a second horizon of expectations, that of a contemporary religious culture:

*Qar je sai bien, ce est la pure,*
*Que de sarmon n’avés vos cure*
*Ne de cors seint oïr la vie.*

(Martin IV, 3-5)

Because I know well, it is the truth,
That you don’t care to hear a sermon

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Or the life of a holy saint.

This opening may qualify as an advertisement alerting the listener/reader that the Renart tale to follow will not be boring, as a sermon might be, nor will it repeat expected values similar to those preached in church or found in the many edifying *vitae* that circulated at that time. There is an assumption that it was natural at that time to preach of or make references to a saint. As the Bollandist scholar Hippolyte Delehaye says, “In the Middle Ages the whole populace was interested in the saints. Everyone invoked them, paid them honor and loved to sing their praises.” While Delehaye’s statement may be hyperbolic, it does reflect a culture that used religious heroes for inspiration.

Amy V. Ogden points out that the lives of the saints constituted an important part of the literature enjoyed by the educated and noble classes. Although varying in length, rhetoric and narrative conventions from the courtly romances of the period, the authorship of the Lives of the saints was similar to that of the romances—as well as that of the

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11 Since the time of the Counter-Reformation, the Bollandists, a small group of Jesuit priests in Belgium—now including historians—have devoted themselves to examining the legends and stories of saints in a search for a factual basis. Their published works consist of the *Acta Sanctorum (Acts of the Saints)*, begun in 1643, and the *Analecta Bollandiana*, a journal of critical hagiography published since 1882.


Roman de Renart—either monks or men who had taken the lower orders of the diaconate and who worked in chancelleries, abbeys or houses of the well-to-do.

An “esprit de critique, de moquerie et de satire,” i.e., a mocking, satiric attitude toward human weaknesses—sometimes ascribed to the French nation and present from the beginning of the Renart cycle—would not ignore religious resources. Indeed, Jean Leclerq ascribes a certain sense of humor, drawn from literary sources, to monks as a regular psychological trait that balanced their normal seriousness. A sometimes austere monastic life did not preclude humor or imagination—characteristics that also indicated a detachment from everyday concerns. As a result, a comic twist often overlays references to religious subjects, whether saints, liturgical rites, or customs, adding layers of meaning to the text of the Roman de Renart. An example would be the ironic sermons directed to or about Renart before a sacrament such as confession or final rites, along with the occasional, purported “relic” to be venerated in the stories. However, it is invocations to saints that

14 Flinn, Renart, 159.


16 There are two “sermons” on the part of well-meaning animals (Bernart, the ass, at Renart’s premature funeral in branche XVII, and Hubert the kite who is eaten in branche VII), as well as a few references to fake relics, either of Saint
“sanctify” the text regularly, mostly factually, sometimes ironically, and sometimes sardonically.

In an example of the latter tone drawn from *branche* XI, “Droïn/Renart Empereur,” Droïn the sparrow makes a request of Renart for advice on what to do for his nine fledglings who have been afflicted with gout, a disease usually encountered only by the well-to-do who could afford to eat rich foods:17

> ‘Renart’ fait il, ‘or m’enseigniez Comment mes enfans garisiez.’
> ‘Droïn fait il, ‘par seint Omer, Tu les feras crestiener. Sitost con bautissiez seront, James ce cest mal ne carront.’
> (Martin XI, 869-74)

‘Renart’ he says, “then tell me How you will cure my children.’
‘Droïn,’ he responds, ‘by Saint Omer, You will have them Christianized. As soon as they are baptized, T his illness will never trouble them.’

Saint Omer had a reputation for miracle cures. Renart’s response violently satirizes the mingling of secular and religious definitions of a “cure.” It may refer to Saint Omer’s energetic efforts to re-christianize

Saintes in *branches* VI and X, and to those of the presumed martyr to Renart’s hunger, the hen Coupée, in *branche* 1b.

17 These verses point to a certain sympathy for Renart and a lack of it for those animals who are tricked as a result of their own actions.
Artois and Flanders, baptizing many. However, Renart’s method of sanctifying the fledglings is to eat each one, definitely removing their health problems in a diabolical, yet practical way to assuage his hunger. While most invocations to saints in the *Roman de Renart* do not reflect such a virulent link between Christianizing pagans and killing them, it could certainly be noted that in the history of Christianity, sometimes the effort to bring the word of God to groups of non-believers lacked human kindness. 18 Perhaps this was true in the case of Saint Omer. In any event the author of this *branche* was gifted in rhetoric, and apparently disillusioned with the veneer of Christianity that he saw touted as a “cure” for all evils. Saint Omer provided the means to express his feelings.

No study of the role of the saints in the *Roman de Renart* has been made as yet. It will be shown that that the saints who populate the stories of the Roman de Renart are used in three ways: first, as textual invocations, whether from an animal or a human; second, in references to religious sites, often those associated with sacred sites; and third, as names of minor characters, generally providing an ironic dimension to the character. As a prolegomenon to discussion of how specific saints were called upon in these profane tales of animals, this chapter will

examine how saints are usually invoked in the *Renart* as well as its medieval continuations and translations, and identify the types of saints and their possible textual and physical sources. In the course of this study minor characters named for saints and those saints whose appellations are given to places (e.g., Saint-Martin de Blaagnie, a parish in Normandy) or feasts (that of Saint John the Baptist on June 23, the start of summer) will be identified only briefly, while references to religious sites of some renown will be considered in order to place the site reference in the context of the situation.

In an example of a saint reference that functions on multiple intertextual and geographic levels, in “Renart fools Roënel and Brichemer” (Martin X) Renart makes a reference to Saint Remacle when he wishes to trick Roënel into entering a trap by promising that powerful relics are kept there:

*Ge ne quit pas qu’en tote France
Ait reliques de tel puissance
Ne ou aviegn tel miracle,
Neïs as poisons seint Romacle.*

(Martin X, 419-22)

In all of France I do not believe
That there are relics of such power
Nor able to accomplish such miracles,
Not even the waters of Saint Remacle.

The author (from Normandy or Picardy) or copyist of this *branche* situates the action in an area of northeast France or Flanders, close to
Therouanne (Martin X, 284). The fountains at Saint Remacle’s nearby monastery, Stavelot, were known for working miracles. Making such a reference would have resonated with its original local audience given its *habitus*. What a particular saint’s name signified to its authors, to its copyists, to its contemporary listeners and readers, therefore fit within the horizon of expectations that had evolved in pockets of Western Europe over several centuries, nourished by liturgical rites, the names and lives of saints, either heard or read, and their ongoing repetition.

*Foi que [je] doi: Invoking or referencing a saint*

Looking at how the animals and humans in the *Roman de Renart* usually call upon a saint, i.e., the wording used before the name of a saint, enables understanding of how the saints “functioned” in the *Roman de Renart*—outside of usually providing a rhyme. This is a first step in understanding what meaning is held in the invocation of the name of a saint. Calling upon a saint either by using “par” (“by”) or “foi que [je] doi” (“by the faith that I owe to...”) is not outward, performative speech that denotes some internal or spiritual action, such as “I believe” or “I agree...” Nor are these expressions oaths that call upon a higher power as a witness. Rather, in the *Roman de Renart* these invocations are constative, declarative utterances, in J.L. Austen’s formulation, made

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with historical or cultural references in mind. As such, an evaluation of their semiotics carries more meaning than a moral evaluation of whether or not the human or animal is “sincere” when making the invocation. It is from the former point of view that the names of the saints will be examined—as signs whose interpretants and authors provided meanings to the invocations.

In an example from “Renart’s Trial” (Martin I), Renart finally shows up at King Noble’s court after tricking the king’s messengers, Brun the bear and Tibert the cat, by appealing to their respective desires for honey or mice. Once in court, he defends himself by calling upon Saint George, the model soldier and saint:

“..Mes foi que doi deu et saint Jorge
G’ai tote chenue la gorge...
Vels sui, si ne me puis aidier,
Si n’ai mes cure de plaidier :
Peche fet qui a cort me mande.»
(Martin I, 1265-68)

“...But by the faith that I owe to God and to Saint George, my muzzle has been whitened by age, I’m old, I can’t help myself, I no longer wish to defend myself in court. He sinned who brought me to court.”

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Although the cult of Saint George was approved in 494, it spread rapidly during the time of the crusades when the Renart cycle was written.²¹ Calling upon Saint George allows Renart to testify to his loyalty to King Noble and to his own claimed status as an “old” warrior who deserves extra consideration.²²

The semiological system evidenced by the naming or invoking of saints is present in almost all branches of the Roman de Renart,²³ often in particular instances that refer to vitae or legends.²⁴ Links are established between the text and persons who are no longer in the contemporary world of the Renart’s authors but accepted as being relevant and interested, i.e., the saints. Leclerq says that the saints, through their cults, were seen as “intimate friends and living examples.”²⁵ This is probably a most positive interpretation of the cults

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²¹ Giorgi, Le Petit livre, 244.

²² The claim of elderly status because of his white muzzle/beard is clearly a stretch, as most red foxes have whitish muzzles and undersides. University of Michigan, Animal Diversity Web, “Vulpes vulpes,” accessed April 29, 2013, http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/Vulpes_vulpes.

²³ See Appendix A for a chart of all branches with saints in the three major redactions. Asterisks indicate writing in the first (*) or second (**) period. Branches are ordered following gamma manuscripts’ unités, due to their division of stories within branches.

²⁴ A general kind of All Saints’ petition does appear in 34 instances in eleven of the episodes: sains, sains Dies, sains du Paradiss, sains a Rome, sainz de Rome/Romme, sainz Dieu, sainz Belleant/ Biauliant (Bethlehem), sainz c’on quiert/prie a Ronme, sainz Galice, seins Deu/Dieu, trestos les seins de France.

²⁵ Leclerq, The Love of Learning, 195.
of the saints, as the Renart shows a sometimes mocking attitude, inverting societal piety centered on saints.

Nonetheless, according to Michel Pastoureau, medieval analogical thinking established a link between something obvious and something hidden; between a name or a relic and someone who had a place beyond the grave alongside the eternal.26 The naming of a saint opened the door to a medieval understanding of an ongoing relationship with a deceased person, one whose virtuous life allowed him or her to communicate directly with God, while relics (bodily or of possessions) remained visible on earth. A relationship with a powerful saint, so constructed by the people, reassured them that there was hope, no matter the difficulties that they faced.27 Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell argue, along with the Bollandists, that a saint should be seen as ahistorical, as “the creation of other people’s perceptions and expectations.”28 Although dead, this person remains part of the continuity of life. Given this status, contrary to past scholarly indifference, the names of the saints

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may function as more than rhymes in the *Renart*, even if a saint’s name may equally serve that purpose.\(^{29}\) Just as the lives of the saints often present animals in narrative, natural or miraculous scenes, placing them in the context of situations that they might inhabit in the life of the faithful,\(^{30}\) the *Renart* takes the saints and places them in the animal-dominated textual society. The name of such a saint, when called upon, is often one who could assist with the situation, and, in the case of the *Renart* cycle, add meaning to the text.

In the two groups of *branches* written principally at the end of the 12\(^{\text{th}}\) century (up to 1180 and 1180-1205), seventeen of the nineteen *branches* mention at least one saint. In the final group, 1205-1250, which consists mostly of adaptations, *remaniements*, of earlier tales, one-half (five) of the *branches* include at least one invocation to a saint. It appears that the belief in the importance of invoking a saint evolved, as it was more common in the earlier tales. In addition, changes in the names of the saints invoked sometimes occurred in the *gamma* manuscripts produced by two 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century copyists, possibly showing shifts in

\(^{29}\) See Chapter 4 for the example of Primaut, Isengrin’s brother, calling upon Saint Germain. While the ending determines the rhyme, calling upon a local, i.e., Parisian, holy person as his witness, is often the operating factor in a *gamma* manuscript.

cultural memes as these saintly units of cultural references were adapted to a new scriptorium, a new era, or a new copyist.

In all, 64 saints are invoked in the often bawdy fox tales that thematically focus on ongoing quests for food, revenge, or tricks, as well as attempts to maintain order and peace on the part of King Noble and others. The process followed for identifying saints was: 1) every saint mentioned, along with liturgical references, from the three major critical editions, was written down on a list; 2) these were organized alphabetically, and by story; 3) background on every saint was researched in several sources; 4) the original Old French text of episodes was read to understand whether the first choice of a saint was appropriate; 5) additional saints were researched in order to match incidents in their vita or passio with a particular episode in the Renart.

Including saints in the Renart adds a “sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities,” in a similar manner to the discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin regarding Rabelais’s work. The “turning-about,” the shifts from high to low culture that Bakhtin described, had a life in the Renart cycle as well, where there are multiple shifts in register, often depending upon which type of literature is being parodied, courtois,

31 See Appendix B for a listing of the saints and where they appear.

epic, or fabliaux.33 Pointed satire directed at a particular cult may be targeting examples of an exaggerated form of piety or the sometimes heavy hand of Church hierarchy. Nonetheless, the frequent inclusion of saints may also point to an effort to ensure acceptance of the tales within the walls of the monastery or offices of a bishopric, while acknowledging the pervasive appearance of saints’ names on church buildings, in prayers for cures or miracles or in names of towns in northern France.

A semiotic reading of the saints in the Renart texts sometimes demands further investigation to clarify which saint is invoked, due to homonymy. Depending upon the situational context, a different saint bearing the same name may have been cited.34 The 35 appeals to “Marie” often refer to the virgin mother of Jesus. However, it seems that some invocations refer to the 5th century prostitute and subsequent ascetic, Saint Mary the Egyptian (Marie l’Égyptienne), whose statue was erected in the church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois.35 These invocations will be examined in Chapters 3 and 4. Saint Mary Magdalene is another possible subject of an invocation, but stories of her life do not mesh as


34 Germain, James, Julian, Marcel, Mary, Paul, Simon, Sylvester are saints for whom more than one individual may be represented.

well as those of Saint Mary the Egyptian with situations in the *Renart*

cycle.\(^{36}\)

Another example of homonymous saints is that of Paul

(Po/Pol/Pox), who generally represents the apostolic missionary well-

known to modern readers. However, the church on the Rue Saint-

Antoine in Paris’ Marais district has been ascribed to a hermit named

Paul.\(^{37}\) This later Paul was considered the “first” of the “Desert

Fathers” \(^{38}\) by Saint Jerome, and included in his *Vitae patrum (Lives of

the Fathers)*. While one cannot discount the possibility that church

leaders at the time may have been thinking of the second Paul when

naming the church, historian Aviad Kleinberg, as well as others,\(^{39}\) believe

that this Paul was the product of St. Jerome’s imagination. Kleinberg

adds that his remains were “invented” in the 12\(^{\text{th}}\) century and

\(^{36}\) The medieval Mary Magdalene, a fusion of several Marys, became known for a

miraculous sea voyage (as were St. Brendan and St. James the Great) to

Marseilles with Martha and Lazarus. Thirteenth century disputes over which

monastery had her “true” relics occurred between Vézelay and Saint-Maximin

near Aix.


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\(^{38}\) Christian ascetism became a way of life in the late 200s and early 300s when

hermits and nuns chose to live lives of extreme simplicity, sacrifice and holiness

in the deserts of Egypt. Some of their writings were circulated as the *Sayings of

the Fathers* (in Benedicta Ward, *Signs and Wonders*, III-15). Their life style and

informal gatherings became the model for Western monasticism (in Lynch, *The

Medieval Church*, 18).

\(^{39}\) Jacques Voisenet, *Bestiaire chrétien: L’imagerie animale des auteurs du Haut

Moyen Age (Ve-Xle s.)* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1994), 49.
transferred to Constantinople, then to Venice during the Fourth Crusade. This second Paul’s currency in the High Middle Ages probably led to renardian invocations in some instances that refer to a monk or a monk’s life (or as a nod to the church on the rue saint Antoine).

**Use of saints’ names for characters**

Besides those saints invoked, either for rhyming purposes or to add cultural references to a situation, hagiographical, cultural or historical intertextuality may be present in the use of a particular name for an animal friend or foe. Some of the names of minor characters can be identified as abbots or bishops, either contemporary or from the 600s—a popular era for ecclesiastical French saints, probably due to their being named in martyrologies used in the Middle Ages. For example, Frobert the grasshopper may refer to the founder and abbot of Montier le Celle (d. 688). As Frobert is a small, but powerful adversary of Renart, the bestiary tradition is also invoked. Hubert the kite—a type of hawk, but a rapacious bird that feeds on carrion—foolishly


41 Voisenet, *Bestiaire chrétien*, 39. The plague of locusts visited upon the Egyptians in Exodus is an example of the strength of the insect.

remonstrates with Renart during the latter’s confession of his deeds. Given that he becomes a meal for Renart, a double comic inversion may be intended for the first bishop of Liège (656-727), both as patron of huntsmen and as cleric. Bernard, the patient, gullible ass and high priest of Noble’s court, possibly provides a reference to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), the leader of the Cistercians who competed with the Cluniacs for dominance in the Benedictine order. Although highly regarded among the church hierarchy—and canonized in 1174—Bernard’s preaching and personal habits were savagely attacked in the 1148 *Ysengrimus*, the inspiration for several stories in the early branches of the *Renart* cycle. So the *Renart* places Bernard in a position of authority, but has him acting or speaking foolishly.

The use of saints’ names for minor characters thus may have been an extension of the “constitutive” intertextuality that Hans Robert Jauss sees as basic and essential to the medieval reader who enjoyed the occasional “perception of difference” that would have added an element of discovery to the reading. The *Renart* cycle certainly provided ample opportunities for medieval readers to bring their own horizons of expectations to play in their reception of this work, especially among the


educated clerics for whom familiarity with the church hierarchy and saints was a daily fact of life.

**The practice of invoking the name of a saint**

As Felice Lifshitz’s research has shown, the regularity of invocations to saints in northern French religious institutions dates to a decree from the 817 church-state council of Aachen. It covered all religious communities in the lands controlled by the Frankish emperor, Louis the Pious, and declared: “At Chapter, let the Martyrology be read first and verses recited...” A martyrology, a listing of the names of saints—not only martyrs--to be honored on a particular day, then became essential. Its use grew out of a belief in the ability of names to transmit holy power. Indeed, Louis and his counselor, Saint Benedict of Aniane, had more than religious purposes in mind when formulating this rule. Louis believed that imperial unity, threatened at that time, could be maintained if religious communities engaged in uniform prayer services (i.e., the same saint invoked at the same time on a given day). “One wholesome usage for all monasteries,” i.e., the Benedictine Rule,

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also became the only approved form, supporting Benedict’s interest in both liturgical and institutional uniformity. 47

At a time when there was an embargo on the translation of Roman relics (an embargo that was lifted by Pope Paul I during the 760s, but reinstated in 774), a “desire for routes of access to the realm of divine power”48 found relief in name-centered piety. Naming a saint was a “portable and efficient and infinitely replicable approach to harnessing the power of a saint.”49 By the late 12th century the saints, named in hagiographic narratives or invoked in litanies that were read or sung in liturgy, marked the life of the Christian in the Middle Ages.50 In place of a distant, abstract deity, the saints were both “intimate and accessible,”51 still active among the living through their miracles.

**The litanies and martyrologies**

While praying to individual saints was a practice from the earliest days of Christianity, Felice Lifshitz does not believe that publicly invoking only the saints was a practice that existed before the 7th century.52


48 Lifshitz, *Name of the Saint*, 76.

49 Lifshitz, *Name of the Saint*, 100.


51 Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 73.

However, repetitive supplications for supernatural help did exist in the early Middle Ages. The practice of a “litany” (“litaneo, to invoke repeatedly in prayer) arose from the call for prayers of supplication by Bishop Mamert of Vienne in 470 CE., at a time of unusual natural calamities (earthquakes, fires, wolves). Mamert gathered his congregation for special prayers to God and the saints for help with their lives and their crops. The prayers were addressed to the persons of the Christian Trinity, to Mary, the mother of Jesus, to the twelve apostles and then to early Christian martyrs. Their prayers were deemed successful. Supplications to the saints were subsequently performed in processions during Rogation (rogare=to ask for humbly) Days, the three days preceding the feast of the Ascension, 40 days after Easter, and, therefore, in prime spring growing season, a time when hopes were high for success in the fields.

Michael Lapidge traces the regular use of litanies as transferring to the British Isles and from there being re-introduced to France around the second half of the 8th century. Inclusion in one of the litanies of the saints, generally those characterized as being the “lesser” litanies (the


“greater” one was attached to the Easter season) and read around the time of Rogations, may have ensured the importance of certain saints. With a large number of saints, and a limited number of days in the year, choices were made regarding whom to honor with intercessions at Mass and during monastic offices. Upon examination, several Latin litanies contain the names of more than a dozen of the saints from the Roman de Renart.55 In one specific litany, the Egbert Pontifical from the second half of the 10th century (Paris BNF lat.10575), twenty renardian saints are included,56 testifying to their ongoing top-of-mind awareness among listeners, given that the number of possible saints to be honored had numbered in the thousands by the end of Charlemagne’s reign.

The expansion of daily martyrologies, i.e., the lists of saints to be honored, was a way to organize those recognized, especially after the 9th century Aachen requirement. By that time both martyrologies and litanies of the saints were widely used in France, for private devotions and during public processions. Several martyrologies were available to religious institutions, including two from the late 6th century: the list of pseudo-Jerome, notable for its exclusion of most Roman saints; and that

55 Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints, ed. Michael Lapidge.

of Bede, notable for its exclusion of most British and Irish saints, but also its historicized approach.\textsuperscript{57}

However, the principal martyrrology used in France and Belgium during the Middle Ages was composed by the monk Usuard at Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris around 865.\textsuperscript{58} Its popularity was due both to its selection of saints (including early martyrs, Merovingian bishops, and other local saints) and to its inclusion of a geographical indication and a short description of the saint’s virtues and experiences, appropriate for daily consideration. It was widely used throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in northern France and present-day Belgium.\textsuperscript{59} It may have been a key resource for many clerical writers, as almost 2,000 saints are named, including 45 of the 61 saints in the \textit{Roman de Renart}.\textsuperscript{60}

The Russian medievalist Aron Gurevich remarks that the veneration of saints set down deep roots in France, but not in Germany, where few local saints were honored.\textsuperscript{61} This could possibly have been the result of the nature of the late antique Roman, and then Christian,

\textsuperscript{57} Lifshitz, \textit{Name}, 128.

\textsuperscript{58} Lifshitz, \textit{Name}, 129.

\textsuperscript{59} Lifshitz, \textit{Name}, 129.

\textsuperscript{60} Usuard, “\textit{Martyrologium per anni circulum},” in Jacques Dubois, \textit{Le Martyrologe d’Usuard: texte et commentaire} (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), 147-364.

\textsuperscript{61} Gurevich, \textit{Medieval Popular Culture}, 77.
domination of what had been eastern Francia. The Roman gods and heroes may have ceded their places in public consciousness to the saints. Hippolyte Delehaye notes that the cults of the saints were once denounced as extensions of pagan heroes, especially in the early days of Christianity, given that the exploits and virtues depicted of saints often mirrored those of Greek and Roman heroes, i.e., bravery and superhuman ability to withstand pain.

**The historical evolution of sainthood**

The first group of Christians to be honored as saints were those who, in the first three centuries of the current era, had confirmed by their death both their “personal heroism and the truth of the Christian message”. In Guy Philippart’s formulation, these important “friends of God” would be people who had proved their friendship through the blood of martyrdom. As unjust victims, their murders created a moral imbalance that their community corrected by ascribing power to them.

In the early fourth century a new group emerged: strict ascetics, often those “desert fathers” who renounced “social life and comfort for

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solitude, self-mortification, and religious devotion.”\textsuperscript{65} Then, after the fourth century, when Christian life became less threatened, bishops and abbots who were leaders of religious communities\textsuperscript{66}--and who had specific religious stature in the structure of the church--were favored with approved cults.\textsuperscript{67} The clerical authors and copyists of the \textit{Roman de Renart} chose many of these saints for invocations by the animals and humans in this beast epic.

In general, a cult of prayers and memorial actions to honor or call upon a deceased individual deemed “holy” could start and grow in any area of society. Charlemagne began the process of controlling the development of local cults in 789, ordering that "the false names of martyrs and the uncertain memorials of saints should not be venerated."\textsuperscript{68} Yet the first “official” Roman canonization did not occur until 933.\textsuperscript{69} Two centuries later in 1173, Pope Alexander III began the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Standard College Dictionary} (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1963), 84.
\textsuperscript{66} Etienne Delaruelle, “\textit{Movimenti Religiosi ed Eresie},” in \textit{La Piété populaire au moyen âge} (Turin : Bottega d’Erasmo, 1975) 8, comments that martyrologies added “an overwhelming majority of bishops and monks” (“\textit{une majorité écrasante d’évêques et de moines}”).
\textsuperscript{69} Delaruelle, “\textit{Movimenti},” 20.
\end{flushleft}
use of canonizations as an extension of papal control. At that point the number of “official” saints to be recognized declined rapidly. Only 35 individuals were canonized between 1198 and 1434. Local communities, however, with the approval of their bishop, continued the practice of honoring those who lived a pious life in their area, especially if miracles could be ascribed to that person. Even in Rome, specific saints associated with the city were those usually venerated by Roman clerics, either because of their martyrdom in the city or because their relics rested in homonymous churches.

**Hagiographic tradition**

The importance of saints in the Christian church can be seen in the hagiographical tradition. Alain Boureau, borrowing from Bollandist Baudouin de Gaiffier, names eight official uses for stories of the saints: for liturgies, as readings at general cloister meetings, for private prayers, as examples in common monastic conversations, in preaching, for the celebration of feasts, for the marketing of sanctuaries, and as moral entertainment.

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71 The honoring of “Saint Guinefort,” a 13th century French dog, was one example of the slower response of the laity to Roman control.

The practice of writing down legends and stories of saints began early in the Christian era—156 CE, with the circulation of “The Martyrdom of Polycarp” by the church in Smyrna. In the 4th century, Severus Sulpicius (360-425), a friend of St. Martin, wrote his biography. In the 6th century, Gregory of Tours (539-594) supplied the History of the Franks (Historia Francorum), The Glory of the Confessors, and The Glory of the Martyrs, along with eight books on miracles, including four on the miracles of Saint Martin. His texts often served as the basis for later stories of saints.

Written accounts of saints’ lives, miracles and legends gained popularity in the 8th century, although oral traditions tended to sustain a cult in a largely illiterate society. While written accounts of a saint’s life may have covered his or her sufferings and witness—or, an enhanced version of it intended to edify the listener/reader—after a while, most hagiographies tended to describe similar paths to sainthood: defended virginity, horrible sufferings, control of wild beasts, miracles of nature, or martyrdom. Popular acceptance of a saint’s life often required recounted heroism and the ability to exceed normal human abilities, the same features that would characterize parts of the chansons de geste—which


the Roman de Renart often parodies. In addition, characteristics were often borrowed from one saint for another. The 10th century Latin life of Saint Gilles is described by Duncan Robertson as “a synthesis of themes associated with [Saint] Martin, ...his charitable acts, his thaumaturgy, his frustrated eremiticism and his involvement in politics....”75 These attributes were rewritten to fit into Saint Gilles’ Mediterranean landscape, with the addition of a nurturing doe, an image that became very popular.76

During the Carolingian period there was a desire to establish the holy credentials of the patron saint or leader, so vitae were provided for the founders or patrons of the most important monastic communities.77 The focus of the vitae changed as centralized government disintegrated. Saints began to play the more prominent role of patronus,78 in the 9th and 10th centuries, at the time of the Viking invasions, when there

75 Robertson, Medieval Saints’ Lives, 180.


78 Spijker, “Gallia du Nord,” 244. The patronus was originally an intermediary in the antique Roman world, possibly a teacher or a social or political leader. In order to arrange projects and accomplish one’s goals, it was often necessary to play off opposing patronage networks. Personal acquaintance with a powerful person made social relationships and everyday life easier.
was a lack of organized governmental protection. The saint also took on the role of protecting the monastery from the raids of nearby marauding strongmen. Leclerq believes that these *milites*, despite their interest in easy plunder, “were timorous when it came to profaning a place hallowed by miracles or saintly visitations.”79 (Renart relies on this belief when luring the mastiff Rœnel into the snare in a vineyard—see page 56 of this chapter.) For this reason monastic communities would create a sacred history of their order or abbey along with a powerful patron saint whom they believed would protect them. Linked with the past, the *patronus*/saint was considered to be present in his or her name and *vita*, as well as in his/her relics.

The desire for protection in the *Roman de Renart* is usually voiced by animals victimized by the fox. For example, Primaut the wolf—loup—calls upon his homonymous Saint Leu/Loup to fend off Renart: “*Par la foi que je doi saint Leu*” (“Si conme Renart et Primaut vendirent les vestemenz au prestre por un oyson”/ “How Renart and Primaut sell vestments to the priest for a bird,” FHS 8, 112). When a saint is called upon, especially in a moment of peril, it can be understood that the invoker is attempting to draw upon a very specialized source of power grounded in religious beliefs, legends, *vita* and emotional space, a particular horizon of expectations.

Vitae and accounts of postmortem miracles also became, in modern terminology, “advertisements for particular churches, channeling veneration into clerically organized cult sites,” such as those that became pilgrimage destinations. In Julia Smith’s view what prompted a written account of a local saint’s “postmortem activities” was “almost always property, money or ecclesiastical privileges,” such as a monastery’s independence from the control of a local bishop based on the strength of the abbey’s patron saint. Take, again, for example, the vita of Saint Gilles, one of the most frequently cited saints in the Roman de Renart, especially in the branches written between 1180 and 1205. His relics were “invented” at his abbey in 925. The Vita s. Aegidii was then composed, according to Bonnassies, Sigal and Iogna-Prat, in the context of a quarrel between the abbey and the bishop of Nîmes over the independence of the abbey. In the 12th century a vernacular hagiographical poem was written by Guillaume de Berneville, as well as two compilations of miracles written between 1120 and 1124 by Pierre

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80 Katherine Allen Smith and Scott Wells. Negotiating community and difference in medieval Europe: Gender, power, patronage, and the authority of religion in Latin Christendom (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009), 335.


Guillaume, the abbey’s librarian. The use of these texts further encouraged pilgrimages, renown—and appropriation by some authors of the *Renart* cycle.

**The cults of the saints**

The saints provided many ways to grasp the sacred, if only through written or oral means. The simplest liturgical form was a mention of the saint’s name during a Mass or office (monastic prayers said every third hour of the day, especially at prime, as decreed by Louis the Pious) on the day of that saint’s death, i.e., the day on which he or she had been “born” into eternal life. Invocation of a saint’s name was often followed by a reading of a saint’s life (*vita*): his or her good deeds, challenges and subsequent miracles. Prominent or locally honored saints generally received more attention, e.g., St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury, who spent three years of exile near Vézelay (Yonne) at the Cistercian abbey of Pontigny. Soon after his canonization, three years after his murder in 1170, a set of prayers, music and chants was written to honor him.83 These texts were recited or sung during the daily office at a monastery.

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The Cluniac branch of the Benedictine order, the one whose members, I propose, may have written some of the tales of Renart, developed a general cult of the faithful dead. André Vauchez says that the office of “all” the saints, including many French saints, was celebrated every day, along with a reading of the litanies, at Cluny. On a saint’s feast day, his or her *passio* (if a martyr) or *vita* (a confessor) was read aloud in its entirety. These practices culminated in the celebration of All Saints Day (November 1) and then, starting in the 1030s, All Souls Day on November 2. This particular method of honoring all the dead found ready acceptance among the laity who may have wanted to honor those who had not been officially recognized as “saints”.

The day of the “translation,” or moving, of the saint’s bones also came to be celebrated, often for an ancillary reason: Julia Smith notes that the translation of relics was usually “the occasion for a sudden

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84 As noted previous, only the “black” monks, i.e. Cistercians, and their monasteries, are cited as being inhospitable to the fox, and Bernard of Clairvaux discouraged the depiction of animals and fanciful beasts in churches. Frequently cited Saints Germain--the eponymous namesake of a Cluniac monastery in Paris--and Peter, whose remains were preserved at the motherhouse at Cluny, certainly point to a favorable reception of the fox.


87 Delaruelle, “*Movimenti*,” 14.
burst of post-mortem miracles…”\textsuperscript{88} reported by the laity in Frankish churches. In \textit{Renart}, the post-mortem miracle is claimed by Couard ("Coward") the hare:

\begin{verbatim}
Que de poor pristrent les fevres
(Dous jors les avoit ja oues)
Merci Deu, or les a perdues
Sor la tombe dame Copee.
\end{verbatim}

(Martin I, 452-54)

Who contracted a fever due to his fear [of Noble] (He suffered from it for two days) Thanks be to God, he lost it On the tomb of Lady Coupée.

This “miracle,” one that happened immediately after the vigil and burial of the hen’s remains, suggests that claims of transformations or cures may have been less amazing than reported. Meanwhile, elaborate processions with a saint’s relics, performed at shrines and churches came to supply visual reinforcement to the spiritual desires of believer and became a celebration that greatly augmented the simple invocation to the saint.

Because of the possibility of miracles, the laity developed a belief in the powers of certain saints, often for thaumaturgic reasons, as medical responses to illness were often unsuccessful, and healing miracles ascribed to a particular saint were successful often enough. Other favors, such as for children by childless parents, were also frequently

\textsuperscript{88} Julia Smith, “Oral and Written,” 320.
requested. Speaking to Poncet, the would-be spouse of Renart’s presumed widow, Renart (disguised as the minstrel Galopin) promotes the idea of visiting the “martyr” Coupée’s\(^89\) grave after the nuptial dinner:

\[
\text{“...Nus homs n’i vient, tant soit enfers,}
\text{Ou soit moignes, ou lais ou clers,}
\text{De tot le mal que il oüst}
\text{Que maintenant gariz ne fust...”}
\]

(Martin, Ib, 2917-20)

\[
\text{“...No one goes there, even the sickest}
\text{Whether monk, lay person or cleric,}
\text{Who is not cured immediately}
\text{Of all the ill that overwhelms him...”}
\]

This call to take advantage of the presence of “relics” is part of Renart’s plan to block Poncet from the marriage bed prepared for him. Renart proposes that Poncet will produce a son, should he go barefoot and with a candle in his hand to the grave to pray all night. Of course, Renart has noticed that a snare has been prepared nearby, a possible commentary on the marketing of false relics to gain financial benefit for shrines and abbeys, as well as the credulity of relic consumers.

The medieval laity often attributed miraculous cures directly to the saints and to the earthly presence of their relics,\(^90\) despite the Roman church’s teaching that the saints only served as intercessors to God.

\(^89\) Coupée was a “martyr” to Renart’s hunger.

Renart then provides the dogmatically correct version when convincing Poncet to advance into the trap:

‘...Lasus giser un seint martir
Por lui faser Dex tant vertuz...’
(Martin Ib, 2936-37)

‘...There lies a holy martyr,
God will perform great miracles for him....’

The belief in the power of relics can be seen several times in the Renart cycle in the context of a trick that Renart is about to play on another unsuspecting animal—to rid himself of an enemy. For example, Roënel the mastiff reverently approaches a “shrine” of Saint Hilary (see page 8):

\[ \text{A jenoillon se mist a terre/}
\text{Por le sentueire requerre.} \]
(Martin X, 459-60)

He got down on his knees
To visit the shrine.

Renart’s blandishments about possible relics or shrines are always plausible to other animals, so great was their desire for the sacred. This may be due to societal acceptance of the possibility of saintly influences in their environment, often promoted by monks. Philippart comments that there are several indications that monks, after the 11th century, developed a culture of enchantment, with familiar saints who
participated in daily life, in churches, dining-halls, sleeping quarters and on the roadways.91

**Pilgrimages that spread the name of the saint**

The need for physical reinforcement to spiritual beliefs was part of the motivation for the popularity of medieval pilgrimages, principally to Rome (10th century) where the relics of Saints Peter and Paul were found until some were translated to Cluny in the 10th century92; to Jerusalem (11th century) with its traces of the life of Jesus Christ; and Compostella (12th century),93 site of the presumed relics of Saint. James the Greater. Shrines more proximate in France, e.g., Tours (Saint Martin), the Camargue (Saint-Gilles du Gard), and Conques (Saint Foy), enjoyed their own popularity for their relics and cures. Ensuring their appeal were their locations on a leg of one of the four major pilgrimage routes from northern France to the three primary pilgrimage destinations (see figure 3). In the *Roman de Renart*, references are made to undertaking pilgrimages to Saint James of Compostela, as well as to Rome where

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Renart needs to do penance and to ask forgiveness of the pope, appropriate for very serious sins.

Specific references to other sites appear in *branche* I (believed to have been written around 1179) of families *alpha* (Martin) and *beta* (Roques), “Renart’s Trial.” Here Tibert the cat is sent by the king to bring Renart back to court to answer Isengrin’s complaint. After vowing that Tibert will enter his dwelling only to encounter despair and misfortune, Renart welcomes Tibert as though he were a pilgrim coming back from a holy shrine. Here the importance of particular religious destinations and copying choices (cf. the phrasing in the *gamma* manuscripts⁹⁴) are shown in Renart’s greeting to the cat Tibert:

‘…*Se tu venoiez or de Rome*

*Ou de seint *Jaque* frescement,*

*Bien soiez venus hautement *

*Conme le jor de pantecoste.*’

(Martin I, 778-81) ‘

Whether you come directly from Rome
Or from Saint James (of Compostella)
you are as welcome
As on the day of Pentecost.’

*Beta* (Roques I, 795-96) refers to the pilgrimage to Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, instead of to Saint-James of Compostella:

‘…*Ausi com venisiez de Rome*

__________________________

⁹⁴ Cf. the gamma version: “Tybert, fet li Renart, weilconme !/Se tu venoies or de Ronme/Ou de Saint *Jaque* freschement/Bien soiez venu hautement/Conme au jor de Pentecoste.” (FHS 10: 774-79).
Ou de saint Gile hautement...
Bien saiez venuz bonement
Com a haut jor de Pantecoste'

‘Whether you come from Rome
Or straight from Saint Gilles,
you are as welcome
As on the day of Pentecost.’

The change from alpha (“Saint James,” copied by gamma) to beta (“Saint Gilles”) could be due to one site being more familiar to a particular copyist. However, in beta, thought to have been copied after the first alpha manuscript, it could also reflect the departures of many French nobles for a crusade (possibly the Third Crusade from 1189-1192) in the Holy Land. The abbey of Saint-Gilles-du-Gard is located on a tributary of the Rhone River. It was a key embarkation port for the crusaders, as well as an important trading post in the Mediterranean region. As a result, cloth merchants traveling from southern France via the sea spread the cult of Saint Gilles throughout northern Europe, particularly to Normandy and Brittany.95 Saint Gilles, as will be shown later, was one of the most popular saints invoked in the Roman de Renart.

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Types of saints invoked in the Roman de Renart

Who were these saints who were chosen by the writers and copyists of the *Roman de Renart*? Table 1 catalogues them by type, each of which will be discussed in turn in this section of the chapter. Given the ecclesiastical background of the writers and copyists, it will not be surprising to find that a majority of the saints (42) invoked were clerics. (See Appendix C: “Saints and their types” for a full accounting of saints.)

Most were French, Frankish, Breton or Irish. Thirty-three bishops and abbots (and, in the case of Amand, Boniface, and Remacle, both), were leaders and models of admirable behavior. They are joined by four monks and one canon. The majority of the bishops or abbots lived during the 4th through the 7th centuries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bishops</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbots</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martyrs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confessors</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermits/anchorites</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canons/clerics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monks</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical persons</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Types of Saints**
The importance of the bishops is highlighted by Duncan Robertson, comparing their historic stature to that of the “martyrs in the early church, and that of the Egyptian hermits with monasticism”. 96

The category of “martyr” overlaps in eight instances with that of “bishop,” while all apostles (6) except for John the Evangelist were also martyrs. Among the 19 martyrs cited are three young virgins, Agnes, Foi and Lucy who died during the reign of Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century, as did the soldier George, Pampelion/Pantaleon, 97 the Bithnyian (present-day northwest Turkey) doctor; one of the two Julians (the one from Brioude in Auvergne, the ancestral home of Gregory of Tours98), and Vincent of Saragossa.99 A later bishop and martyr, Thomas Becket (d. 1170), was highly honored for his defense of church rights against the English king, Henry II.

96 Duncan Robertson, Medieval Saints’ Lives, 130.


98 The other Saint Julian is the apocryphal “Hospitaler” honored at the church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre across the Seine from the cathedral of Notre-Dame.

98 Saint Vincent’s relics and cloak were brought back from Saragosa by King Childebert I and placed in the new church of St. Vincent-St. Croix in 558. This church was renamed Saint-Germain des Prés in 1163 in honor of Saint Germain, bishop of Paris at the time of the church’s construction.
“Confessors” (17) were those whose lives—with or without martyrdom—gave proof of their devotion to the Gospels and the message of Christianity. Saint Martin, one of the patron saints of France (along with Saint Denis), is included here. Several defenders of the faith against civil authorities or barbarian invaders\textsuperscript{100} might also be considered to be confessors: Gilles, Lambert, Loup/Leu, Nicolas, Protais, Rémi, and Thomas of Canterbury.

Only four ascetics (Mary of Egypt, Paul of Thebes, Leonard and Renaud of Soissons) are named—possibly because this was not a desired calling for the 12\textsuperscript{th} century authors, compared to that of bishop or abbot, or their stories did not provide additional meaning to the tales told. Four persons from the Old Testament are named: Israel (also an 11\textsuperscript{th} century priest and teacher), Daniel, David, Samson (also a Breton bishop), along with the New Testament apostles, Mary, and Anne (either Mary’s mother or Anna, the prophetess in the temple, who is usually cited in 9\textsuperscript{th} century martyrologies).

Of the 64 saints invoked in the extant Renart texts, 18 saints lived during the formative first three and one-half centuries of Christianity, a period marked by intermittent persecutions and martyrdoms. Most of the saints during this period became martyrs, sacrificing their life for their

faith. They were revered for their witness, immediately after their death and in the centuries that followed.

A majority of the remainder of the saints lived in pre-Carolingian times. Only five saints invoked in the Roman de Renart lived after the ninth century: Saints Israel of Limoges (d. 1014), Renaud of Soissons (d. 1104), Simon de Crépy (d. 1082), Simon de Saint-Bertin (d. 1148), and Thomas Becket (d. 1170). It is possible that invocations to the (more-plentiful) pre-Carolingian saints were seen, in general, as more effective, in line with the observation by Kleinberg that holy individuals who were “old miracle-working saints”\textsuperscript{101} were more popular in the Middle Ages than those promoted more recently by the papacy. A geographic or eponymous reason may also apply: many northern French churches, abbeys, towns and streets carried the names of earlier saints.

One saint, “Eblans/Esblant” invoked in “Renart médecin”/”Doctor Renart”—in beta manuscript H, Arsenal 3334, branche X, and gamma #29--could not be identified. This name is, nonetheless, mentioned (“Sainct Esblant”) with other sites close to Paris, e.g., “Clichi, Gentilly, Montrouge, Arcueil”, in Jacques d'Ableiges’ Le Grand cōtumier de France

\textsuperscript{101} Kleinberg, Prophets, 30. Believers expected that any valued saint would produce miracles, unexpected cures or actions, in response to continued prayers.
which appeared in 1868. This leads one to suspect that Esblans/t was a local saint supplanted by other, more popular saints over time.

**Choice of saints**

Joseph H. Lynch suggests the possibility of 25,000 inspirational *vitae* circulating during the Middle Ages throughout western Europe. Of course, only selected *vitae* would have been available at a particular place at a particular time, and that may be reflected in the choices of saints in the *Roman de Renart*.

There may be several reasons for choosing this particular mix of saints, besides rhyme. Their presence, forming a particular horizon of expectations, probably flows from incidents in their *vita* or *passio* and from familiarity resulting from substantive physical or geographic reminders, as well as inclusion in a litany or martyrology. (See Appendix D.)

One might expect that the popularity of certain hagiographical romances in the 12th and 13th centuries, e.g., stories of St. Alexis,


would have led to inclusion among the saints invoked in the *Roman de Renart*. However, Alexis and several other well-known medieval saints are excluded, e.g., Michael, Severus, Léger, Catherine of Alexandria, Genevieve, Stephen, and Agatha. Some of these also had abbeys (Genevieve) or churches (Stephen) named for them. Yet other saints honored in religious establishments in the Parisian region were included in the *Roman de Renart*: Saint-Germain-des-Prés (site of a large scriptorium), Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois, Saint-Jacques (of which only a tower remains today), Saint-Paul (Marais), Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, Saint-Benoît, Saint-Martin-des-Champs, Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, Saint-Pierre-de-Montmartre, and Saint-Jean-en-Grève. These are among the oldest churches and parishes clustered around the early *arrondissements*\(^\text{105}\) of Paris.

Familiarity with a particular saint’s life may have been found in resources available to the clerical authors. What sources were generally available besides the *vitae* and martyrologies? In southern Normandy, not far from Ile-de-France, the library of one Benedictine monastery, that of Saint-Evroult, held the principal manuscript of the *Historica*

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Ecclesiastica of Orderic Vital (1075-1141). This series of chronicles treats the history of Christianity, of the abbey, of William the Conqueror and of France up to 1141. Ordericus names 15 of the 61 renardian saints, associating them with abbeys, churches, and pilgrimage sites.

In the “Remarks” of M. Leopold Delisle that precede the English translation of Historia Ecclesiastica he provides the library holdings of the monastery of Saint-Evroult, established in 1050. Among the many volumes were those of Gregory of Tours, several Lives of the saints (among them, vitae of renardian saints Martin and Leonard), Jerome’s Daniel, and the 1087 Translation of Saint Nicholas. Examining the contents of these available codices is germane to this discussion of hagiographic influences on the Renart cycle, especially in areas (Normandy and Ile-de France) that have been cited as giving birth to

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106 The original manuscript was held there until the Revolution. A manuscript copy held at the monastery of Saint-Ouen was transferred to the city of Rouen. In the 16th century copies were written on paper. Louis Du Bois, quoted by M. Guizot, Introduction to the French translation of Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, vol. 1, trans. Thomas Forester (New York: AMS Press, 1968), xiii.


Renart's alpha, beta, and gamma families, based on word choices, spellings, and codicology.

Gregory of Tours’s *Glory of the Confessors* and *Glory of the Martyrs* were probably significant sources for the saint references in the *Roman de Renart*. These two works cover 23 of the 61 saints mentioned in the *Roman de Renart*: Felix of Bourges, Médard, Remi, Marcel, Lupus/Leu/Loup, Hilary, John, Simeon Stylite, Germain d’Auxerre, Martin, Germain de Paris, Sylvester, Denis, Vincent, John, Julian, Lawrence, Clement, Thomas, Paul, apostle, Peter, James, and John the Baptist. In Gregory’s *History of the Franks* 27 of the 61 saints are mentioned or have incidents from their lives described with Saints Benedict, Boniface, Eloi, and Sylvester included, indicating their long-established interest for clerics.

**Diachronic naming of saints in the Roman de Renart**

One might suspect that there would be changes in the horizon of expectations for the naming of saints in later branches of the *Roman de Renart*. Certain saints may have gained or lost “patronage,” depending upon the location of the copyist, the building of an eponymous church, or the announcement of a particular miracle. Following the periods of composition proposed by Jean Dufournet: 1170-80 (designated as “x”), 1180-1205 (“y”) and post-1205 (“z”) in Appendix D, “Saints, sources and
references,” the majority of references to saints in the *Renart* texts were made during the first two periods. Afterwards, the number of invocations to saints diminished, and a few select saints were reused, probably through diligent copying. There are only three exceptions: bishops Protais of Lausanne (FHS 7, 663); Lambert of Tongres/Maastricht (Martin XIII, 747), and James the Less of Jerusalem (Martin XIII, 2293). As was mentioned in the first chapter, the *esprit du temps* probably became less idealistic after the failure of the Fourth Crusade (1202-04), and, possibly, earlier in the aftermath of the Third Crusade when one of its leaders, Richard the Lion-Hearted, was imprisoned for three years by a fellow European nobleman demanding a large ransom payment. I would suggest that this may have been a contributing factor for both a change in the spirit of the *Renart* tales, as well as the presence of fewer saints.

Among those saints invoked the most frequently throughout the *Renart* cycle were Saints Martin, Peter, Mary, Germain, Gilles, Liénart/Léonard and Riquier. (See Appendix E for ‘Invocations by Character.’) While Saints Peter\(^{109}\) and Mary belong to the foundations of Christianity, saints from late antique Gaul (Martin, Germain) and from

\(^{109}\) It is possible that when a reference is made to a Saint “Peter,” without indicating “of Rome,” this might be a reference to another Saint Peter, perhaps Peter the Venerable (1092-1156), abbot of Cluny from 1122-1156, or Peter Damian (1007-72), a theologian. Saint Peter (of Rome) was one of two patrons of the Cluny monastery.
the Merovingian period (Germain, Gilles, Leonard and Riquier) were also invoked frequently, depending upon the manuscript family, as may be seen in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular saints in Renart/families</th>
<th>alpha (Martin)</th>
<th>Beta (Roques, Lecoy)</th>
<th>gamma (F,H,S)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin—32*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter—30*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary—29*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germain—28*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gile/Gilles—27*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lienart/Léonard—23*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riquier—22*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Popular Saints in Renart (according to manuscript families)

*Asterisk indicates the number of invocations in the Roman de Renart across the three major critical editions.

It would be helpful in laying the groundwork for future chapters to consider briefly the contemporary cultural associations of each of these saints. Saints Martin (315-397), Peter (died in the 1st century), Germain (this may be either the Auxerrois who died in 448 or the bishop of Paris who died in 576) and Riquier (d. 645) were emblematic of church-state leadership. They also had important churches dedicated to them throughout northern France. Saint Martin’s *vita* was probably found in most French ecclesiastical libraries, as he was “the apostle to the Gauls,”
a patron of France, and the “most popular saint in the calendar in
France.” Saint Peter was the acknowledged administrative leader of
Christianity, with a major church dedicated to him in Rome, besides
numerous abbeys and churches scattered around northern France,
including Cluny where his relics were honored. Both saints named
“Germain” were important in the Church, the first a defender against the
Pelagian heresy and an admired bishop; the second as bishop of Paris for
whom the monastery and church of Saint-Germain des Prés were
renamed. Saint Riquier was an abbot, preacher, and, later, hermit in
Picardy. The Benedictine abbey and church dedicated to him functioned
as an important cultural center from 790-1131. A chronicle of the
abbey written by Hariulphe, a monk at Saint-Riquier (later abbot of
Oudenbourg), sometime between 1104 and 1143, was probably known
by some writers of Renart tales, especially those (for alpha and beta
families) from the region of Picardy.

Saints Gilles and Leonard had widespread cults in France and
western Europe based upon presumed thaumaturgic and procreative

110 Robertson, Medieval Saints’ Lives, 131.

111 Abbaye de Saint-Riquier, “Saint-Riquier and its Heritage,” accessed February

112 Hariulfe, Chronique de l’abbaye de S. Riquier, Livre I, trad. Marquis de Ver
bloodwolf/historiens/hariulf/chronique1.htm.
powers (Gilles) or an ability to set captives free (Leonard, who was also known for ensuring the safe delivery of a royal infant in the woods\textsuperscript{113}). Both cults were probably spread by merchants traveling from southern or central France to other areas.

**Saints in later versions of Renart**

The composition of linked *branches* of the *Renart* cycle ended around the middle of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century. While the continuations, as well as adaptations, lie outside the main focus of this dissertation due to space constraints, they are testimony to the popularity of the *Renart* material and to its cultural importance in France. In this final section of the chapter, I will briefly survey how saints remained an essential rhetorical element of the French *Renart* tradition.

The instances of invocations to saints\textsuperscript{114} in texts bearing the fox’s name continued, with one exception: the poet named “Rutebeuf” around 1268 included no saints in his 162-verse poem, “*Renart le Bestourné.*”\textsuperscript{115} This short polemic attacks the power given to the mendicant orders, i.e.,

\textsuperscript{113} Bonnassies et al., “La Gallia du Sud,” 300.

\textsuperscript{114} See Appendix E, “Saints in *Renart* continuations and the *Golden Legend.*”

the Franciscans and the Dominicans, and does not pause long enough to call upon saints for their cultural references.  

In contrast, a contemporary, anonymous, incarnation of Renart (1263-1270), *Le Couronnement de Renart*, presents the fox as more evil than wily. Yet the saints remain part of the Renart rhetoric of composition. In this poem of 3408 verses, seven saints are mentioned. While five of the most popular saints in the Renart cycle are retained—Mary, John, Martin, Paul and Peter—Maurice and Mary Magdalene are added. The latter appears to substitute for Mary the Egyptian as the reformed woman who gives witness through her life. The referrals to this saint may relate to a contemporary dispute between the Benedictine abbey cathedral of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine at Vézelay along the way to Compostela and the Dominican abbey of Saint-Maximin. There was a question about whose relics of Saint Mary Magdalene were “real”—those held at Vézelay or those held by the Dominicans (who won in public opinion).

In another late (1288-1292) Renart poem, *Renart le Nouvel*, Jacquemart Gielée condemned the vices of Church leaders, while

116 Known as a pious man, he also wrote “Sainte Marie l’Egyptienne” and “Sainte Elysabel de Hongrie.”

117 Two cathedrals in northern France (Angers and Tours) are dedicated to Saint Maurice, the leader of a Roman infantry legion, who was martyred around 287 during the reign of Diocletian.
continuing the original tradition of invocations to saints. In the La Vallière manuscript (BNF 25566) there are 17 saints invoked in 7,862 verses. Thirteen are among the saints found in the earlier Renart cycle. In a nod to contemporary life, the two founders of mendicant orders, Saints Francis of Assisi and Dominic are added, as are Saints Mary Magdalene and Acaires, a 11th century missionary. The author added an appendix containing saints Guari, bishop of Cambrai; Andrew, the apostle; Catheline (probably Catherine of Alexandria), martyr; Mark the evangelist; and Ghislain, a holy man of Hainaut. The last extant set of medieval Renart tales, Le Roman de Renart le Contrefait, composed by a former cleric and spice merchant of Troyes, continues the legacy of invocations to saints with 34 saints mentioned in his stories, 30 of whom are borrowed from the original Renart cycle. Another 175 are

119 Denis, John, Lambert, Lawrence, Leonard, Martin, Nicholas, Omer, Pierre, Paul, Rémi, Samson, Simon.
122 He was trained for the lower orders but defrocked for his relationships with women, forbidden after the 1215 Lateran Council. Henri Le Maître, introduction to Le Roman de Renart le Contrefait, v.
123 Agnes, Benedict, Clement, Denis, Eloi, Georges, Gilles, Guillaume,
added in the hagiographical and historical notes which accompany the poem and presumably make use of his clerical training. This final continuation of Renart was written more than 60 years after the first appearance in 1265 of the widely popular Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, the Dominican bishop of Genoa. Jacobus’s work, as can be seen on the chart (Appendix E) includes most of the saints from the original Renart cycle, with the exception of three figures from the Old Testament (Daniel, David and Israel) and 20 saints whose cults were probably limited to French speakers. The Renart may have influenced the popularity of certain saints, even while reflecting those saints popular throughout the Middle Ages in France.

**Western European versions of the Renart cycle**

In line with Gurevich’s observation that the cult of the saints took hold more firmly in France than in Germany (see p. 23), French versions of the comic, satiric and critical Renart show a much greater reliance on Hilaire/Ylaire, James le Majeur, John, Julian, Leu/Loup, Leonard, Lucy, Marcel, Marie, Martin, Nicolas, Peter, Po/Pol/Paul, Protais, Remi, Riquier/Richier, Samson, Simeon, Sevestre/Cevestre/Sylvestre, Simon/Symon, Thomas of Canterbury, Vincent.

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saints. Looking at related tales from neighboring European countries, the differences are striking.

**Alsatian-German:**

The first set *Renart* tales outside of France appeared around 1180: Alsatian Heinrich der Glichaer’s’ *Reinhart Fuchs*, written in Middle High German. In 2266 lines of rhymed verses only “*sente Galle*” is mentioned:

*Er sprach: ‘nu beschirme mich *sente Galle*
Vor Reinhartes ubelen dingen!’*  
(v. 331-333)¹²⁶

He said: ‘Protect me now, Saint Gall,  
From Reinhart’s evil deeds!’

The Saint “Galle” invoked here probably refers to an Irish missionary who worked in eastern France and present-day Switzerland.¹²⁷ The monastery erected in his name in Switzerland was renowned as a center for music and manuscript collections.

**Italian:**

Found in two codices, *Rainaldo e Lesengrino*, the franco-italian/venetian recounting of the trial of Renart (based on *alpha branche*  

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¹²⁷ Eglise catholique en France, “Saint Gall,” accessed February 18, 2013,  

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I) from the second half of the 13th century,\textsuperscript{128} cites only Saint Martin, three times in the Oxford manuscript (v. 513, 543, 560), and two times in the Udine manuscript (v. 513, 560).

\textit{Flemish:}

J.F. Willem’s short, Flemish \textit{Van den vos Reynaerde}, or \textit{Reinaert de Vos} dates from around 1250. It is also based on \textit{branche 1 (alpha)}, and mentions no saints.

\textit{English:}

William Caxton used Willem along with Gheraert Leeu’s 1479 prose version of \textit{Reynaerts Historie}\textsuperscript{129} as the basis for the 1481 “Reynard the Fox.” His retelling includes no saints. However, Geoffrey Chaucer retells the story of Chantecler and Renart in the 1390 “Nonnes Preestes Tale, mentioning saints Paul (v 3441), Augustine (v 3241) and Kenelan, a murdered 9th century king of Mercia (v. 3110, 3112).\textsuperscript{130} Other saints are named in some of the other prologues and tales.

By the late 18th century, when Johann Wolfgang Goethe took a low German version, \textit{Reynke de Vos}, and transformed it into \textit{Reineke Fuchs}

\textsuperscript{128} Anna Lomazzi, \textit{Rainaldo e Lesengrino} (Firenze: Leo S. Oschki, 1972), 11.

\textsuperscript{129} Kenneth Varty, \textit{Reynard, Renart, Reinaert and Other Foxes in Medieval England: the Iconographic Evidence} (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 27.

(1794), no saints remained, while an occasional reference to a feast or a prayer was retained in order to contextualize a situation. Saints had ceased to play any role in the non-French *Renart*, in contrast to *Renart’s* beginnings—and to his appearances in 20th century French texts.\(^{131}\)

**Conclusion**

As discussed above, saints played an important role in late 12th and early 13th century French culture. Given the large number of saints\(^{132}\) who could possibly have been honored at this time, either locally or in accord with an official Roman martyrology (that of Usuard provided about 2,000 names), the choice of a particular saint’s name, whether on the rhyme or, especially, in the middle of a verse, might lead one to ask: Why was this saint chosen? What and how does his or her presence add to the import of the verse? Can the reading be deepened with specific geographical associations? Is it possible that the writers of the stories of the fox and his *compères* were making references to churches and abbeys that were familiar to them?

\(^{131}\) For example, the extracts of the *Roman du Renard* by A. Périer (Paris: Librairie A. Hatier) published in the first half of the 20th century for middle-school children, include six saints in a prose retelling of selected episodes. See Appendix E for a listing of saints in continuations of the *Renart*.

\(^{132}\) See page 89, Lynch, *The Medieval Church*, 270, on the possibility of 25,000 circulating *vitae*. 
Analysis in the following chapters will show that use of a particular saint’s name in a particular context usually relates to that saint’s legends, miracles, accomplishments or substantive eponymous sites or buildings. The layering of meaning added to incidents in the *Roman de Renart* through use of a reference to a saint’s life, legend or site may have been easily within the horizon of expectations among many groups in medieval society, not only the educated elite, as religion was not an “entity distinct from culture,” and its practices were observed by many.

The frequent invocations or references to saints in the *Roman de Renart*, can be approached in several ways: 1) by *branche*, chronologically by imputed date of first composition, examining situations where a saint is invoked; 2) according to the speaker; 3) thematically, that is, with the repetition of a particular situation; or 4) by typology, that is, by groupings of clerics, martyrs, confessors, etc. I have found that the latter possibility would result in unbalanced sections, given that over half (42 of 64) of the saints invoked are clerics. Analysis by speaker (2) leads to a reliance on Renart’s own use of saints, as he makes the majority of invocations (75, of 37 saints), with Noble (13 saints, as well as the more general “saints of Bethlehem”), Primaut (13)

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133 Sylvia Boesch Gajano, “The Use and Abuse of Miracles in Early Medieval Culture,” in *Debating the Middle Ages*, 384.
and Isengrin (12), each calling upon a third as many saints. In all, a majority, i.e., nineteen, of the 33 animals call upon saints. Most of the humans, except for any monks or priests, also invoke saints. Finally, a thematic approach to situations (3) misses distinguishing details, once one moves past the animals’ experience of evil-doing on the part of Renart.

Therefore, I propose to present the names of the saints in two ways: first (Chapter 3) in the context of the stories and situations in which they are invoked (1) because there are references to individual passio and vita. Second, in Chapter 4, the substantive invocations of saints will be examined, that is, the physical, geographic or liturgical links to the saints.

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134 See Appendix F, “Invocations by character”.

135 For ease of reference, the saints mentioned in the Old French Renart texts are listed alphabetically in Appendix G.
Chapter 3

Les vies des saints and the Renart:

Saints’ lives and the text

The Roman de Renart affords readers the opportunity to observe the interaction and interpenetration of traditions in a medieval epic: the oral and vernacular, the religious and the literary. Key to the medieval way of apprehending the world “in two hypostases—sacred and secular, sublime and base, serious and playful”\(^1\) is the semiotic role of the saints—previously ignored, but coding stories and legends, as well as history and geography with their presence. Rather than treat them with benign neglect, this chapter will show, as Aviad Kleinberg observes, that “the saints signified something... The saints of God were there for a reason....”\(^2\) This chapter will look at saints whose names were chosen because of some aspect of their vita or passio.

An interpretation of the Renart that looks at the nature of the textual signs associated with the lexeme of “saint” as “constative, 

\(^1\)Gurevich, Medieval popular culture, 208.

\(^2\) Kleinberg, Prophets, 40. A professor of history at Tel Aviv University, Kleinberg has focused on the sociological complexities associated with the creation and reception of stories of saints and how the narratives function.
declarative utterances”3 (see Chapter 2, page 57) avoids the nihilistic framework that can develop from an interpretation saying that there is no “sense” to the discontinuity and animality, the play of zoomorphism and the anthropomorphism. When Dominique Boutet says that God is “strangely indifferent” (“l’étrange indifférence de Dieu”) in the Renart because of the lack of an historic time with a beginning and an end and the recycling of time on Fortune’s Wheel,4 he is not taking into consideration those aspects of the text, even the carnivalesque, that address religious thought. The sometimes ironic, sometimes parodic, sometimes satiric approach of the authors grows more pessimistic as the years progress in the periods of creation of the Renart. Yet the authors continue to maintain an allegiance to their society’s belief in the importance of saints, and of the efficacy of prayer to God, even if mostly to benefit the trickster Renart.

For example, when Renart has become a criminal condemned by the king, he prays to God for help finding a way to disguise himself:

*Lors dist Renart une proiere
Qui molt fut pressiouse et chiere.
‘Hé Dex, qui meins en trinite
Qui de tans perilz m’as jeté
Et m’as soufert tans malz a fere*

3 Of the four “senses” of scriptural verse, only the literal applies here. Allegorical, moral, and mystical interpretations are best left to scriptural verse.

Then Renart says a prayer
That was urgent and of great import.
‘Dear God, who lives in trinity,
You who have delivered me from so many dangers
And who allowed me to do so much evil
That I should not have done,
Protect me from now on
By your holy will!
And so arrange for me such a disguise
In a such a manner
That no beast who sees me
Will be able to tell who I am.’

After an appropriate nod to the Christian doctrines of free will and of the
tритy—the second denied by the Arians (a heresy in the late antique
period against which several of the bishop-saints preached) and the
Cathars (12th to 13th centuries)—Renart continues on his way. Given that
he quickly finds a solution at a dyer’s house, it could be read that the
miscreant was heard by God. After all, this is a text that continually
disrupts readers’ assumptions. The contradictions that swirl throughout
the “polygraphic”5 Roman de Renart as it changes author, register, and
intertext can lead only to an acknowledgement of its fundamental

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5 Scheidegger, Dérision, 98.
ambivalence. While Renart subverts traditional practices, he is ultimately dependent on them and upon their social bonds. He operates within the community, not outside of it, in an inversion of an accepted, established order. An essential component of Renart’s ambivalence is the frequent use of some aspect of the sacred.

In this chapter selected verses of the Renart that refer directly to the life of a saint will be presented and analyzed. These selections are drawn from the first two groups of pre-1205 branches because they provide more examples of ties between the vitae (or passio) and phrasings or incidents. I will begin with the cardinal episodes in the epic, those that relate to:

... la guerre,
Qui tant fu dure de grant fin,
Entre Renart et Ysengrin...
(Martin II, 10-1)

...the war,
That was long and grim
Between Renart and Isengrin....

Some examples of text drawn from alternate manuscript families that exclude mention of a saint are provided in footnotes to show how the authors and/or copyists rewrote text to include or exclude the name of a

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7 Allison Williams, Tricksters and Pranksters (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 91.
saint. Invoking the name of a saint was a conscious choice on the part of the poet or copyist.

**The origins of the relationships in the Renart cycle**

The central narrative conflict of the Renart stories is the enmity between Isengrin the wolf and Renart the fox. Many subsequent tales of mischief with other animals refer to the polarization of Noble’s court between those who support and those who dislike or fear Renart. Isengrin’s dislike of Renart is recounted in the opening *branche* (“Le Jugement de Renard”/ “Renard’s Trial”) in both *alpha* and *beta* manuscript families, as determined by their first *remanieur*. The verbal ambiguities of the trial leave Renart’s guilt in question throughout the following *branches*.8 The *gamma* manuscripts avoid this possibility with a cyclical arrangement of stories, beginning with the birth of Renart as a figure of nascent evil, and ending with his presumed death. (The trial appears in *unité* 10.)

For these reasons, it is in the earlier *alpha branche* II—*beta branche* VIIa and later parts of *gamma* 1--where the reasons for the enmity are to be found.9 This *alpha branche* from Pierre de Saint-Cloud


9 Readings from the *alpha* (Martin) critical edition provide the basis for this study. When there are changes in the name of the saint in *beta* or *gamma*,

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is the only one without references to other branches.\textsuperscript{10} It concludes with the pivotal events between Renart and Hersent, the wolf’s wife (“\textit{Renart et Hersent}”). In this key tale Hersent, Isengrin’s wife, invites Renart to enter her home while her husband is away. After Renart assures her that others are talking about their attraction for each other, she agrees to make the most of the occasion. However, her four small wolf cubs are also present; they protest, and Renart pees on them. As soon as Isengrin returns and hears their complaints, he and Hersent set off to find Renart. Hersent runs faster and reaches Renart’s den first. She tries to wedge herself into the entrance, but becomes stuck. While she struggles to free herself, Renart comes out of a second entrance and rapes her from behind, as her husband, Isengrin comes upon the scene.

Saints begin to play a semiotic role with the episode of Isengrin’s complaint to the king in \textit{alpha branche} I. Hersent is asked to defend herself against the accusations of adultery by Grimbert the badger, Renart’s cousin. Among her ironic defenses, made in the same tone as those used by Iseut in \textit{Tristan},\textsuperscript{11} is one that uses double negatives, as passages are generally presented in the text or in a footnote with an explanation.

\textsuperscript{10} Foulet, \textit{Renard}, 101.

\textsuperscript{11} “No man has entered between my thighs,\slash{} except the beggar who acted as a beast of burden\slash{} to carry me over the ford,\slash{}and King Marc, my husband.” Béroul, \textit{Tristan and Iseult}, trans. Janet Hillier Caulkins and Guy R. Mermier (Paris: Champion, 1967), v. 4205-4208.
well as ambiguous play on which particular saint she is invoking.

Hersent calls upon a Saint Mary, by whom she could mean either the virgin mother of Christ—in an ironic displacement--or the reformed prostitute, Mary the Egyptian, who had been an active courtesan, providing her services for free, before being thrown back at the entrance to a church in Jerusalem.\(^\text{12}\)

\begin{quote}
Onc, foi que doi sainte Marie,
Ne fis de mon cors puterie
Ne mesfet ne maveis afere
Q'une none ne poïst fere.'
(Martin I, 175-78)
\end{quote}

‘Never, by the faith that I owe to Saint Mary,
Have I done any debauchery with my body
Nor taken part in shameless behavior
That a nun could not do.’\(^\text{13}\)

Hersent denies that her actions with Renart were shameful, or in anyway inappropriate with a fox. She carefully chooses the verb “pvoir” (“poïst”)

\(^{12}\) Robertson, Medieval Saints’ Lives, 99.

\(^{13}\) Beta renders the lines with no mention of Saint Mary (Roques I, 171-176):

\begin{quote}
‘...onques puis, se Dex me doint joie,
Qui m’en viaut croire, si m’en croie,
De fis de mon cors lecherie
Ne malvaisté, ne puterie,
Ne mesfait, ne vilain afaire
C’une none ne peüst faire.’
\end{quote}

‘...Never could I have, if God grants me joy,
(Whoever wishes to believe me, let them believe me)
Committed any kind of lechery with my body
Nor any wicked or whoring act,
Nor any criminal or vulgar thing
That a nun could not do.’
to indicate capability for a nun, rather than the conditional tense of the verb “faire” (“feroit”) to indicate probability. The chastity of nuns is placed in doubt—they did not always join convents for purely religious reasons. The implication is apparent that nuns could, if they desired, enjoy physical pleasures, as Mary the Egyptian was said to have done.\(^\text{14}\) If the saint called upon is Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, the one lauded as “Our Lady” or “Notre Dame” in so many churches, then Hersent is falsely calling upon that saint’s presumed virginity to defend herself. The medieval listener well-versed in saints’ lives would have appreciated the humor of the implied, ironic juxtaposition of two opposing models of sanctity.

Regardless of her intentions (or poor hagiographic education) Hersent’s invocation of a Saint Mary is effective: Bernart, the ass and high priest, ignores the ambiguity in her response, quickly praises her and offers to bring Renart back to answer Isengrin’s complaints. The king seems willing, but the barons of the king’s court object, because they don’t trust Renart either to show up or to be honest:

\[
‘\text{Onques ne vos aït saint Giles}, \\
(\text{Se vos plést et vos commandez}) \text{Se ja Renart i est mandez} \\
\text{Hui ne demein ...} \ ‘
\]

(Martin I, 220-23)

\(^{14}\) In *alpha* (Martin XXII, 358-59), the ruthless king, here Connin, has been forming sculptures of vulva to amuse himself. Renart says: “*Sainte Marie, sont si lait/Tuit le autre comme cist est?*” (“By Saint Mary, are they all/ as ugly as this one?”). This is probably Saint Mary the Egyptian, as when she was found by the monk Zosimas, her skin had turned black from the sun. She was ugly.
‘May Saint Gilles never help you
--Should it please you, and you so command--
If you order Renart to come here
Today or tomorrow …’

The barons invoke the popular 12th century saint, Gilles, to anchor their objections to Renart’s presence in court. Devotion to Saint Gilles, now considered an apocryphal saint, was an important cult. The Benedictine abbey, Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, was located at the end of the Via Tolosa or Via Aegidiana/Chemin de Saint-Gilles route through the Auvergne, and close to the embarkation port used by those leaving on a crusade. It also became a destination for pilgrims, especially for going to the Holy Land or continuing on to Saint James of Compostella. Invoking a patron of safe travels against the king’s idea of compelling Renart to travel to court emphasizes the barons’ distrust of Renart. The barons are saying that bringing Renart back to court is an activity that will waste the king’s ability to call on Saint Gilles, should his help be needed.

Given Renart’s absence, Hersent offers, as did Iseut (in Thomas’ version of Tristan), to undergo the ordeal of holding a hot iron in her hand to “prove” her innocence. Isengrin, however, doesn’t want his wife to do that, because either result might reflect poorly on him. He vows to wage war on Renart, in imitation of the barons and knights described in the chansons de geste, who fought wars, often for reason of personal
revenge, e.g., Raoul de Cambrai. King Noble, who has established a rule of peace among his subjects, objects:

‘Foi que je doi saint Lienart,
Ge connois tant les arz Renart ;
Plus tost vos puet il fere ennui,
Honte et damaje que vos lui.’ (Martin I, 259-62)

‘By the faith that I owe to Saint Leonard,
I know well Renart’s tricks;
He would rather cause you trouble,
Hurt and shame than have you do the same to him...’

While “Lienart” and “Renart” rhyme, the saint’s name merits attention for its cultural resonances. Saint Leonard was a popular saint, particularly in the Limousin, but also throughout western Europe. Among the miracles recounted through his intervention were several involving the release of prisoners, usually those captured by the local *perfidissimi milites* (literally, “most evil armed men”) or *iniquissimi tyranni* (“most unjust tyrants”), including a local count of Limoges. Knowing Renart’s devious character, similar to that of a contemporary warlord, Noble the king warns Isengrin not to proceed. Instead Brun, the bear, is sent as the king’s representative to bring Renart back to the court.

Renart, however, uses his wiles to avoid extradition. He launches into a soliloquy about the injustice of being poor and having little to eat, but having had his own bacon and peas earlier, which he had seasoned

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\[15\] Bonnassies et al., 301.
with fresh, new honey. This piques the bear’s interest; he also invokes
Saint Gilles to underscore his amazement and delight:

‘Nomini dame Cristum file’
Dit li ors, ‘por le cors saint Gile.
Cel meuls, Renart dont vos abonde ?
Ce est la chose en tot le monde
Que mes las ventres plus desire...‘
(Martin I, 537-41)

‘To the name of the lady and Christ the son’
Says the bear, “by the relics of Saint Gilles,
This honey, Renart, where do you find it?
In all the world
it’s what my weary belly desires the most...’

The above-mentioned Saint Gilles, patron of the town in the Gard (among
numerous other localities), was a hermit of the seventh century who lived
off what he could glean in the woods of Septimania (southern France).
There is a parallel with the situation of the animals.

Renart leads Brun to an oak tree with a wedge in it, declares that
the honey is there, encourages the bear to stick his muzzle in the hole,
and removes the wedge. Brun is stuck, and Renart begins to mock him
and to accuse Brun of selfishness, humorously changing the incident’s
frame to one of Renart being the poor hermit, and Brun the offending
animal:

‘...Ahi! Com vos cuideriez
Moi a saint Gile en ferté

---

16 This is “fractured” Latin for “In nomine Domini, Christi filii,” In the name of the
Lord and Christ His son. Brun is repeating what the unlettered bear thinks he has heard.
Se je cheoie en povreté  
Vos m’eslieriez poires moles. ‘  
(Roques I, 640-43)

‘...Ha! As you would presume  
To leave me to the mercy of Saint Gilles,  
If I fell into poverty,  
You would happily give me rotten pears.’¹⁷

Renart turns the polysemous meaning of the saint’s name used  
previously by Brun and the barons of Noble’s court to his own contrary  
purposes, transgressing the previous invocations that descend in register  
from high-minded (barons), to delight (Brun), to self-serving (Renart).

Tibert the cat is the next reluctant messenger sent to Renart.  As  
he sets out, he prays to the saint known for protecting prisoners:

Deu reclème et saint Lienart  
Cil qui deslie les prisons,  
Qu’il le gart par ses oreisons  
Des meins Renart son conpaignon...  
(Martin I, 746-49)

He puts himself in God’s hands  
and those of Saint Leonard  
Who frees prisoners  
That he would protect him with his prayers  
From the clutches of his companion Renart ...¹⁸

¹⁷ Martin’s alpha family ignores a saint and renders the reading as:

‘ Ahi! Con me conduisiez,  
Et con seroie a savete  
Se g’estoie en enfremete !  
Vos me lairees poire moles.’  
(Martin I, 621-22)

¹⁸ Roques I, 762 omits a reference to God:  Lors reclama saint Liēnant.
Saint Leonard’s reputation for freeing prisoners was so established, that even while alive, it was said that “all those imprisoned who invoke his name see their chains break.”

However, the saint cannot protect the cat from his own cupidity, as Renart points out later in court. (See chapter 2, page 58.)

In a bad omen, Tibert sees a buzzard (l’oisel saint Martin, I, 756) near the entrance to Renart’s lair. The bird was probably named for its disheveled appearance. Martin’s “sordid garments and disgraceful hair” were noted by dissenting bishops to his election as bishop of Tours.  

In a late miracle showing Martin’s power over nature, he banished voracious water-fowl in the Loire near Candes to mountains and forests, the kinds of places that buzzards and hawks are known to inhabit. The bird, an opportunistic predator of small animals, 

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19 “‘Tout homme emprisonné qui invoque son nom voit ses chaînes se briser.’” Bonnassies et al., 301.


21 Pernoud, Martin, 153. Once again, this is a reference drawn from Sulpicius Severus.

22 The bird may also be called a “busard Saint Martin” or “oisel Saint Martin” because of its migration patterns. Normally it would arrive in lowland France around St. Martin’s day—the 11th of November--after breeding in the mountains. The Black Rabbit, January 27, 2013 (09:51), “The Hen Harrier,”
ignores Tibert’s attempts to shoo him away, perhaps because its nest is near Renart’s lair. Tibert is rightfully discouraged, because he does not succeed.

Grimbert the badger, Renart’s defender, is now asked to bring him back to Noble’s court to answer Isengrin’s charges. After expressing his own concerns about Renart, Grimbert declines to go without an official letter from the king. He calls upon Saint Israel, here the Jacob/Israel of the Old Testament (Genesis 25:21-50:13), son of Isaac and Rebecca and grandson of Abraham. Although a cousin to Renart, Grimbert fears that Renart will trick him, just as Jacob tricked his older brother Esau into giving up his birthright, then tricked his father into giving him his blessing. Grimbert hopes that a letter from the king will protect him:

‘Bien sai que pas ne l’amenroie,  
Si je vos letres n’en avoie.  
Mes s’il veoit vostre seel,  
Foi que je doi saint Israel,  
Lors sai ge bien que il vendroit  
Ja nul essoingne nel tendroit.’  
(Martin I, 935-40)

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24 “…In the medieval … [encyclopedia] Israel denoted the chosen people and connoted the soul.” Umberto Eco, “Two Problems in Textual Interpretation,” Poetics Today 2, 1a (Autumn, 1980): 152.
'I know well that I could not bring him back
Without having your letters.
But should he see your seal,
By the faith that I owe to Saint Israel,
Then I know well that he would come,
Without invoking the slightest excuse.'

As Israel was also a trickster, invoking his name could be seen as a counterweight to Renart’s wiles, when added to the letter with the king’s seal.

In contrast, in *gamma* (FHS 10, 928)²⁵ the saint invoked by Grimbert is Daniel, the Old Testament prophet and adviser to the Babylonian king. Daniel survived being thrown into a lion’s den (Daniel 6, 23); here, by extension, Renart’s foxhole. For medieval Christian leaders, Daniel came to be seen as a precursor to Christ, who was transformed into a new Daniel in “this animal den of the world.”²⁶ Daniel’s story became well known, not only through preaching, but through a popular musical play, the *Ludus Danielis, The Play of Daniel*, that can be dated to c. 1140, although a manuscript from about 1230

²⁵ “Mes s’il veoit vostre seel,/Foi que je doi saint Daniel,/Lors sai je bien que il vendroit,/Ja nule essoigne nel tendroit.” (FHS 10, 927-930).

documents its performance and accompanying music in Beauvais.\textsuperscript{27} The timing is appropriate for the later redaction of the two *gamma* manuscripts.

While awaiting Renart’s return to court, the barons discuss the wolves’ case against the fox. (This *alpha branche Va* version of the court’s decision process predates the honey story of *branche I*). Brun elaborates on a trap (also involving honey) set by Renart. Cointereau the monkey, a trickster allied with Renart, suggests that Brun is not being factual, doubting that both his and Isengrin’s stories are reliable. Brun responds:

‘Sos cie n’a cort, par seint Richier,  
Que je n’ossasse aficher  
Se j’en devoie estre creüs,  
Que trestot cist max est moû  
Par dant Renart et par sa cope,  
Et Ysengrins a droit l’encope.’  
(Martin Va, 809-14)

‘In this world there is no court  
By Saint Riquier, in front of which  
I would not dare to affirm and I ought to be believed  
when I declare that all these problems  
were the work of Sir Renart and by his fault,  
and that Isengrin is well within his rights to accuse him.’

The invocation of Saint Riquier had intonations of Charlemagne, kingship and high erudition attached. The priest/monk/hermit founded

(640) an abbey in Centula, Picardy that became a center for Carolingian religious life under Angilbert, Charlemagne’s putative son-in-law. The first Capetian king, Hugues Capet, chose Saint Riquier as his patron saint to legitimize his usurpation of kingship by claiming a connection to Carolingian sanctity. The bear’s intent in claiming a connection with kingship could be that he had lost his earlier status as king of the animals (in Germanic mythologies). Starting in the 11th century, as land was cleared, the bear’s habitat was pushed towards the mountains. Association with pagan symbols led to the bear being “dethroned” by the lion, a beast that clerics considered to be a more suitable animal king. As a consequence, the bear became known not for regality, but for gluttony and his fondness for honey—a literary trope continued by A. A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh in the 20th century.

Finally, Renart agrees to participate in a judicial duel (“Le duel judiciare”—gamma unité 26) to settle matters with Isengrin. Saint Paul is cited only in gamma when Ysengrin is asked to cover his tailless hind quarters at court. The wolf lost his tail when using it to catch fish in an


ice-covered pond (“La pêche à la queue”/ “Fishing with a tail”—alpha branche III), of course, at Renart’s instigation.

‘...couvrez vostre tro.
Estes vos de l’ordre saint Po
Qui aportez si grant coronne?’
(FHS 26, 37-39)

‘...cover your hole.
Are you of the order of Saint Paul
That you have so large a crown?’

The last line mockingly refers to the tonsure given to monks, here those following the rule of Saint Paul the Hermit (also known as, “the Egyptian” or “of Thebes,” referring to his presumed desert location or his birthplace). This Saint Paul is the one who was promoted by Saint Jerome as the “first” hermit, and praised for his extreme isolation. An order of monks (ordo fratrum sancti Pauli primi eremitae) that attempted to follow his example was founded in Hungary in 1215 (although it later moved to the rules of St. Augustine).30 Given that the manuscripts of gamma family were produced in the 14th century, word of this monastic rule had probably spread. However, the sacred is paired with the scatological, as it is the anal opening that is so obviously “tonsured.”

The mistrust between the wolf and the fox continues in alpha branche V (“Le jambon enlevé”/ ”The stolen ham”) where six saints are invoked in the text, beginning with St. Cler (Clair). When Isengrin meets

Renart in the forest, he starts beating the fox in payment for the many tricks the latter has played on him. To distract Isengrin, Renart urges Isengrin to help him steal a ham from a passing peasant, but Isengrin objects, probably calling upon the abbot of Saint-Marcel de Vienne in the Dauphine in the mid-600s:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Ysengrins li moustra la dent}, \\
&\text{Si li respondi ‘par saint Cler}, \\
&\text{Vers vilain n’ai cure d’aller}. \\
&\text{Je passai ier par une rue}. \\
&\text{Un m’en feri d’une macue} \\
&\text{Que il m’abati tretout plat}. \\
&\text{Grant honte me fait qui me bat’}. \\
&(\text{Martin V. v.80-86})
\end{align*}
\]

Isengrin bared his teeth
And swore to him ‘by Saint Clair,
I have no desire to accost the peasant.
I passed one yesterday in the street
Who hit me with a club
until I was almost flat.
Hitting me was a great insult.’

Saint Clair was said to have predicted the destruction wrought by the Saracens and Africans\(^{31}\) during his final illness, a fitting trope for the beleaguered wolf. Another Saint Clair was the first bishop of Nantes, sent there in 280. Aurélie Barre says that this reference is to him in manuscript O (giving no explanation).\(^{32}\) A third Saint Clair moved from the Cotentin (Saint-Clair-sur-l’Elle) to the Seine (Saint-Clair-sur-Epte)


\(^{32}\) Barre, Renart, 697.
where he was martyred, decapitated by the guard of a spurned woman.33

A fourth Clair was a popular saint in the Aquitaine. While multiple references may be possible, it seems more likely that, given Ysengrin’s past and upcoming encounters with misfortune at the hands/paws of Renart, the sainted abbot would be the appropriate reference.

After Renart persuades Ysengrin to stop hitting him, he plays dead by lying on the side of the road to attract attention to his fur. A passing peasant stops to look:

_Dist le vilain_ : ‘Par saint Marcel, Ta pel ert mise en mon mantel.’
(FHS 22, 273-4)

‘By Saint Marcel, says the peasant, Your pelt will be part of my cloak.’

This reference—found only in _gamma_,34 the manuscript family with paleographic origins solely in Ile-de-France—was probably made in memory of the Saint Marcel who served as the ninth bishop (d. 436) of Paris.35 Thanks to his efforts (building on those of the earlier Saint

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34 _Alpha_ and _beta_ omit a saintly reference in the same verse, as Renart jumps to one side when the peasant approaches with a club and says: “…Riens ne vous vaut,/Ta gorge iert mise en mon mantel.” (Martin V, 104-05; Roques XVII 15274-75 with the substitution of “vos” for “vous”) “You needn’t try,/ Your throat will be part of my cloak.”

35 Other possible rhyming saints include Abel, an 8th century bishop of Reims who was unable to take control of his diocese; the Old Testament prophet Daniel; Gabriel, the archangel; and Daniel Stylite, a priest in Asia Minor.
Denis, with Saint Genevieve to follow), Paris became solidly Christian. As the “le premier grand saint parisien” (the first great Parisian saint”), his tomb along an ancient Roman road to Lyon became a place of pilgrimage for local Christians.\textsuperscript{36} Admired for carrying out his episcopal duties while tending to the poor, among whom might be the peasant who needed a warmer collar, five sculptures on the arch of the Porte rouge of Notre Dame Cathedral honor him.

With the peasant distracted by Renart, Isengrin grabs the ham, takes off, and eats all of it himself, as agreed. He offers to Renart only the cord binding the ham. Outwitted, for once, in his quest for food, Renart is afraid to demand more of the larger animal. So he quietly proposes to become a pilgrim, naming Saint James of Compostela, one of the major pilgrimage destinations in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century:

\begin{quote}
"Biaus oncles douz, je vous requier
Congie de saint Jaque requerre,
Pelerin serai par la terre."
\end{quote}

(Martin V, 138-44)

"Good, sweet uncle, I ask leave of you
To make a pilgrimage to Saint James
I'll be a pilgrim on the land."

As a seeker after the sacred, Renart can expect to be fed by strangers.

On the way Renart comes to the vegetable garden of a priest and sees a cricket that he plans to eat. He asks it to sing a psalm to distract

it. But it’s Frobert (whose name is possibly a reference to the founder and abbot of Montier le Celle who died in 688), who recognizes Renart and responds, naming one of the patrons of Paris:

‘Par saint Denis, enquerre voil
De quel pie’ fet il ‘vos clochez.’

(Martin V 172-73)

‘By Saint Denis, I’d like to know what you’re up to,’ he says.

Given that the literal translation would be, “on which foot you’re stumbling,” here Frobert implies a dichotomy between Saint Denis’ purported ability to walk steadily several miles--while holding his severed head in his hands--and Renart’s ability to act truthfully, especially when contemplating a source of food. Frobert may also be suggesting that neither the legend of Saint Denis nor Renart is believable. So Renart continues his search.

In alpha branche III, “Les Poissons volés”/”Stolen fish, Renart’s larder is empty, as is his stomach, and he goes out to find some food. Noticing a fishmonger’s cart with baskets full of lamprey and eels (“paniers ... bien enpliz/que de lamproies, que d’anguilles”—Martin III, 30-31), Renart devises a stratagem and comes home with three strings of eels. Soon after building a fire to roast the eels, the smell attracts the hungry Isengrin to Renart’s den (“Ysengrin moine”/ “Ysengrin the monk”). Renart refuses to grant him entry, saying that the monks there need to
finish eating first. When Ysengrin expresses his surprise at this, Renart ignores the obvious question of whether any monks are there, and assures him that these monks are from the abbey of Tiron, where the Benedictine rule was followed to the letter.37 Upon further inquiry, Renart specifies that “Saint Benedict tells us never to eat poorly,” reflecting a contemporary view that the monks ate very well: “Saint Beneoit le nous commande/ Que ja n’aions peior viande” (Martin, III, v. 259-260).

Saint Benedict of Nursia’s (480-543) rules on food specified vegetables, fruits and bread, but no animal meat.38 Eels were, therefore, acceptable. There were no strictures on quantity, except for that of bread. It was said that the monks could increase the quantity of the food that was permitted by placing one dish on top of another.39 So Renart’s

37 Gabriel Bianciotto, trans, Le Roman de Renart (gamma) (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2005), note 1, page 149.

38 The Holy Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter XXXIX, “Of the Quantity of Food,” trans. Boniface Verheyen, OSB (Atchison, KS: St. Benedict’s Abbey, 1949) accessed May 19, 2013, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule2/files/rule2.html#ch39. “Making allowance for the infirmities of different persons, we believe that for the daily meal, both at the sixth and the ninth hour, two kinds of cooked food are sufficient at all meals; so that he who perchance cannot eat of one, may make his meal of the other. Let two kinds of cooked food, therefore, be sufficient for all the brethren. And if there be fruit or fresh vegetables, a third may be added. Let a pound of bread be sufficient for the day, whether there be only one meal or both dinner and supper. If they are to eat supper, let a third part of the pound be reserved by the Cellarer and be given at supper.”

39 Lawrence Morey, OCSO, “No One Is Excused from Dinner” (paper presented at the 48th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 9-12, 2013).
comment may have been intended to mock certain overfed Benedictines who were obeying the letter of the rule rather than the spirit. Perhaps certain monks were behaving like animals?

Later, after feeding on the fowl in a local monastery, Renart finds himself at the bottom of a well (alpha branche IV, “Renart et Isengrin dans le puits”/ “Renart and Isengrin in the well” 40). He foolishly jumps into the well bucket because he sees his own reflection and thinks that it is Hermeline. Shortly thereafter, he sees Isengrin peering over the side of the well, believing that that his own reflection is that of his wife, Hersent. Renart pretends to be in paradise and persuades Isengrin to join him, assuring him that he will enjoy all the food. The single saint invoked here is Sylvester, probably the long-serving bishop from Chalon-sur-Saône.

\[
\textit{Ysengrins jure saint Sevestre} \\
\textit{Que il voudroit la dedens ester.} \\
\textit{(Martin IV, 277-78)}
\]

Isengrin swears by Saint Sylvester That he would like to be inside there.

With the promise of abundant food, friends and easy entry to paradise, who would not enter? This 6th century bishop served his community for a very long time, 42 years, and was probably ready for a heavenly

\footnote{Foulet, Renard, 289, sees it as having been borrowed from the Disciplina Clericalis.}
reward. While there may be no other rhyming saint for the word “ester,” Saint Sylvester was also quite famous. According to Gregory of Tours, his bed “woven from slender ropes” healed those who were placed beneath it twice. Pieces of the rope were cut to cure others.41 Perhaps the well rope and bucket called to mind the saint’s healing bed hanging in the cathedral of Chalon-sur-Saône.

**Renart on-the-run**

While fleeing from the king’s vengeance--after dropping a stone on the king’s head—Renart has several adventures where help from God or a saint is implored. As noted on page 108 of this chapter, Renart prays for help from God, and his prayers are answered. Renart approaches the home of a dyer, and leans in the window. He tumbles into a vat of yellow dye that proves to be the perfect disguise.42 Renart leaves the dyer gratefully, and saunters down the road where he meets Isengrin. Renart now takes on a new identity as a Breton jongleur, and brags about his skill to Isengrin. The popular life of Saint Brendan is invoked along with examples of the *matière celtique*:


42 Michel Pastoureau recounts the story (taken from versions in Anglo-Norman, as well as Arab and Armenian) of an eight- or nine-year-old young Jesus being apprenticed to a dyer, mixing up the colors (blue, black or yellow) of garments, and fixing them by means of a miracle. *Une Histoire symbolique du Moyen Age occidental* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 194.
As a traveler, Renart references Saint Brendan, an Irish abbot of the 6th century, known for the “visionary fairy tale” of a fantastic voyage across the seas in search of paradise. Régine Pernoud speculates that this 10th century work drew from the oral, druidic tradition and Irish spirituality of the high Middle Ages.44 The first French translation by Beneeït of the Latin text, "Navigatio Sancti Brendani," appeared in the 12th century,45 and enjoyed “the widest, truly European popularity.”46 Renart also makes references to King Arthur, a sprite ("Noton") and “chevrefeuil"/"Charpel" from the “Lai de Chievrefeuil” of Marie de France.47 The naming of the sly Tristan and the story of the honeysuckle vine that he


said would always bind him to Iseult, provides situational irony as the reader is reminded of the ongoing relationship between Renart and Hersent, the wife of the wolf, Isengrin, to whom he is speaking.48

After Ysengrin responds to Renart’s questions about the identity of the criminal whom the king seeks to imprison, Renart responds:

‘...Foi que devez le seint martir
Et seint Tomas de Cantorbir,
Ne por tot l’or que dex aver
Ne fot voloir moi lui sambler.’
(Martin Ib, 2435-38)

‘ ...By the faith that you owe to the holy martyr
And saint Thomas of Canterbury,
Not for all the gold of God
Would I ever f***ing want to resemble him.’

Renart suggests that Isengrin, not Renart, should show devotion to the recently martyred saint, Thomas of Canterbury (Becket), whose cult spread with “surprising” speed and distance in Europe.49 A particular connection for the French was that Thomas had lived in exile in France for about six years, between 1164 and 1170, including two years at the Cistercian abbey of Pontivy, France. A personal connection for Renart

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48 While talking with Isengrin, Renart uses the verb “foutre”/”fotre” 30 times between Martin Ib, 2358 and 2528.

49 Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe 1000-1300 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 22.
was that this prelate endured the persecutions of a powerful king, as Renart imagines himself doing.

In beta’s remaniement of the same passage, the profanity is dropped and a patron saint of France is added, one who was particularly revered in the regions around Tours and Amiens for his generosity, asceticism and example as a traveling bishop:

‘...Par la foi que doi saint Martin
Ne saint Tomas de Qanttorbir,
Por tot l’avoir que Diex aver
Ne voroie lui resanbler.’
(Roques I, 2485-88)

‘By the faith that I owe to Saint Martin,
And even Saint Thomas of Canterbury,
For all God’s wealth
I would not want to resemble him.’

Having what(ever) God has, rather than specifically naming “gold,” points to the author/copyist taking a more spiritual or abstract approach to denying any resemblance between Galopin and Renart. No one seems to notice anything but the color of the fox’s fur. Agreeing with Renart, Isengrin then proposes that Renart accompany him to court to entertain the king and queen. Renart agrees to go, but only if Isengrin can find


51 Michel Pastoureau says that red was the color of all those who engaged in illicit or dishonest activities, thus betraying the social order (199). Yellow became the color of duplicity and lies (204) at about the same period, between the 11th and 13th centuries. Une Histoire symbolique.
him a stringed instrument suitable for a *jongleur*. Isengrin knows where to find one—at a peasant’s house:

‘...*Par la foi que je dois seint Pere,*
*La vielie est et bone et chere.*’\(^52\)

(Martin Ib, 2473-74)

‘...By the faith that I owe to Saint Peter,
The instrument is good and dear.’

This “Saint Peter” may contain a reference to the 8\(^{\text{th}}\) abbot of Cluny (1122-56), Peter the Venerable, who was known for writing hymns, as well as other intellectual pursuits. The apostle Peter, one of the two (along with Saint Paul) patrons of Cluny, may also be called upon simply for the rhyme. Isengrin climbs in an open window and steals the fiddle, but not without Renart playing a trick on him by pulling out the brace holding the window open. The peasant and his family beat the cornered wolf, and their mastiff sinks his teeth in Isengrin’s private parts. Then the door is opened, and Isengrin runs home howling to Hersent.

It is, apparently, the end of August, because Isengrin suggests that Hersent should spend her time praying—and not bother him in bed—because it is the vigil of a great apostle’s feast—their namesake, Saint Loup/Leu. Hersent objects, calling upon the popular Saint Gilles, who shares the feast day with Saint Loup/Leu, September 1. She urges her husband to act:

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\(^{52}\) *Beta* (Roques I, 2524) calls the fiddle “*clere,*” and *gamma* (FHS 11, 264) calls it “*bele.*”
'Sire’ fete ele, ‘par seint Gile,
Ja n’i aura mester vigile.
Se vos volez m’amor avoir,
Fetes en tost vostre pooir.’
(Martin Ib, 2655-58)

‘My lord,’ she says, ‘by Saint Gilles,
There will be no vigil observance.
If you want my love,
Make haste to do what you can.’

One of the legends included in Saint Gilles’ *vita* was that while he was living as a hermit, a doe would come every day and allow him to suck milk from her swollen teats. Hersent’s invocation of the saint could be an insinuation of one form of “her love” in sexual acts. Then Hersent notices the damage inflicted on Isengrin, who blames it on a veiled nun (*une nonein velee-Martin Ib, 2668*), another reference to distrust in those who joined convents, although he could certainly have told the truth. Hersent is indignant, and leaves Isengrin.

The course of love will soon be assigned to Saint Nicholas, the bishop who provided dowry money for three impoverished girls, rather than let them face prostitution. Renart takes the instrument that Isengrin stole, masters it, and continues his masquerade as “Galopin,” the Breton minstrel. Roaming through the forest, one day he comes upon his wife Hermeline with Poncet the badger, Grimbert’s cousin. Hermeline has believed Tibert’s story that Renart is dead, hanged

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because of his misdeeds and mistreatment of the king. She is ready to
take a new spouse. Renart/Galopin speaks to this cousin (badgers and
foxes were known to share dens) after seeing him kiss Hermeline and
hearing him talk about Renart’s misdeeds. Vowing that Poncet will be
very sad, he covers his evil intentions by saying to him:

‘Par foi mon segnor seint Colas,
   Bien fot sembler que tu l’amas
   Et le senbler bien toi amer.’
   (Martin Ib, 2807-09)

‘By the faith that I owe to my lord Saint Colas
It appears that you love her
And she seems to love you well.’

Line 2807 could have been written, “fоi que je doi seint Nicolas,” keeping
the saint’s name intact within the octosyllabic format.54 The diminutive
form coupled with “mon segnor” breaks with the previous use of saints’
names. It may indicate Renart’s intent to act against—even while
invoking—the spirit of Saint Nicholas. The cult of Saint Nicholas had
spread throughout Europe even before the translation of his relics to
southern Italy and the book about the journey. The 12th century
vernacular Jeu de saint Nicolas served to publicize Saint Nicholas’ many

54 While gamma copies alpha, and Saint Nicholas does not appear in beta,
manuscript O, Barre Ic, 2817 does use the complete name within the
octosyllabic format: “Par mon seignor saint Nicholas.”
good deeds in the marketplace and on the front steps of churches.\footnote{This late 12\textsuperscript{th} or early 13\textsuperscript{th} century play was preceded by 9\textsuperscript{th} century \textit{Vitae} written in Greek and Latin. F.J. Warne, introduction to \textit{Jean Bodel: Le jeu de Saint Nicolas} (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), x.}

Another ambivalent saint invocation, this time to Saint Thomas, appears when Renart/Galopin offers to play at Poncet’s wedding (the couple was waiting to find a troubadour). Galopin speaks kindly to Poncet:

\begin{quote}
\textit{‘Par foi que doie saint Tomas,
Sanblant ferez de Tholomas
Et si sanble bons rois amer.}
(Roques I, 2865-67)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\text{‘...By the faith that I owe to Saint Thomas,
You would appear to be of the Tholomé family
And seem to love a good king.’}
\end{quote}

This Saint Thomas could well be the Thomas Becket previously invoked because Renart sees himself as rightfully opposing the king, as did Becket. Here the reference to a “good king” would be sarcastic, as Renart does not like king Noble at this time, but would certainly consider a king “good” if he agreed with Renart. If the saint invoked were the “doubting” apostle Thomas, this would add an ironic twist to the invocation with Renart suggesting doubt about what he states next: any aristocratic family ties that Poncet might have, as well as the “goodness” of king Noble. I believe that the reference is to Thomas Becket, because of the earlier reference in the same \textit{branche}, and the link with a rebellious baron. Praise of Poncet’s family then functions as simply a genteel lie. In
either case, there is irony in the reference to “Tholomé” because he is described by Roques as a brave warrior from a fragment of “Doon de Nanteuil,” 56 part of a cycle of tales of rebellious vassals, La Geste de Doon de Mayence. 57 Renart’s ironic praise of Poncet as a member of a noble family that supports the king is undercut by the “reality” that Renart is one of the barons who has revolted against the king. The saint’s name sets up both the ambiguity in Renart/Galopin’s description of himself and in his praise of Poncet.

With Renart/Galopin’s clever description of a snare as a valuable shrine near the tomb of Coupée, the hen that he ate, the groom is lured into a trap, and killed. There is no bigamous marriage between Poncet and Hermeline, based on a lie told by the cat Tibert.

**Adventures of Tibert**

Two particularly Breton saints, Guion and Sampson, along with a little-known Limousin cleric, Israel, are invoked in Tibert’s story, alpha branche XII, “Les vêpres de Tibert” / ”Tibert’s Vespers” (1190). 58 At the beginning of the episode Tibert reluctantly abandons sunning himself on a rock to join Renart in search of food and fun. As they hear dogs and

56 Roques I, Index des noms propres, 165.

57 Zink, Littérature française, 80.

58 The self-named poet is Richard of Lison, a village near Bayeux in the western Normandy.
their handlers approaching, Renart runs off and Tibert climbs an oak tree. A priest riding by carrying liturgical books joins the huntsmen in throwing stones and sticks at the cat in order to knock him down from the tree. Tibert is quite put out by these unholy thrusts:

‘...Mes foi que doi seint Ysrael,
Vos faites molt grant vileinie
Qui venes par tele estotie... ’
(Martin XII, 288-90)

‘...But by the faith that I owe to Saint Israel,
You are doing a very evil thing
That you show with this wicked act.’

Tibert invokes the name of a canon from Dorat in the diocese of Limoges who was known for his unceasing devotion for learning and for teaching theology at the bishopric school. He was also known for caring for the sick. After his death in 1014, many miracles were noted at his tomb, leading to significant local devotion to him. The reason for this reference to this learned and holy man soon becomes clear. Seeking an escape, Tibert jumps on the back of the priest’s horse and takes off. The priest begs him to return with the books that he needs. But Tibert asks him, invoking Saint Martin (Martin XII, 421, also the name of the church where the priest was substitute at services), to give him the correct Latin word for “fable.” The priest replies, “faba” (“bean”). The priest is no match for the cat who easily trumps the village priest with his knowledge.

of Latin. Tibert then proposes a riddle, one that the priest cannot answer, but one that clearly refers to Saint Israel of Dorat:

‘…Savez nient de celi faire  
Que li prestre font as clercons  
Quant il lor pernent lor lecons ?’  
(Martin XII, 438-40)

‘...Do you know something about  
What the priests do to the young clerks  
When they take their courses?’

As the village priest has never been to class, he is unable to answer the cat’s riddle, so Tibert leaves with the priest’s horse and books.

Meeting Renart along the way to the church, Tibert continues to display his rhetorical skills, much to Renart’s dismay. Arriving at the church of Saint Martin, Renart suggests that they ring the bells. He shows how to do so, mounting a bench, and making a noose for his muzzle with the rope. Tibert imitates the fox, taking the noose in his teeth and paws. But Renart kicks away the bench that the cat was standing on, and the cat is left swinging from the cord, unable to speak or stop because his neck is firmly snared in the noose attached to the ringing bell of the church. Renart directs a variety of jeers at Tibert, in the manner of Tibert’s earlier learned challenges:

‘...Vos ne feïstes pas que sage.  
Si vos di bien par seint Sanson,  
Que ge vos en tieng a bricon…’  
(Martin XII, 1110-12)

‘...You don’t seem wise at all,
When you say by Saint Sampson
That I hold you for a fool...'

One of the Celtic founding saints of Brittany, Saint Sampson established
a monastery at Dol, a place that later became a stop on the medieval
pilgrimage route of those seven founding saints. His signature on the
Acts of the Council of Paris in 560 attests to his position.\textsuperscript{60} In Brittany,
he was famous for the austerity of his life and the miracles that he
worked.\textsuperscript{61} Renart uses Sampson’s integrity to mock Tibert’s previous
erudition and his current inability to respond in any way.

As Renart continues to mock Tibert, getting his revenge for the
latter’s intellectual puzzles that Renart could not answer earlier, he
becomes more extended in his jeers:

\begin{quote}
\textit{‘Ge quidoie par seint Guion}
\textit{Q’a la purification}
\textit{Venist ma feme a vos demein.}
Mes ne porraoit a vostre mein
\textit{Atteindre s’offrande a baillier}
\textit{Ne vostre bele mein baissier,}
\textit{Que trop vos estez haut leve.}
\textit{Si vos tendreit a fol deve}
\textit{Et en auroit trop grant poür...’}
\textsuperscript{(Martin, XII, 1165-73)}
\end{quote}

‘By saint \textbf{Guion} I think
That my wife will come to you

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{60} In a 9\textsuperscript{th} century Breton calendar, Sampson, patron of the Breton arch-
bishopric, was one of only two saints listed. Julia Smith, “Oral and Written,”
337.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{61} Albin Butler, “Saint Sampson, Bishop and Confessor,” \textit{The Lives of the}
saints, vol. VII (1866), September 9, 2012, Bartleby.com
\end{quote}
For purification tomorrow.
But she will not be able
To reach your hand with her offering
Nor to kiss your lovely hand
Because you are raised too high.
So she will hold herself back
And will be very afraid.'

In nearby Brittany the single trace of this saint is a chapel dedicated to a Saint Guyon in Pluvigner, Pays d’Auray, Morbihan. However, the word also means “guide” in Old French. Beta (Roques XI, 12623) substitutes a Saint Simon (probably the abbot of Saint-Bertin at Saint-Omer in Picardy) in this particular jeer that refers to the medieval practice of requiring women who had given birth to go to the parish church to be “purified” four to six weeks post partum to receive a blessing from the priest. He would “greet her, sprinkle her with holy water while reciting a psalm and a prayer, and then take her by the hand to lead her into the church.” 62 Adapated from the Jewish ceremony that Mary followed forty days after giving birth to Jesus--later celebrated as “Candlemas” on Feb. 2--priests often required offerings for the ceremony, leading to stories of improper practices or extortion, 63 as might be inferred from Renart’s speech. Renart has reason to reference this practice as Hermeline has


just given birth to both a male and a female kit, setting off Renart’s search for food at the beginning of this *branche*.

The ringing of the bell, counterbalanced by the cat, summons the villagers, including the priest and his concubine, who hits the cat. A young man tries to kill Tibert with his sword, but ends up slicing the rope, thus freeing the cat. Tibert flees into the night, only to meet up with Renart again, who ironically invokes a saint who suffered martyrdom with a rope around his neck.

> Que que Tibert si s’achemine,  
> Li est venuz Renart devant  
> En sa voie : ‘Par saint Climent,  
> Ahi, fait il, bons ordenez,  
> De vostre ofrance nos donez,  
> Por amor Dieu, biaux tres douz sire,  
> Que Diex le pere le vos mire .... ‘  
> (Roques, XI, 12854-60)

While Tibert was walking along,  
Renart came in front of him  
In his path: ‘By saint Clément,  
He said, give us goods  
From your offering,  
For the love of God, sweet, kind sir,  
That God the father should admire you…’

“Climant,” while used here for rhyming with “devant,” refers to the story of the pope Saint Clement being drowned with an anchor tied around his neck, as Tibert was almost killed with the belfry cord around his neck.64

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64 *Alpha* (Martin XII, 1408) presents the phrase as “en sa voie parfont clinant... ” (“...in his path, bowing deeply...”).
The invocation of clerical saints continues in the two episodes of
*alpha branche* XIV: “La Queue de Tibert”/ “Tibert’s Tail,” and “Primaut.”
In the first one, Tibert invites the hungry Renart to join him while he
seeks the milk hidden in a bin at a nearby peasant’s house. Tibert
promises the possibility of fat hens and capons. Renart agrees to
accompany Tibert. Renart also agrees to wait to catch a hen, because, as
Tibert points out, the guard dogs would start barking, and Tibert
wouldn’t get access to the milk.

Renart then agrees to hold up the heavy cover that protects the
pitcher of fresh milk, while Tibert laps up the milk. But Renart becomes
impatient while waiting for his own dinner in the hen house, and invokes
Saint Denis to underscore his annoyance:

“Tybert’ dist il, ‘ies tu a ese?
Hume tantost et si t’en is !
Car foi que je doi seint Denis,
Ceste huce forment me greve :
Car par un pou que je ne creve.’
(Martin XIV, 80-84)

‘ Tibert,” he says, “haven’t you had enough?
Hurry up and drink, and then leave,
Because, by the faith that I owe to saint Denis
I can scarcely hold this cover
Because I am almost dead.’

It is possible that Renart’s claim that he has been working hard might
refer to the popular saying “À la Saint-Denis, le laboureur se réjouit” (“on
Saint Denis’ feast day, Oct. 9, the worker can rejoice”—because it’s near
the end of the harvest). But the reference may have been an ironic one made to compare Renart’s holding up a heavy cover—while “dying” of hunger—to Saint Denis carrying his head—while dead.

In any event, Renart releases the cover, allowing it to fall on Tibert’s tail, cutting it in half. The angry cat accuses Renart of having caused him great pain. Renart feigns innocence, and replies that it was Tibert’s fault. Tibert answers: “Je non ai, par seint Lienart” (“It was not, by Saint Leonard,” Martin XIV, 119). Renart proceeds to discuss the benefit of a lighter tail, and adds:

‘Ce poise moi, par seint Amant,
Que la moe coe est si grant.
Ge voudroie qu’el fust coupee.’
(Martin XIV, 133-5)

‘By Saint Amand, I am annoyed
With having such a long tail.
I wish that someone would cut it off.’

Here Renart calls on Saint Amand, patron of brewers (milk is Tibert’s preferred beverage) and missionary-bishop in 7th century Flanders, while pretending to have a concern with the length of his own tail. Given the possibility of a lowercase word, “amant” (lover), Renart’s words could be

65 There may also be an allusion to the poem, “Speculum stultorum” of Nigel de Longchamps (1175) where the ass Bruneau wants to lengthen his tail, but only manages to shorten it—thanks to a group of dogs. Jean Batany, “Renardie et asnerie: La Fontaine et la tradition médiévale,” Europe 50, 515 (March 1972): 64.
easily be interpreted on another level as casually bragging about his own sexual endowment.

Tibert makes a show of accepting the loss of part of his tail, and calls upon Saint Riquier, whose abbey was burnt to the ground in 1134—certainly within recent memory—saying:

“...foi que je doi seint Richer
Je voil que aies a manger”
(Martin XIV, 139-40)

“...by the faith that I owe to Saint Riquier
I want you to get something to eat.”

Here the “faith” owed to Saint Riquier is likely that Tibert feels that his person has been destroyed, just as the abbey, and that he owes Renart for the mutilation.

The two animals go over to the hen house, where Tibert assures Renart that the cock would be a better choice than the hens, as he is “bon et cras et grant” (Martin XIV 154—“good, fat and big”)—but also loud. Renart is caught by the dogs before escaping.

**Primaut**

Still hungry, Renart comes across a box of hosts that a priest has dropped when jumping a hedge on his horse. Renart eats all of them except for two that he carries folded in half. He meets Primaut, Isengrin’s

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brother. Primaut is also hungry, and Renart offers to share the
“gatax/de mostier que sont bons et bax” (Martin XIV, 233-34), “cakes
from the church that are good and lovely,” an ironic statement referring
to Catholic tropes of the spiritual goodness of the consecrated hosts
taken at Communion. Renart suggests that for more hosts, they might
visit the closest church:

‘...Vien, si iron a .I. moustier
Ou il en a encor assez,
Tant que tu soies respassez
De la fain qui si mal te trace,
Tu en avras, par saint Romacle...’
(FHS 7, 66-70)

‘...Come, then, let's go to the first church
Where there are enough,
So much that you will recover
From the hunger that so badly afflicts you,
You will have some, by Saint Remacle....’

As “Romacle” does not rhyme with “trace”, or with “avras” at the end of
the following line, the author/copyist probably chose to call upon a saint
who was known for his generosity to the poor, as well as his healing
powers, as seen in the healing waters of his monastery, Stavelot. The two
enter the church, and, after eating the hosts, they force open a locked
chest that holds bread and meat and wine. Primaut gets drunk on the
sacramental wine. Renart skillfully abstains. Primaut suggests that he
might sing a liturgy, and Renart responds that the wolf needs to be
ordained first. A monk’s tonsure will also be necessary. Primaut
drunkenly agrees with Renart: “Par la foi que doit seint Renaut” (Martin XIV, 359). Saint Renaud (d. 1104) was a monk and hermit in the Angevin forest of Craon, helpfully chosen to rhyme with “Primaut.” The monk and hermit Saint Leonard is the choice in the later gamma (FHS 7, 231), rhyming with “Renart,” but also implying the need for deliverance from Renart.

A razor, a basin and scissors are soon found in the sacristy, and Renart sets about shearing Primaut’s head down to his ears. The wolf pronounces himself satisfied “par seint Remi” (Martin XIV, 406), the saint renowned for baptizing Clovis, Merovingian king of the Franks, and for establishing close connections between the crown and the church in France. However, it should be noted on another level that cutting the long hair of a Merovingian king also signified removing him from power, as Renart is doing to Primaut here.67

Renart’s next suggestion is that Primaut go with him to seek out three hams—well salted (“molt bien sales”)—that a peasant has stored in his house.

_Fet Primauz, ‘et si en alon’_
_Je volenters par seint _Simon_’
_Fet Renars..._
(Martin XIV, 671-73)

‘Let’s get going,’ says Primaut,

67 Averil Cameron, “How did Merovingian kings wear their hair?” in Revue belge de philologie et histoire, v. 43, 4 (1965), 1204.
‘By Saint Simon, very willingly,’ says Renart...

The Saint Simon invoked here may be the 12th century abbot (of Saint-Bertin, d. 1148) who, after waiting for seven years for the results of his contested election, finally was able to exercise his leadership. Renart certainly doesn’t want to wait long before leading Primaut into the larder through a narrow hole and setting about eating the promised hams.

While Renart can slip out through the hole, Primaut cannot, and ends up being beaten by the peasants before reaching Renart in the woods.

Renart next suggests that they look for food in the flock of fattened geese close by.

- _O est ce, por seint Nicholas?_
  _Fet Primaus, enseigne le moi !_

(Martin XIV, 856-57)

- “-Where are they, then, by Saint Nicholas?”
  Says Primaut, “show me.”

In effect, if it’s a present, as Nicholas was known to provide, “show me now,” says Primaut. The cult of Saint Nicholas of Myra was popular throughout Europe, even before some Italian merchants took advantage of civil unrest in the area of present-day Turkey to “translate” his relics to Bari, Italy in 1087.

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Upon Renart’s indication of where to find the geese, Primaut promises to bring back one or two for them to eat together, if Renart will wait for him.

‘Molt volunters, ce dist Renart,
Par mon seignor seint Liènart.’ (Martin XIV, 871-72)

‘Most willingly,’ says Renart,
‘By my lord, holy Leonard.’

While “Liènart” rhymes with “Renart,” this could also be an instance of an invocation to the patron saint of released prisoners, as Primaut has just escaped from the peasants.

But Renart has a trick in mind: the geese are guarded by two mastiffs who chase Primaut as soon as he has taken a goose. Finding Renart again, Primaut upbraids him because he suspects that Renart knew full well that the hounds were there. He begins beating the smaller animal, but stops when Renart says that he’s a little fellow (“un petis hom”—Martin XIV, 918), who will complain to the king, the queen, his wife, Hermeline, and their little foxes, if anything bad should happen to him.

This stops Primaut, who then offers to swear an oath never to harm Renart again, as long as the fox stops playing tricks on him. Renart agrees. Primaut wants to solemnize the oath by taking it in a church:
“By the faith that I owe holy Charity,”
Says Primaut, “I greatly wish to know
Where the church would be found
Where I can take the oath?”
Renart responds: “By saint Clement,
I will show you the path,
If God sends me guidance.”

Saint Clement, the pope whom Emperor Trajan sent into exile to work in mines and then to be drowned at sea, is probably the saint cited by Renart when offering direction, for he wants Primaut to meet a similar fate. Saint Clement was also known for giving spiritual direction to the people of Corinth, urging the reestablishment of peace within its Christian community.69

Renart trots down a path in the woods, thinking about how to humiliate Primaut. He remembers a snare hidden in the woods. They proceed to this spot, where Renart reassures Primaut:

‘ ...Et je sai bien, par saint Simon,
Par quel endroit i enterron,
Si en avrez en moie foi
Se vos volez venir o moi.’
(FHS 8, 637-40)

‘...And I know well, by Saint Simon, 
By which opening we will enter, 
If you have faith in me 
If you want to come with me.’

The suggestion by Renart that joins “faith” with knowing how to enter (the trap) has resonances of Matthew 7:13, “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, those who enter through it are many.”70 For that reason, the saint “Simon” may refer to Simon Peter, the leader of the early Christians, by his earlier name.

Renart then describes the qualities of the presumed saint whose relics Primaut is to touch when taking the oath, and promises to be Primaut’s good friend, if the latter swears never to raise a hand against him.

‘...Se tu ne vous, je n’en puis mes.’
‘Par la foi que doi seinte Anés, 
Dit Primaus, ce fera ge bien. 
Ne t’en estuet doter de rien... ’
(Martin XIV, 1047-50)

‘...If you refuse, I can do nothing.’ 
By the faith that I owe to saint Agnes,’ 
Says Primaut, ‘I truly want to swear, 
That you should have no need to fear...’

Primaut references a young female martyr known as an eloquent
defender of her relationship with Christ to anchor his upcoming oath.\^1 A
Latin *Gesta sanctae Agnetis* was written in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, and served as
the basis for several medieval versions of this popular legend.\^2

Primaut holds his paw over the supposed relics as he solemnly
pronounces his oath. Then he lowers his paw, and the trap firmly closes
on it. As Renart jumps to the side, Primaut shouts at him:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Sire Renart, aïe, aïe!}
\begin{flushright}
Aïdiez por seint Lïenart!
\end{flushright}
\end{quote}

(Martin XIV 1068-69)

\begin{quote}
\textit{Sir Renart, help!}
\textit{Help me in the name of Saint Leonard!}
\end{quote}

While Saint Leonard is almost always called upon non-ironically by those
animals tricked by Renart, it seems that those invocations accomplish
little when the adversary is the clever fox. When Renart responds, “It is
not in my power to help you” (‘De toi aidier moi ne tient’—Martin XIV,
1072)—and that might be true, if only a human has the power to open
the trap that Renart has led Primaut into. As with the experience of the
mastiff Roënel and the badger Poncet, this is a sad joke about the
gullible not seeing that a presumed shrine is a snare, and about animals
not being wary of the fox Renart. Given their didactic possibilities,

\^1 When this saint’s name is added in later tales or gamma manuscripts it may
reference the third wife (1196-1201) of Philippe Auguste, Agnès de Méran.

\^2 Anne B. Thompson, “The Legend of St. Agnes: Improvisation and the Practice
perhaps these episodes have close links to exempla, the stories used in sermons, because of the warning that they provide to the unwary.

**Renart and the birds: the crow and the cock**

Renart’s tricks with other animals continue in a group of earlier branches, with invocations (alpha branche II) to saints Mary and Julian. In the first instance, Renart approaches Tiecelin who has just stolen a small, fresh round of cheese that was drying in the sun (, “Renart et Tiécelin le corbeau ”/“Renart and Tiecelin the crow”). A piece falls in front of Renart, but he has his eyes on a bigger prize, the crow himself. At first glance, the invocation to Mary appears to function simply for the rhyme with the previous line:

‘Ha dex!’ fait il, ‘con poi de joie
M’a dex done en ceste vie!
Que fera ge, seinte Marie!
Cist formages me put si fort
Et flere qu’il ja m’aura mort.’
(Martin II, 958-62)

‘Dear God, he says, so little happiness has God given me in this life!
What will I do, Holy Mary!
This cheese smells so bad to me,
And it will stink until it kills me.’

However, there is also the implication that Mary can intercede with God (as she did at the marriage feast of Cana) to present Renart with better food than that dropped by the crow (namely, the crow himself). But
Tiécelin thinks twice about coming close to Renart to reclaim his bit of cheese.

So Renart goes off hungry. He encounters a lay brother, holding two bloodhounds on leashes ("Renart et la mésange" /“Renart and the tit”). Thinking quickly, Renart greets him as a holy man and hermit ("seins hom estes et ermites," Martin II, 630), and states that if he is hindered by the brother’s dogs from running with the other dogs—with whom he says that he has a bet—it will be the holy man’s fault.

*Cil se porpense qu’il dist bien ;
A deu et a seint Julïen
Le commande, si s’en retourne....
(Martin II, 641-42)

This fellow thinks to himself that Renart speaks well;
He commends Renart to God
and to Saint Julian and turns around....

While rhyming with “bien” is convenient, the Julian cited here is probably the patron of travelers, the legendary “Julien l’Hospitalier,” who devoted his life to helping the poor and ferrying travelers across a river—after mistakenly killing his parents.

A different Saint Marcel appears in alpha branche XVI (1202), after Renart bests the *vilain* Bertaut and claims his cock, Chantecler. This is a rewriting of the earlier *branche* II situation with the cock of farmer Constant de Noues. Once again, Chantecler escapes. High up in a tree, he encourages Renart to flee, perhaps because he notices a pack of
hunting dogs, pointers and their handlers approaching in pursuit of a
wild boar:

‘Alez vous en: que par le corps
Saint Marcel, se plus attendez,
Vo pelicon ert ramendez.’
(Martin XVI 636-38)

‘Get out of here: by the body
Of Saint Marcel, don’t wait any longer—
Your fur-lining will be in pieces.’

This reference probably alludes to the fate of a second century deacon
named Marcel. He was tortured by the Romans, then buried up to his
waist and left to die. In time, a Cluniac monastery was established over
his tomb in Chalon-sur-Saône in Burgundy,73 contributing to awareness
of his name and vita for Cluniac monks, if not clerics in general.

When Renart plays doctor

In the branche named “Renart médecin” /”Renart the Physician”
(alpha X. 1180-90) there is preliminary episode, “Renart trompe Roënel et
Brichemer”/ “Renart fools Roënel and Brichemer” (Martin X, 1-1152).
Here, once again, messengers are sent by Noble the king to summon the
fox who has ignored invitations to join the other animals at the king’s
grand feast. Roënel the mastiff is the first chosen to take a message to
Renart. In beta (and gamma 29, 315-18) Roenel responds to his wife,

who remembers all the ill that came to those barons (Tibert and Brun)

who previously attempted to talk with Renart:

‘Dame, dame, par saint Mandé,
Qant le rois le m’a commendé
et por le cors saint Boniface
Dont n’est il droiz que je le face ?’
(Roques XIX, v. 17295-98)

‘My lady, by saint Mandé,
When the king ordered me
And by the body of Saint Boniface
Should I not take on this mission?’

In short, Roenel resembles Saint Boniface, who, to serve his Lord,
sacrificed his body to north German pirates expecting to find gold and
jewels, not Patristic texts, in his treasure chests.\(^74\) An invocation to
Saint Mandé (Maudez), the Irish monk who lived in Brittany in the 6th
century, might help to protect Roënel against Renart, as the saint was
known for reviving a boy thought dead because of his brother’s arrow, as
well as for banishing poisonous snakes from an island.\(^75\) The proximity
of the town and abbey of Saint-Mandé, a dependency of the abbey of
Saint-Magloire of Paris, would also have kept the name of the saint in the
minds of the copyists of Ile-de-France.


The evil that his wife fears happens to Roënél, who is tricked by Renart into stepping into a snare on the promise of a shrine with relics. He crawls back to court.

The lion king calls upon his favorite saint, Lienart, during talks with his assembled barons, Brichemer, Grimbert, Isengrin and Belin, telling them that the original reason for the convocation of animals was to prepare to rein in Renart, who has been defying him:

‘...Bien veez, par saint Lïenart,
Que Renart me prise mout pou…’
(Roques XIX, 17800-01)

‘...Note his refusal, by Saint Leonard,
That he values me so little...’

The invocation to Saint Leonard in beta (and gamma) shows the frustration of King Noble with his vassal who refuses to honor him. It is said that Saint Leonard's main purpose in freeing prisoners was "to bring malefactors ... to a true sense of the enormity of their sins, and to a sincere spirit of compunction and penance, and a perfect reformation of their lives."76 This will be an endless task for King Noble, who next sends Brichemer. The stag returns in great distress after being harassed by village dogs in a “short cut” suggested by Renart.

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While the king promises to avenge this trick, he is feeling ill. No doctor seems able to help him. So Grimbert decides, once again, to be the third messenger and persuade Renart to return to court.

Renart once more prays for help:

*Molt prie Deu et seint Martin*
*Qu il tel cose li envoit*
*Don li roi Nobles garis soit...*
*(Martin X, 1272-74)*

Implores God and Saint Martin
To send him a medicine
That will cure King Noble...

Saint Martin, a soldier who left the Roman army and became a monk, then a bishop, was said to have prayed in a similar fashion, “My Lord, if it’s necessary, keep me alive, because I do not refuse your work” (“Seigneur, s’il le faut, garde-moi en vie, car je ne refuse pas le labeur.”)⁷⁷

Calling on Saint Martin, a patron saint of the kingdom of France, is also appropriate for royal health and healing. Among the miraculous works ascribed to Martin were the healing of lepers and the raising of the dead,⁷⁸ possibly more difficult tasks than that of curing the king’s ills. Gregory of Tours mentions that Saint Martin once ate hellebore, and recovered. Administered in small doses, it was considered a “remedy for

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⁷⁸ Farmer, Oxford Saints, 265.
madness,” 79 a possibility if there were no discernible signs of a physical illness. When Renart arrives in court with some hellebore in his pouch, Renart brags that he has searched in Rome, Salerno, the Holy Land, the Ardennes, Lombardy and Toscany to find a cure for the king. Several of the animals object to his exaggerations, but Tibert defends Renart’s assertion that he has been traveling widely. The king is momentarily grateful, and invokes Nicholas, a saint known as patron of those who travel by sea, and as one who restored life to three children:

\[\text{Dist Nobles: 'Par saint Nicholas}\]
\[\text{Tieberz, vos dites verité... '}\]

(Roques XIX, 18576-77)

‘By Saint Nicholas,’ says Noble, ‘You have spoken the truth, Tibert...’

Saint Nicholas of Myra, a patron of sailors in the Aegean Sea, was also known as a thaumaturge. 80 An invocation to this saint is particularly appropriate here because a healing oil (Manna di S. Nicola) was said to ooze from his relics, giving this invocation overtones of healing and prayer. 81

Although the king does not know why he is suffering, he is willing to be generous to whoever can cure him:

79 Pernoud, Martin, 44.

80 Farmer, Oxford Saints, 292.

Noble said, ‘There is nothing I desire so much
I would willingly give half
of my kingdom, by Saint William,
so that I might be healthy.’

Among the saints named “William” who might be invoked here, the most likely model was the inspiration for *La geste de Guillaume d’Orange*. This William of Gellone was count of Toulouse, duke of Aquitaine. He led Charlemagne’s armies against the Saracens and defeated them at Aliscans. He left his wealth behind to become a simple monk at the abbey of Gellone, later renamed Saint-Guilhem-le-désert in the Hérault. It was after his canonization in 1066 that troubadours began to sing about his deeds and increase his renown. The abbey attracted a large number of pilgrims, partly for Saint William, and partly because it was one stop on the *chemin d’Arles* that led pilgrims to Saint James of Compostella.

Renart, after checking the sick king’s pulse, his ribs, his back, his urine, says:

> *Et dist: ‘Sire par saint Climent,*

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A poi ne sui venuz trop tart :
De vostre mal covient esgart,
Se talant avez de garir.’

(Roques, XIX, v. 18638-41)

And he says, ‘My lord, by Saint Clement,
I hope that I have not come too late:
Regarding your illness it is important to take into consideration
Whether you have the desire to recover.’

While Pope Saint Clement was usually invoked against childhood
diseases,\textsuperscript{83} it is possible that the Saint Clement noted here may well be
the founder of the Christian community in Metz. He is remembered for,
presumably, defeating the Graouully dragon,\textsuperscript{84} the emblem of all evil
visited upon the people of Metz. Drawings or large, stuffed figures of the
dragon became part of local Rogation festivities in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century.
These celebrations may have been well known to the writer. In the end,
Renart “cures” the king with a small dose of hellebore.

**Renart the counselor**

Renart later proves helpful to the king again when his skill and
knowledge of the land are requested for scouting out a pasture where the
king wants to hunt. In reply Renart responds with an invocation to an
able shepherd who became king:

\textsuperscript{83} Giorgi, *Le Petit Livre*, 688.

\textsuperscript{84} European Institute of Cultural Routes, “The Graouully, Symbol of Metz,”
‘...par saint Davi,
Je ne sai pas certainement
En quel pasture ne conment
Nos truisson proie qui riens vaille...’
(Martin XVI, 868-71)

‘...By Saint David,
I don’t know for certain
In which pasture nor how
We can find a worthy quarry...’

Renart is, undoubtedly, invoking the Old Testament king and military leader of the Israelites (not the pious patron saint of Wales). As a young man, David was a shepherd who knew the best pastures for his sheep.

Once the prey, a bull, a cow and a calf, are secured, Isengrin suggests this division: that the bull and cow be given to the lion, with the wolf keeping the calf, and Renart receiving nothing—because he doesn’t like this meat anyway (si n’a mes de viande cure—Martin XVI, 1235).

The king is not pleased, and tears Isengrin’s cheek with a swat of his claw. When it’s his turn, Renart answers the question of who receives which animal by assigning ownership of all three to the king, the queen and their young son—and nothing to himself nor to Isengrin. Noble quite admires hearing a solution that gives him everything, and asks Renart who taught him so well how to divide spoils. Renart responds:

‘Sire,’ fet il, ‘par sainte Luce,
Cel vilain a la rouge aumuce,
Je n’en oi onques autre mestre...’
(Martin XVI, 1297-99)
'Sire,' he says, ‘by Saint Lucie,  
I've had no other master but  
This fellow with the red cap....’

Renart’s credits his clear appreciation of the king’s greed both to the  
unfortunate, bleeding Isengrin (with the red “hat” of a cardinal) and to  
Saint Lucy, a virgin martyr in Sicily whose story resembles that of Saint  
Agnes. Lucy became known as a protector against eye diseases and  
hemorrhages, because her eyes were pulled out—although it was said  
that she put them back in before she was decapitated, linking Isengrin’s  
bloody head with hers.  

Another allusion to sight is made in branche IX, “Brun, Renart and  
Liétart” by “un prestre de de la Croiz en Brie” (v. 1) with an invocation to  
Saint Pantaleon. The peasant Lietard has just promised to give his best  
ox to a bear, after disparaging the ox for its lethargy. Brun is delighted  
to hear the offer, and confronts Lietard to demand the exhausted work  
animal. Later the farmer laments long and loudly about his foolishness.  
One listener overhears the rant: Renart. The fox runs over and suggests  
to the peasant that he can help him. Lietard, of course, doesn’t believe  
him. Renart chastises the man for not believing that he, Renart, is an  
able lawyer known to transform wrong into right, and, more than one  
time, change right into wrong:

— Giorgi, Le petit livre, 730.
'Je sui bon mestre de plaider,
Foi que doi seinent Panpalion :
En la cort Noble le lion
Ai ge meû meint aspre plet
Et meintes fois de droit tort fet
Et molt sovent de tort le droit....'  
(Martin, IX 484-90)

'I am a master of the argument,
By the faith that I owe to Saint Pantaleon.
In the court of Noble the lion
Have I made many a bitter plea
And often made right wrong
And many times made wrong right...'

Famous for giving sight to a blind man, Saint Pantaleon was invoked in cases of ocular problems, including strabismus, when the eyes cannot focus simultaneously on the same spot. So Saint Pantaleon works here both as a reproof to a peasant who does not recognize Renart’s capabilities, and as an example of Renart’s ability to twist events in opposing ways to suit his needs.

**Conclusion**

If remembering the saints were “an act of piety...and the fulfillment of a duty to posterity,” then the poets’ use of saints’ names--with their sociological and religious meanings--in the mouths of animals and humans alike in the protean *Roman de Renart* gives evidence of their intention to enrich the meaning of their work while honoring societal

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expectations. Invocations to saints may be sincere, ironic, or, occasionally, sardonic. They challenge the modern reader to bring a new horizon of expectations to the reading of the Renart, one that includes an appreciation for the manner in which saints’ lives were integrated into the fabric of the Renart, as well as an effort to learn more about these saints.

The choice of saints’ names reflects the knowledge, background, and rhetorical skills of the clerics and poets who wrote the stories. Popular piety is often linked with an ironic view of the beliefs held by gullible believers who sought to reach the sacred however possible. Whether these saints’ names are used to provide additional textual information, or to support the ironic gap between what was being said and meant by a protagonist, or whether their use was a prudent method of ensuring acceptance of the tales within clerical circles, these names carried meaning.

There remain many saints in the Renart who are invoked without referring to an incident in their life or a quality attributed to them, as, for example, Saint Mandé on pages 157-158 of this chapter. Their appearances in the Renart cycle, especially in the final group of branches, carry a different kind of meaning, one associated with their feast day on the liturgical calendar or with eponymous physical buildings, i.e.,
churches and abbeys. The invocation of the names of saints due to their eponymy will be considered in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

The Eponymy of the Saints and the *Renart*

In the previous chapter the import of the names of saints cited in the *Roman de Renart* was explored with incidents from their *vita* or *passio*. In this chapter selected instances of characters invoking a saint due to awareness of the eponymous name of a town, church, abbey, or name day will be discussed. In many instances, more than one saint’s name would be possible in a rhyme. Why was a certain saint invoked, if not for his/her *vita* or *passio*? Whether inspired by a feast day, a particular shrine or a memorable church or abbey, the use of a saint’s name may have had a meaning in the physical world for the poets and copyists. The effect of *habitus*, the familiarity that arises from experiences and everyday life—or from the commercialization of pilgrimage sites—provides possible reasons for invocation of a saint.

**Devotion to Mary, *Theotokos*, Mother of God**

The importance of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, cannot be over-stated in medieval times dominated by Christianity, a set of beliefs that provided both religious and civil structure for everyday life, the latter
until the rise of the nation state, the suppression of local warlords, and the development of urban life. Many characters in the *Roman de Renart* cry out for Mary’s help as the nurturing mother of God and, therefore, a key intermediary between God and humans. Mary, often invoked as “Saint Mary,” can be considered a “saint” despite the special nature of her calling. She was a person “who sought spiritual perfection,” was venerated as holy and was recognized as such.¹ As little is known about her life, besides what is related in the Bible, most of the 20 or so invocations to her (not counting at least two to Mary the Egyptian) do not reference any particular legend or deepen one’s understanding of an incident in the *Renart*, besides the two cited in Chapter 3. One of these, Martin II, 958, references Mary’s entreaty to her Son to help find wine for the marriage feast of Cana; and the other, Martin I, 175, alludes to Mary’s virginity, while posing the possibility of a contrast with the courtesan Mary the Egyptian. With the lack of specific reasons for invocations to Mary based on her life, the frequency of invocations may be related to the numerous churches consecrated in her name and her agnomen, “*Notre Dame,*” “Our Lady.” This is a regal woman who cares for everyone and acts as an intercessor with her Son. She is the perfect *patrona.*

¹ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints & Society*, 1.
The contest of wits and will between the peasant Lietard and both Brun and Renart (branche IX, “Brun, Renart et Liétart”) provides an example of a general invocation to Mary’s name, although one that implies help with nourishment. Lietard has accepted Renart’s advice and, with the fox’s help, kills the bear. Preparing to recover the carcass at night to be salted down and stored for winter, Lietard invokes God and Saint Mary for help in the important task that must be done secretly by him, his wife, his daughter and his farm-hand to avoid detection by jealous neighbors or agents of the local count on whose hunting grounds Brun was killed:

‘...Se Deu plaist et seinte Marie,
Entre nos quatre leverons
Brun, que ja greve n’en serons.’
(Martin IX, 1012-14)

‘If it please God and holy Mary,
Among the four of us we will raise
Brun, without being weighed down.’

Here Saint Mary is paired with God in an invocation for help in covertly securing meat for the winter and avoiding an accusation of poaching.

Saint Mary is also invoked by Renart when seeking food at the beginning of branche XVI (“Bertaut” and “Le partage des proies”/”The Division of Spoils”) and admiring the countryside where he finds himself.

‘Diex, dist Renart, Sainte Marie!
Ou fu trouvez aïnssi biax estrez ?...’
(Martin XVI, 44-45)

‘
Dear Lord,’ says Renart, ‘by the virgin Mary,
Where else could one find such a pleasant sight?’

Renart would likely have stayed at such a place, were it not for the need to satisfy his stomach.

Several sets of invocations have ties to particular cities. The first group relates to the two ecclesiastical institutions located in central Paris.

**Churches in Paris—Saint Germain**

“Saint Germain,” whether the missionary bishop of Auxerre (d. 448) or the bishop of Paris (d. 576), is frequently invoked in the second and third groups of branches, and, especially, in the gamma manuscripts from the 14th century and Ile-de-France. However, there generally appears to be no particular link to the *vita* of either cleric. For that reason, it appears that the use of the name may be linked to a physical location bearing the name of one of the two saints, whether the large Benedictine monastery of Saint-Germain-des-Prés on the left bank of central Paris, or to the church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois that is situated just east of the Louvre, the palace first constructed for Philippe Auguste.²

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² This scriptorium dates from circa 543 until the Revolution. It was said to have produced fine illuminated manuscripts, as well as “excellent historical work,” including the *Historia Regnum Francorum ab Origine Gentis ad Annum 1214*. M. Dorothy Neuhofer, *The Benedictine Tradition: The Origins and Early*
In an example drawn from a 14th century redaction of the tales presented by Fukumoto, Harano and Suzuki (FHS), and appearing only in gamma, Primaut the wolf is hungry, as are many renardian animals. They engage in an ongoing search for food, a quest that mirrors a knight’s search for individual renown (in the romans d’aventure) or glory on the battlefield in the chansons de geste. In this instance, Renart suggests eating hosts, because the fox has found a box of them dropped by a priest on horseback. He still has two, and offers them to the wolf. Primaut responds: Par seint Germain/Ne menjai hui ne char ne pain”—By Saint Germain, I’ve eaten neither flesh nor bread today” (FHS 7, 61-2).

In short, Primaut has fasted, so he has prepared himself to receive the host in holy communion, hosts that Renart simply gobbled up. Now the poet or copyist working in Ile-de-France, the province that includes Paris--could have chosen another rhyming saint’s name, perhaps Urbain, the Cluniac monk who became pope and condemned the scandalous second marriage of Philippe I of France. But neither of those had an immediate connection with Paris, in contrast to a Saint “Germain.” (As in other examples, the verse could have been rewritten to allow for a different saint’s name.) In short, besides the rhyme, the person who

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*Development of Two College Libraries* (Lanham, MD and Oxford: University Press of America, 1999), 16-17.
produced the later manuscript witnessed to a local connection with a known saint and institution bearing that individual’s name.

Visits to the court of king Noble are also often associated with an invocation to Saint “Germain.” When Renart agrees with Grimbert to go to court to help cure the king, he says,

‘...Devant lo roi irai demein, Foi que doi Deu et seint Germein.’
(Martin X, 1243-44)

‘..I will go before the king tomorrow, By the faith that I owe to God and Saint Germain.’

If Renart were going to see the king in Paris, the church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois would have been a nearby landmark. However, it was the 7th bishop of Paris, Germain, who was known for a series of miraculous healings, making him the appropriate subject of an invocation for the task at hand. So this is a polysemous reference, both with content and with an allusion to a physical building or urban space.

In another instance related to the king’s court, the nearby Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois is the probable reference. Before the judicial duel with Isengrin begins, Renart follows the king’s instructions, and kneels to swear on the relics that he is speaking the truth in denying all the testimony against him:

Desor les seinz estent sa mein. Il a jure par seint Jermein

With his hand over the saints
He swore by Saint Germain,
And by the saints [bones] that he sees.

In swearing on the relics of saints, some of which may have been conserved at the nearby church, Renart is following a custom set by Charlemagne who ordered that swearing on relics should become the practice for all oaths, secular and religious. Before any major decision or commencement of a private duel or war, combatants pledged to be truthful while holding their hands above or on the powerful relics of people believed to have a direct connection to the Almighty. This practice appears in Tristan when Isolde swears ambiguously on relics before her “trial” (Béroul, v. 4135-36, 4162, 4202) and in the chansons de geste—e.g., in Raoul de Cambrai (v. 4948-51)—that are often parodied in the text, as they are here. Meanwhile, Renart’s false use of emblems of saintliness, possibly reflecting practices that the poet observed in everyday life, and his perjury are faults that he often assigns to others, usually when they call on Saint Leonard for help to escape from one of Renart’s traps.

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In a later *branche* ("La Mort Renart"/"Renart’s Death") Saint Germain is invoked when Renart responds to the king’s kind greeting upon his arrival in court:

‘...et je vous aim,
Foi que je doi a saint Germain.’
(Martin XVII, 191-92)

‘...and I love you,
By the faith that I owe to Saint Germain.’

In these examples, going to court appears to be linked to the use of Saint Germain’s name, probably because of the physical proximity of the two churches and a scriptorium in Paris.

**Churches in Paris—Saint Julian**

Another well-known church in Paris was that of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, erected by Cluniac monks in the 12th century across the Seine from the cathedral of Notre Dame. While a number of invocations to this Saint Julian in the *Renart* are clearly associated with the legendary story of his assistance to travelers crossing a river, at other times, the reference is general. As an example of the former, the instance of a peasant exclaiming over Renart’s fur and invoking Saint Marcel, bishop, presented in *gamma* 22, 273 (as a *réécriture* of *alpha* V, “Le jambon enlevé”/ “The Stolen Ham”), is rewritten (appropriately) for a boatman invoking Saint Julian in Martin XXV, 229, “Le vol des jambons”/
“Stealing hams.” On the other hand, in Martin *branche* XVI, 350-51, “*Foi que je doi saint Julïen,/* *Que je ne vous face contraire*” (“I swear to you by Saint Julian, that he would not make me renounce my revenge” [on the peasant Bertaut]), copied in *beta* and *gamma*, gives no indication of a particular saint. Additional examples appear in the *beta* (*branche* XX) version of “*Renart Empereur*” as part of the story of Droïn’s revenge and in Martin XVI, 1058, “*Le Partage des proies*/ “Dividing the Spoils.” Here the king, impatient for the return of Renart from his mission scouting a small herd, invokes Saint Julian with no particular saint referenced. For that reason, the “*Saint Julien*” who is invoked could refer to the church in Paris (especially in later redactions that were made in Ile-de France), or to the 90 localities named for a Saint Julian,5 or to the cathedral of Saint Julian in Brioude near Puy. This saint was a favorite of Gregory of Tours, who grew up in the region. However, devotion to this particular saint Julian seemed to remain local. For that reason, it is likely that the poets were referring to the church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, part of the cathedral school of Notre-Dame. In addition, devotion to and awareness of this Saint Julian was such in the High Middle Ages that the oldest extant sign—dating to at least 1373--in Paris is one announcing the

location of a hostel for travelers, using imagery from the legend of the Hospitaler.⁶

**Churches in Paris—Saint Agnes**

Another popular saint was Agnes, the young martyr whose inspiring passio was probably used in many homilies, although a rhymed version in Old French was not produced until the latter half of the 13th century.⁷ In “Renart le noir”/“Black Renart,” a post-1205 branche that appears only in alpha, the piteous appearance of a dwarf is described sitting on a table in a knight’s castle:

\[
\begin{align*}
E \text{ si vos di par seinte } & \text{ Agnes} \\
I \text{l n’a pas plein pouce de nes}. \\
& \text{(Martin XIII, 773-775)}
\end{align*}
\]

And then you would say by Saint Agnes
He has less than a thumb’s size nose.

While the use of Agnes’ name here conveniently rhymes with “nes”, or nose, the dwarf’s ugliness offers a strong, ironic contrast to Agnes’ presumed beauty—and known purity. Evidence that popular devotion to Saint Agnes, a virgin martyr found in the martyrology of Usuard, was still popular at the beginning of the 13th century can be found in the

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The establishment of a chapel next to the market place of Paris in 1213. A townsman, Jean Alais, a lead organizer of mystery-plays, had lent a large sum of money to Philip Augustus. To repay the debt, the king authorized Alais to collect a tax of one penny on every basket of fish sold at the Halles. Alais, in gratitude for the return of the funds—and following local custom—had a chapel built that was dedicated to Saint Agnes. Moreover, the name of the third wife (1196-1201) of Philip Augustus, Agnès de Méran, may have encouraged devotion to the martyr as well.

**Churches in Paris-Saint Nicholas**

Among the most popular saints in Christendom was the third century bishop of Myra. Saint Nicholas is invoked eleven times across the three major critical editions of the *Roman de Renart*, yet only three of these invocations reference his life or miracles: Martin XIV, 856 and Roques XIX, 18576 that were examined in Chapter 3, and beta XX which opens with Renart and his family confronting famine, a familiar story of the search for food. In face of an additional concern, that Hermeline is expecting, and fears losing her kit if she doesn’t get some food, Renart sounds equally concerned:

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'Dame, ne vos esmaiez pas!
Que, foi que doi saint Nicholas,
Assez vos en ferai avoir... ‘
(Lecoy XX, 18903-05)

‘My lady, don’t be afraid!
Certainly, by the faith that I owe Saint Nicholas,
I will make sure that you have enough...’

Here Renart is being momentarily solicitous and sincere in his invocation to Saint Nicholas who saved three children from death.

In those instances where his life’s work or legends are not invoked, another saint, e.g., Thomas (whether Becket or the apostle) could have been chosen for the rhyme. For example, after Renart’s victory over the peasant Bertaut in the first part of alpha XVI, the fox heads back to Maupertuis with the cock Chantecler in his mouth. Chantecler bemoans the fact that while hens are eaten in joyous feasts, he will receive no such mark of pleasure. Out of pity, Renart opens his mouth and begins to sing a popular song. Of course, Chantecler, freed, flies immediately to the top of a large elm tree and mocks Renart, in response to his complaint about being tricked,

‘...Foi que je doi saint Nicolas
Mielz vous venist estre teûs.
Se vous estes or deceûs
Par trop chanter... .
(Martin XVI, 598-600)

‘...By the faith that I owe to Saint Nicholas,
It would be better for you to be quiet
If you are then deceived
By singing too much...’
Chantecler invokes “Nicolas” simply for the rhyme, although another saint’s name could have been used. Later, Renart turns Saint Nicholas to his own purposes when the sparrow Droïn asks him for advice, based on his expertise gained from travel. Renart responds:

‘…par seint Nicolas
Ne te mesconseillerai pas
Que bien m’as ma volente fete…’
(Martin XI, 829-30)

“By Saint Nicholas,
I won’t give you bad advice
As you made it my wish…”

While this invocation to Saint Nicholas could represent an elegantly stated desire to be helpful, it ironically results in the loss of all Droïn’s children, and the fulfillment of Renart’s desire for food.

In these three examples, although a “Thomas” might have served the rhyme, few churches in northern France were dedicated to him, while numerous churches were dedicated to Saint Nicholas during the 11th to 13th centuries in France. The basilica of Saint-Nicolas-de-Nantes was begun in the 11th century. In Angers an abbey was dedicated to him in 1020. In Paris the first palace chapel of Robert the Pious (996-1031) was dedicated to Saint Nicolas, and remained part of the Palais royal complex through the medieval period. Another chapel (3rd arrondissement)
outside the abbey of Saint-Martin-des-Champs was dedicated in 1119 to
Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, for the spiritual well-being of the abbey’s
servants and local peasants; it was designated a parish in 1184. In 1187
Robert de Dreux established a hospital for the poor students of Saint-
Nicolas. Another Parisian church, Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, was
established in 1230. These examples of churches give evidence of a
great appreciation for the saint in the region.

**Churches in Paris—Saint Médard**

Saint Médard, a 6th century bishop of Noyon and Tournai, is
invoked in only one *branche* of the *Roman de Renart*. In *branche* XVI, “*Le
partage des prioes*”/ “The Division of Spoils,” Isengrin is given the honor
of deciding how to divide up a small family of cattle that the three
animals have slain. He calls upon Saint Médard:

> ‘*Et dit li leus: “Par saint Maart,*
> Sire, quant vous vient a plesir,
> Il n’est riens que je tant desir,
> Que je ai au coer fain moult grant... ‘
> (Martin XVI, 1206-09)

The wolf responds, ‘By saint Médard,
If this is your good pleasure,
It is also my dearest wish,
Because I am starving.’

As a young boy, Médard was admired for his generosity and respect for
God. As bishop of Noyon and Tournai, he was known for his generosity

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10 Hélène Verlet, *Épitaphier*, 229.
toward the poor, certainly reflected in Isengrin’s gratitude for food that is within sight. However, a reference to a physical building is more likely. Under the direction of Frankish King Clothaire I, a Benedictine abbey was erected over the tomb of the saint in Soissons soon after his death. Under the direction of Frankish King Clothaire I, a Benedictine abbey was erected over the tomb of the saint in Soissons soon after his death.12 A chapel in Paris dedicated to Saint Médard was built before the ninth century along a Roman road leading to Lyon. Although destroyed in one of the Viking raids, it was rebuilt in the 12th century, probably after 1163, on the Rue Mouffetard where it crosses the Bièvre.13 Both the church and the abbey were probably familiar to northern French clerics, especially the Benedictine monks of that era.

**Churches in Paris—Saint Marcel**

Another sainted bishop with a church in Paris was Marcel, whose life was discussed earlier in Chapter 3. In the later *alpha branche* XI, “Renart Empereur,” the king, returning from victory against the Saracens, tells the usurper Renart he won’t ever see his son Rouvel, who captured in a battle. So Renart takes his two prisoners, Brun the bear and

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12 Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 93.

Bruvant the bull, and parades them on the ramparts with their eyes bound and a rope around each one’s neck.

‘Seigneur, ce leur a dit Renart,
_Hui est adjourne vostre jour._
_Proiez Noble l’empereour_
_Qu’il me rende mon fil Rouvel,_
_Ou foi que je doi saint Marcel_
_Ja serez ambedui pendu._’
(Martin XI, 3020-25)

‘My lords,’ said Renart to them,
You have come to your last day.
Ask the king, your lord,
That he return my son Rouvel to me,
Or I swear to you by Saint Marcel,
Both of you will be hanged.’

The threat is effective, and the exchange of prisoners is made.

Rouvel counsels his father to give up fighting the king. However, Renart responds, once again employing Saint Marcel:

‘_Vos dites voir, sire Rouvel,_
_Mes foi que je doi seint Marcel_
_Que je n’ains que vaille un dernier,_
_Li rois le conpera molt cher._’
(Martin XI, 3277-80)

‘You speak the truth.’ says Renart to Rouvel,
‘But by the faith that I owe to saint Marcel
If I am worth only a penny,
It’s the king who will pay dearly for it.’

Renart’s defiance of King Noble continues with the boast that the king shall pay dearly to defeat him. As there is no connection with the life of the 4th century bishop of Paris, nor with the martyred deacon in Chalon-sur-Saône, the rhyming of the final syllable of Marcel’s name with “Rovel”
is apparently the reason for his inclusion in these instances. However, one might consider *habitus*. The Parisian church of Saint Marcel was one of four collegiate churches attached to the archdiocese of Paris, according to Louis de Jaucourt, a prolific writer for the 18th century *Encyclopédie*.\(^{14}\) A letter from Pope Adrian IV of June 26, 1158 attests to the presence of the church in Paris.\(^{15}\) In addition, the five sculptures of Saint Marcel on the arch of the *Porte rouge* of Notre Dame Cathedral, mentioned in Chapter 3, were probably created about the time of the writing of the Renart.

**Churches near Paris—Saint Mandé/Maudez**

A connection with Paris may also be the reason that Saint Mandé/Maudez, is invoked in three different *branches*, one from each of the three periods of composition. For example, at the end of the story of the stolen ham, when Renart is obliged to let Isengrin eat all the ham in exchange for not beating him, Renart comes upon the cricket Frobert, whom he tries to catch in his mouth. Unsuccessful, the fox (*gamma*) decides to give Frobert some advice on keeping his affairs secret:

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As noted in Chapter 3, page 158, Saint Mandé, a reclusive 6th century Irish abbot, established a monastery in Brittany. During a period of Viking raids on northern France in the 9th century, a relic of Saint Mandé was brought to a site east of Paris, adjacent to what was to become the Bois de Vincennes. A chapel was constructed there, dedicated to Saint Mandé, and a village grew around it, especially after the construction of a Benedictine priory associated with the larger Abbey of Saint-Magloire in Paris. So references to Saint Mande were probably based on the chapel dedication.

Churches in Amiens and Liège

Churches in Amiens and Liège also receive groups of references in the Renart. In the later branche XIII, “Renart le Noir,” there is a series of saints invoked who may refer to some aspect of society in Amiens. When the mastiff Roenel does not recognize Renart, who has dyed his fur black,

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he turns to run away. Renart (calling himself “Coflet”) runs after him, saying:

"Venes arere por seint Leu!
Ja su ge cosse de par deu.
Ne vos en fui es pas issi ! »
(Martin XIII, 1153-54)

Come back, by Saint Loup!
Even if I’m an ugly pod of God.
Don’t run from here!

Roenel comes back, but is not at ease...

‘Dont estes vos, por seint Martin,
Qui si aves noir pelicon ’
(Martin XIII, 1162-63)

‘Then what are you, by Saint Martin,
That has so black a fur?’

Renart responds:

‘...par seint Simon,
Sire, je fui nes a Amiens.’
(Martin XIII, 1164-65)

‘By Saint Simon,
Sir, I was born in Amiens.’

The three preceding references are probably geographically based. Saint Simon de Crépy was count of Amiens from 1174-77, before resigning in order to become a monk. It was at the gates of Amiens that Martin divided his military cloak to clothe a beggar, hence the reference to Renart’s outer covering. Amiens, the principal town of Picardy, had neighborhoods named for Saints Peter, Loup and Germain, and churches
dating from the Middle Ages named for the first two of these saints, plus saints James and Martin. Saint Loup was the bishop of nearby Sens and accompanied Saint Germain of Auxerre to England to preach against the Pelagian heresy, hence a connection between the two clerics.

It is also possible that a reference to “black” and Amiens could be related to the dye (and textile) industry that flourished there, as well as to the lightning strike and fire that destroyed the cathedral and church archives in 1218.17

A similar grouping of saints accompanies a specific mention of Liège. When the king sends the trio of Bernard, the ass and high priest, Brun the bear, and Baucent the wild boar to bring back Coflet, the mysterious black animal who plays tricks on the barons, the three animals decide to approach Coflet singly, so as not to disturb it. Bernard takes the lead, and finds Coflet. The others join him to take the black fox back to the king. Noble tells the fox that he will be either burned or hanged, if he does not win a judicial duel against Roenel, who was grievously injured as a result of the black animal’s tricks. The mastiff represents not only himself, but Isengrin, who lost a foot in a trap when Renart/Coflet evaded him. Renart begs the king to listen,

‘... Par tos les seins qu’en prie a Liege,
Se Ysengrin caï el piege
Et il i a le pie perdu,

“By all the saints that one prays to in Liege,
If Isengrin fell into a trap
And he lost a foot there,
Should I be hanged for this?
May God and Saint Martin defend me from this!...
By the faith that I owe holy Mary
There I gained nothing and resolved nothing....’

“Par tos les seins qu’en prie a Liege” may refer to those saints to whom collegiate churches in Liège were dedicated before the 12th century:

Martin, Paul, John, Denis, Laurent, Cosmas and Damian, as well as the Virgin Mary. Saint Lambert, invoked in line 747 of this branche, was martyred there, with a shrine, a church, and, subsequently, a cathedral dedicated to him.

When the king suggests that a ransom might resolve the situation, Renart/Coflet refuses:

“...par seint Denis,
N’en prendroie de paresis
Un somier chargie, non pas deus
(Martin XIII, 2129-31)

“...by saint Denis,
I won’t take a packhorse
loaded with Parisian coins, nor two...”

...thus linking Saint Denis and the wealth of the city of Paris through a packhorse (or two) loaded with ransom, as Hermeline brought for him in
branche Ia, Martin, 2051: “un somier tot cargie.”

**Churches in Rome, relics in France (Pantaleon)**

A saint who appears in only one episode (once in each of the manuscript families), Pantaleon, a native of Nicomedia, Bithnia, is invoked by Renart, when counseling the peasant Lietard (branche IX, “Brun, Renart et Liétart”). Renart brags about his rhetorical abilities. (See Chapter 3, page 165.) In appreciation for the Christian witness that he gave when martyred around 305 as another victim of Diocletian’s policies, four churches were dedicated to him in Rome. Charlemagne obtained some of the saint’s relics in Constantinople. A few were translated to Saint-Denis north of Paris, while the skull was sent to Lyon. A window in the cathedral of Chartres depicts his torture and death. In 1033 Count Odo of Champagne sacked Commercy and Lorraine, and it was recorded that the arm of Saint Pantaleon was part of his booty. Roques notes that he was honored in a side chapel in the church of Saint-Jean-du-Marché in Troyes after 1189. While this single invocation to the saint in the *Roman de Renart* is appropriate for

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the saint’s attributes, it could also be linked to the location of the village (“la Croiz-en-Brie”) of the poet near Troyes.

**Churches in Rome, relics in France (Peter)**

The twelve references (across the three families) to “Pere de Ronme/Rome” could well be to the basilica in that city, Saint Peter’s, the “mother church” of the Catholic faith, as well as to the saint himself. It is highly unlikely that the references are to the relics of Saint Peter, as some of these were translated to Cluny in 981, after the Cluniacs took over the Roman Benedictine monastery of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in 937.21

In *branche IX*, “Brun, Renart et Lietart,” Lietard realizes that Renart’s threat to tell the local count that the peasant has been poaching game on his lands might have be the worst outcome—it could lead to his hanging. So he offers to take Renart as his liege lord:

‘ ...Des or mes me poes tenir  
A vostre serf et a vostre home.  
Foi que doi seint Pere de Rome,  
James vers vos ne mesprendrai... ’

(Martin XI, 1976-79)

‘ ...You can consider me from now on  
As your serf and your man.  
By the faith that I owe to Saint Peter of Rome  
I will never do you any wrong...’

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Whether calling upon the founder of the Christian church, alluding to the ecclesiastical building in Rome or employing a synecdochic reference to the headquarters of the institutional church, Lietard holds true to his word because of his fear of denunciation. (Renart takes full advantage of his new rank, and visits the peasant’s farm frequently—as liege lords were allowed to do--eating every hen, cock, capon, goose and gosling that Lietard owned.)

Isengrin makes a similar invocation to Saint Peter, one that could be read again on three levels: the name of the saint, the building, or the institutional church. In this instance, Isengrin is weighing whether to trust Renart’s advice that they work together to avenge themselves on Noble for taking all the prey that they killed together. Isengrin thinks about this for a minute, weighing the pros and cons:

‘...Foi que doi saint Pere de Romme,
   A son conseil me maintendrai
Ja est il mon compere en loi
   Si pens qu’il ne me mefferoit
Ne nul mal se pourchaceroit.’
   (Martin XVI, 1470-71)

‘By the faith that I owe to Saint Peter of Rome,
Let’s go along with his proposals
He is legally my fellow godfather
And I don’t think that he will try to hurt me
Nor do me wrong.’

Here Isengrin demonstrates his belief in the institutional church and its promotion of a unified society with defined roles. When it does not
match his experience with Renart, he ignores “reality.” Of course, Isengrin is much too gullible, believing that a bond of faith and an appeal to a church leader can change the nature of the fox.

**Shrines**

A key aspect of European culture in its social economy was the journey to a special place for an encounter with the sacred. According to Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, the 300 years between 1100 and 1399 may be considered the “golden age of Western European pilgrimage.”

“Seintueire” (as used in the Renart) was the term that generally designated such centers of pilgrimage in France. These shrines were usually places where a particular relic might be honored, because it was believed that a miracle once happened there and might happen again.

**The “shrines” of Saint Hilary**

In the *Roman de Renart* Saint Hilary’s relics are cited as those belonging to an unnamed “seintueire” (Martin VI, 370; X, 846). Both references occur in the second group of *branches*, those written between

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1180 and 1205, and refer to a trick played by Renart on the king’s messenger, the mastiff Roenel.

Beaten by villagers after being caught in a snare promoted by Renart as a shrine, Roënel crawls back to court, where he describes the events, and attributes the false “relics” to Saint Hilary, the bishop of Poitiers who mentored Saint Martin. This incident is related twice, once in “Renart médecin”/“Doctor Renart” (branche X, variably dated between 1180 and 1190); and once in “Le duel judiciare”/ “The judicial duel” (branche VI, 1190):

‘Qu’il me fist d’une ceoignole
Acroire que c’ert seintueire
Et que la giseit seint Yleire…’
(Martin X, 844-46)

‘...He made me mistake a trap
For a reliquary
One where Saint Hilary lay.’

‘...Que la gisoi un seintuaire
Qui ért apele seint Ylaira…’
(Martin VI, 369-70)

‘...that there lay a shrine
That was named for Saint Hilary…’

Saint Hilary, exiled for several years for opposing Arian heretics, became known as a protector of those similarly exiled. His name was also invoked against snakebites—an evil akin to a trick by Renart. Although the parceling out of a saint’s relics was a well-known practice, it is
curious that in the *Renart*, only Saint Hilary’s (presumed) relics are named. It appears that the saint’s relics traveled widely on a well-documented circuit. Gregory of Tours notes that the relics of Saint Hilary were to be found in churches in Limousin and Javols (now Languedoc-Roussillon).²⁵ Moreover, Saint Hilary’s relics appear to have been among the traveling supplies of a 6th century Irish monk, Fridolin. He became abbot of the monastery of Saint-Hilaire in Poitiers after finding the saint’s relics in this monastery destroyed by Arian Visigoths in 409. Following the directives of Saint Hilary communicated in a dream, Fridolin later left the monastery with some of the relics to become a missionary. As “apostle to the Germans,” Fridolin established church buildings in the Vosges, at Strasbourg, at Coire (Chur, Switzerland) and at Säckingen (Black Forest region). At each site, he left some of Saint Hilary’s relics.²⁶ Others were moved from Tours to Saint-Denis north of Paris in the 9th century.²⁷ A monastery at Tavaux in the Jura was also recorded as


accepting relics of Saint Hilary in 1181.\textsuperscript{28} There is no record indicating that false relics were often attributed to Saint Hilary, but the fact that Fridolin left some in every place he stopped for a while may be the reason for the attribution in two \textit{branches}.

\textbf{On the road to Compostela}

Having a site on one of the roads leading to Saint-James of Compostela was one reason for the popularity of shrines such as those honoring Saints Martin (Tours), Foi (Conques), Leonard (Noblac) and Gilles (in Gard). Gilles, as has been shown, is a supple saint, invoked in many instances. When Brichemer the stag, a bestiary animal sometimes symbolizing those taking a confused path,\textsuperscript{29} is chosen as the king's next messenger to Renart, the king tells him to bring Renart back directly:

\begin{quote}
\textit{‘...Sanz achaison querre ne guile,}
\textit{Que par la foi que doi seint Gile,}
\textit{Se il m'i fet envoier plus}
\textit{Ses castex sera abatus...’}
\end{quote}

\textit{(Martin X, 983-86)}

\begin{quote}
‘...without looking for an excuse or trick, \\
That by the faith that I owe Saint Gilles, \\
If he makes me send another messenger, \\
His chateau will be destroyed...’
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{29} Voisenet, \textit{Bestiaire chrétien}, 103.
Given that Noble is talking about a final mission before war is declared, Brichemer plays the role of emissary to an enemy. The place where final prayers were said before embarking to confront the principal enemy at that time, the Saracens, would be the abbey of Saint-Gilles-du-Gard\textsuperscript{30} on a tributary of the Rhone.

Saint Foi appears in an incident where another unsuspecting animal finds himself the victim of Renart in \textit{alpha branche XI}, “\textit{Renart Empereur}.” Here Isengrin and Renart are tired and hungry, looking for food. Unable to continue without a nap, Isengrin stops to sleep under a chestnut tree. Thinking of how to play a trick on the wolf, Renart takes some rope and ties him by two feet to the tree, and takes off. A peasant approaches with a cudgel, and Isengrin awakes just in time. Although hobbled, the wolf finally repels the attack. Renart casually circles back and, acting surprised, quickly removes the cords that he’d used earlier. Isengrin, unaware of who bound him with rope in the first place, conveys his heartfelt thanks and an invitation to Renart:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Si est ale Renart besier}  \\
\textit{Et dit ‘Renart, par seinte \textbf{Foi},}  \\
\textit{Je vos aim molt en bone foi.}  \\
\textit{Se je vos aim, je n’ai pas tort,}  \\
\textit{Que vos m’avez gari de mort.}  \\
\textit{Que mort fusses, bien le sachez}  \\
\textit{Se ca ne fussiez repairiez.}  \\
\textit{Dex le fist por amor de moi.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Ernest Rembry, \textit{Saint Gilles: Sa vie, ses reliques, son culte en Belgique et dans le nord de la France} (Bruges : E. Gailliard, 1881), 219.
Then he goes to kiss Renart,
And says: ‘Renart, by Saint Foi,
I love you in good faith.
If I love you, I am not wrong,
As you have saved me from death,
A death that would have happened,
Know well, if this had not occurred.
God did it out of love for me,
But by the gratitude that I owe you,
Directly and without delay,
Come with me to eat
A leg of young lamb
That I left at my home....’

The choice of Saint Foy seems a weak one for rhyming with “foi” (“faith”),
but signals a particular set of stories. A 12th century Occitan poem, “La Chanson de Sainte Foy” recounts the martyrdom in 303 of Saint Foy, a 12 year old Christian girl of Agen during the reign of Diocletian. She was condemned to be burned alive on a grill (similarly to Saint Lawrence), but was temporarily saved by a rain storm, and then beheaded. Like Saint Leonard, she was seen as a deliverer of prisoners, as Isengrin believes Renart has freed him.

The background that may be more important to the story of Isengrin’s profuse and mistaken thanks to Renart, who had tied him up in the first place, is that a group of monks at Conques needed a relic to
gain higher status as a stop along the pilgrimage route to Compostella. Sending one of their own to the abbey of Agen where relics of Saint Foy were housed, they waited for ten years until the monk, Aronis, was promoted to overseeing the relics. Soon afterward, in 866, he stole the relics and brought them back to his abbey. Pilgrims and offerings followed, leading to a new church being constructed between 1041 and 1082, and a small wooden statue of the saint being ornamented with jewels (a connection with Saint Eloi, the jeweler). Subterfuge could be the link between Saint Foy and Renart.

Beta (Lecoy) and gamma (FHS) chose to invoke a different saint, one known for his honesty. Saint Eloi was first a farrier, then a jeweler, then a counselor to King Dagobert and finally, bishop of Noyon. A connection to Isengrin’s brush with death is that Saint Eloi established a cemetery around 630 outside Paris to provide a resting place for the religious of the abbey of Sainte-Aure. The chapel of this cemetery, dedicated to Saint Paul the Hermit, is the one that, after the 9th century Viking raids, was reconstructed and became the parish of Saint Paul in the Marais in the early 12th century. In any event, good comes of this


32 Verlet, Épitaphier, 65-66.
trick for Renart: the fox accepts the wolf’s invitation, and has a feast at his home.

None of the references to Martin or Leonard appear to be principally due to the location of their shrines along the roads to Compostela. Their invocations appear to relate to Martin’s status as a patron of France (except for the example given above), while animals in distress often call out to Saint Leonard for release.

**Saints and liturgical time**

The liturgical calendar of the Roman Church, supported in the martyrologies with names of the saints to be honored each day, provides a key to invocations to two saints named “John.” While Saint John (the Evangelist) is mentioned (“the body of Saint John”-- “le cors seint Johan”- - might refer to him or to John the Baptist) five times across the families of manuscripts, only in “Brun, Renart et Lietard” (alpha branche IX) is there a more specific mention of that saint tied to the liturgical calendar (appropriately, if this branche were, indeed, written by “un prestre de la Croiz-en-Brie”). Brun agrees with Lietard to wait until the next day to claim his prize, the ox Rogel:

‘... Je cuit et croi par seint Johan,
Ne te verroie mes ouan
A ton pooir te garderoies
De toi metre mes en mes voies…’
(Martin IX, 269-72)
‘...By Saint John, it seems to me
That I won’t see you this year
You would do everything possible
To avoid me...’

Should this be Saint John the apostle and Gospel evangelist, his feast
day occurs at the end of the year, December 27, providing the expanse of
days that Brun sees stretching before him, along with a wise
reassessment of the peasant’s reliability. In addition, one of the
charisms associated with Saint John is that of a protector against false
friends, obviously something that the gullible wolf needs.

Saint John the Baptist provides five time-based references because
the feast of his birth, June 23, comes near summer solstice, a time
particularly marked by rural communities that depended upon daylight
for work or hunting. For example, Brun, testifying about Renart’s tricks,
makes a reference to the feast in Pierre de Saint-Cloud’s branche Va:

‘A moi vint en esté oen
Devant la feste seint Johen...’
(Martin Va 642-43)

‘He came to me last summer
Before the feast of Saint John...’

No other saints’ feast days are noted in the Roman de Renart, only
specific references to events of the Christian church year: Ascension (40
days after Easter), Pentecost (50 days after Easter), Christmas (December
25), the feast of Purification/Candlemas (40 days after Christmas), and

33 Giorgi, Le Petit livre, 758.
Rogations (the three days preceding Ascension). All of these, except for the seasonal feasts of Ascension, Christmas and Pentecost, disappear in the continuations of *Renart* in French and in other languages as societies changed, and Christianity was no longer the only dominant and dominating presence in civil and textual communities.

The *Renart*, if written today, might be much different. Rather than relying on the names of the saints, poets could invoke modern cultural heroes and heroines, assuming that their audience would, just as those of the 12th and early 13th centuries, understand what they mean when they call upon a name.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this dissertation three uses of saints’ names in the *Roman de Renart* have been shown: 1) enriching an incident in the *Renart* by tying it to some aspect of the *vita* or *passio* of a particular saint; 2) associating the naming of a saint with a physical or liturgical reminder of that saint, whether a church, shrine, sanctuary, or feast; and, 3) as *cognomina* (appellations) for three animals. Research by historical anthropologists, as well as examination of the fox stories told in neighboring countries, have shown that France maintained a stronger association with saints, both local and adopted, than its neighbors. A Frankish reliance on human conduits to the sacred can be traced back to the late antique period, as well as to Roman practices. The use of the name of a saint was solidified in the 817 Decree of Aachen that mandated praying at prime in all ecclesiastical institutions in western Francia to the saints honored that day. Martyrologies created both before and after this date facilitated the use of the name of the saint in invocations.
During the 350 years that followed the Aachen decree, numerous religious institutions were established in France, each bearing the name of a saint who had inspired the builders with his or her bravery in the face of persecution (i.e., martyrs) or with their disciplined and rigorous approach to spreading Christianity (i.e., confessors). Just as in the pre-Merovingian era, the bishops and abbots of these institutions provided a measure of civic leadership as the Carolingian empire fell apart, thereby increasing the recognition of the name of their saint-patron. The monastic way of life, with its many liturgies for saints honoring their passage to eternal life, doubtless influenced the nearby communities.

The pillaging of the Vikings during the 9th and 10th centuries caused many religious in northern Francia to flee, taking their relics of saints with them, and establishing new sites. When the raids mostly ceased—with the granting of the area of Neustria to the Normans in 911 at Saint-Clair-sur Epte—daily life gradually became easier in northern Francia. Benedictine monasteries—2,000 attached to Cluny—proliferated, as they integrated themselves into a rural and later, an urban society. Meanwhile, the importance of pilgrimages increased to abbeys, churches and shrines where saints’ relics could be viewed, prayed over, and, perhaps, touched in order to receive possible thaumaturgic or miraculous effects.
The societal importance of saints was acknowledged in vernacular literature, beginning with the “Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie" in the 9th century. Hagiographical romances, similar in style to courtly literature, were written to justify a patronus or to edify the listener, whether they were read in churches, monasteries, or the homes of the well-to-do. Besides preachers in church, jongleurs in the marketplace probably spread the stories heard in these more stately venues, while carrying folkloric tradition back to them. In this way, some stories of the fox, already evidenced in the mosaic floor of the cathedral of Lescar and the portal of the church of Saint-Ursin in Bourges, could have been mixed orally with the style and themes of hagiographical romances and courtly literature before ever being written down. Hans Robert Jauss believes that there are many indications that the branches were meant to be recited orally and says that they appeared subsequently in manuscripts of the jongleurs.¹

The poets’ inclusion of saints in tales inspired by oral and written sources flowed from the mixing of everyday religious practices with epic and courtly styles and genres, forming a narrative framework that is “an

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invention specific to medieval Europe,” 2 the medieval beast epic. The addition of details in one copyist’s version and the composition of new adventures of the fox and his *compères* by other poets point to the *mouvance* that enlivens the *Renart* as the reader or listener anticipates the familiar and looks for the new, whether in parodies, characters, situations, or saints.

The important role played by saints’ names in the *Roman de Renart* has been ignored for centuries as societies changed, and the common horizon of expectations that implied shared knowledge of saints’ lives faded. A close reading of the *Renart* matched with an examination of the legends and associations of the saints who are named enriches the reader’s appreciation for the imbrication of the saints in northern French society around the turn of the 12th to 13th century, as well as for the rhetorical and verbal skills exhibited by the poets of the *Roman de Renart* as they chose a saint who most closely met their idea of the narrative’s meaning or who was the first to come to mind due to a physical or liturgical presence.

Invocations to the saints in the *Roman de Renart* follow a pattern of being constative, declarative statements, not evidence of internal faith and belief that would be open to judgment of their moral or spiritual

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import. Irony, present on a scale that varies from comedic to sarcastic, whether verbal, dramatic or Socratic, plays a role as much as sincerity, depending upon the situation and the poet’s approach. When there is a carnivalesque disruption of a religious, civil, criminal or amorous code, a parody arises of those “positive” values, rituals and identities, as well as of intertextual genres and styles. What Allison Williams says of Renart applies to the writers of the Renart: “the fox as trickster does not stand outside the community, but relies on its social bonds.”3 He operates on the edges of the society, but is aware of and participates in its practices, even if he questions their import.

Some writers, most recently Evelyn Birge Vitz,4 propose that the authors deny all traditional and existing principles, values, and institutions when describing human and animal life in the Renart. They ignore the Renart’s function of providing parodic inversion and release of the tensions that grew in a society based on “symbolic practices of relationships and of meaning among men, between men and nature, and between men and the divine.”5 The darkness that begins to shadow the

3 Williams, Tricksters and Pranksters, 91.


5 Dominique Iogna-Prat, “The Dead in the Celestial Bookkeeping of the Cluniac Monks around the Year 1000” in Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and
tales starting around 1200 does not support a generalization to the entire cycle. Certainly, a nihilistic attitude enters the text in *branche* IX, “Liétard” (1200) when Brun the bear is killed. *Branche* XVI, "The Division of Spoils" (1202) and *branche* XXII, "Working together" (post-1205) show increasing derision, as do other later tales, sometimes described as epigones, that is, inferior versions. Perhaps the nihilistic view of *Renart* is based on the order of the *gamma* manuscripts that begin by establishing Renart as evil—eliminating the ambiguity that is present from the beginning in the *alpha* and *beta* manuscripts. The heteroglossia—not usually seen in an epic—and polysemy inherent in the cycle limit labeling to particular *branches* or poets. The earlier tales, those that comprise the majority of this epic, display a mocking lightness as they question the rigid conventions of everyday life, the fragile legal system, and the personal hypocrisy of certain individuals (e.g., Brichemer who is normally truthful--but not in *branche* I). Yet they continually employ the names of saints.

The question of what sources could have inspired the poets’ choices of saints leads one to look at the manuscripts that were available in the libraries of monasteries for information on individual saints lives. Their sources included martyrologies, along with Gregory of Tours’ *Readings*, ed. by Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 386.
convosational and, sometimes, personal recollections of contact with a saint, and Orderic Vitalis’ reminders of eponymous institutions, as well as popular devotions.

My own examination of the saints invoked in the Roman de Renart benefitted from these three written sources, as well as from the rich records of the Catholic Church in France that acknowledge both oral tradition and the factual knowledge provided by the work of the Bollandists and other researchers. Relying on these and on numerous modern texts, I have sought to determine the authors’ intentions in regard to choosing saints, being mindful of the region in which the manuscript was produced and of the popularity of certain saints in that region during the period of composition. How well an aspect of a saint’s vita or passio matched a situation in the Renart was the final criterion for choosing a particular saint as the one who provided additional context for an incident. This may have been the key to how the original writers made their choices.

When examining the changes in wording for a particular passage that occur in the different families of manuscripts, or a change in a saint’s name within the same family (e.g., Clement, Amant and Esblant in beta XIX, 18638—manuscripts B and L, and composite H), one can imagine the poet or copyist thinking about what saint’s name would fit
best. Changes may have been made because of a contemporary or personal interest in that saint.

In considering what could enhance the scholar’s experience of reading the Renart texts, I would suggest that some of the later branches or unités that are generally skipped over because of their scandalous or scatological character, namely alpha XIII, “Renart le Noir” / “Black Renart” and alpha XXII, “Le labourage en commun” / “Working together” (also found in beta and gamma), could be translated into modern French or English. These branches contain cogent episodes (one scene in particular describes Renart hanging from a rafter among a group of drying pelts, an incident borrowed by Roald Dahl and seen in the 2009 film, “The Fantastic Mr. Fox”) that can round out an appreciation of the entire cycle. It might also be of scholarly interest to consider the meaning of those saints who could not be included in this dissertation, unlike their acceptance into the heavenly realms. As has been discussed above, the use of a particular saint’s name was based on more than a rhyme. The saints’ names carried meaning.
Appendix A: Saints in the *Roman de Renart* arranged by story and family

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<th>Editions/families of manuscripts</th>
<th>Martin (alpha) α</th>
<th>Roques (beta) β</th>
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<td>III, VIIa, VIIb</td>
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<td>XI-12592, 12636</td>
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**indicates 1180-1205

No asterisk indicates post-1205
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Note: * indicates first wave of stories  
** indicates second wave  
No mark indicates third wave
## Appendix C: Saints and their types

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Appendix F: Invocations by character

These nineteen animals invoke the following saints:

- Baucent the wild boar—Lawrence and Vincent
- Belin the ram—Gilles, Thomas Becket
- Bernart the donkey—Leonard and Gilles
- Brun the bear—Gilles and Riquier
- Chantecler the rooster—Marcel and Nicholas
- Cointeriaux the monkey—Riquier
- Drouïn the sparrow—Martin
- Fère the lioness—Simon de Crépy and Semion
- Frobert the cricket—Riquier
- Grimbert the badger—Daniel, Denis and Israel (Old Testament)
- Hermeline, Renart’s wife—Mary
- Hersent, the wolf’s wife—Mary of Egypt, Virgin Mary, and Gilles
- Hubert the kite—Leonard
- Noble the lion king—Clement, Denis, Eloi, Gilles, James, John, Julian Hospitaler, Leonard, Nicholas, Peter, Riquier, Sylvester, William, as well as the more general “saints of Bethlehem” and “God’s holy jug”
- Primaut, Isengrin’s brother—Agnes, Clement, Germain, Gilles, Leonard, Leu/Loup, Martin, Nicholas, Protais, Remi, Renaud, Riquier, and Romacle
- Roenel the mastiff—Boniface, Mandé, and Hilary
- Roussel the squirrel—Simon de Crépy
- Tibert the cat—Gilles, Israel of Donat, Loenard, Mandé
- Isengrin the wolf—Cler, Eloi, Foi, George, Germain, Médard, Omer, Peter, Remi, Remacle

Renart scatters 75 invocations among 36 (or 37) different saints across the three major families of manuscripts. These can be divided...
among the pre-1180 group (22 invocations), the 1180-1205 group (39 invocations) and the shorter group of post-1205 stories (14 invocations).

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<td>Agnes</td>
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<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Pantaleon</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Paul the hermit</td>
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<td>Peter</td>
<td>Remi</td>
<td>Riquier</td>
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<td>Samson</td>
<td>Simon de Crépy</td>
<td>Sylvester</td>
<td>Thomas Becket, or Thomas apostle</td>
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Table 3: Invocations by Renart

Among the humans in the stories, most--except for the monks and priests--also invoke saints:

--Successful peasants:
  - Bertaut (branche XVI)—Gilles and Thomas
  - Liétart (branche IX)—George, Mary, and Peter
--Knight’s household (branche XIII)—Agnes, Denis, James, Lambert, Leonard, Nicholas
--King Connin (branche XXII)—Sampson
--Villagers/traveling peasants: Marcel, Remacle, and Riquier.
Appendix G: Glossary of saints

Glossary of Saints Appearing in the *Roman de Renart*

- Agnes (d. 304), Roman virgin, martyr, January 21
- Anne (1st century), Mary’s mother, July 26
  - Anna, prophetess in temple, February 3
- Benedict of Nursia (480-537), Italian “father of western monasticism,” July 11
- Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153), abbot and doctor of the church, August 20
- Boniface (672-754), English monk, bishop, missionary, martyr, June 5
- Brandan (c. 486-c.575), Irish abbot, navigator, May 16
- Clement (1st century), pope and martyr, Nov 23
- Clement (3rd century), first bishop of Metz, November 23
- Cler (d. 660), abbot of Saint-Marcel de Vienne, January 1
- Daniel (6th century B.C.E.), Old Testament prophet, counselor, July 21
- David (10th century BCE), Old Testament king, December 29
- Denis (d. c. 250) bishop, martyr, December 9
- Eloi (c. 588-660), jeweler, farrier, counselor, bishop of Noyons, December 1
- Felix (d. 576), bishop of Bourges, January 1
- Fermin (d. 303), missionary in western Gaul and Aquitaine, September 25
- Foi/Faith (d. c. 303), virgin, martyr, October 6
- Frobert (d. 673), monk and abbot, Montier-la-Celle, January 1
- George (3rd or 4th century), soldier and martyr, April 23
- Germain-Paris (d. 576), bishop, May 28
- Germain of Auxerre (d. 448), bishop, missionary to England, July 31
- Gilles (d. c. 725), hermit and abbot, September 1
- Guion (unknown), Breton saint (Pluvigner, Pays d’Auray, Morbihan)
• Hilary (c. 315-367), bishop of Poitiers, theologian, January 13
• Hubert (d. 727), bishop of Tongres-Maastricht, November 3
• Israel (d. 1014), priest and teacher in Dorat and Limoges, September 13 or December 12
• Israel (Old Testament, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham)
• James, Major (1st century), apostle and martyr, July 25
• James the Less (1st century), apostle, bishop of Jerusalem, May 3
• John the Baptist (1st century), preacher, August 29; his birth, June 23
• John the Evangelist (d. 101), apostle, December 27
• Julian the Hospitaller (2nd – 3rd century?), soldier, caretaker of ill, February 12
• Julian of Brioude (d. c. 304), martyr, August 28
• Lambert (d. 708), bishop of Tongres/Maastricht, martyr in Liège, September 17
• Lawrence (d. c. 258), deacon, martyr, August 10.
• Leonard of Noblac (4th century), hermit, monk, November 6
• Loup/Leu (d. 623), bishop of Sens, September 1
• Lucy (d. 304), virgin and martyr, December 13
• Mandé/Maudez (6th century), Irish abbot in Brittany, November 18
• Marcel (4th century), bishop of Paris, November 1
• Marcel (d. 177), deacon and martyr, September 4
• Martin (315-397), soldier, monk, bishop of Tours, November 11
• Mary the Egyptian (5th century?), hermit, April 2
• Mary, mother of God (theotokos), January 1 (plus other feasts)
• Médard/Maart (d. c. 560), bishop of Noyons and Tournai, June 8
• Nicholas 3rd century), bishop of Myra, Turkey, December 6
• Omer (d. 667), bishop of Therouanne, Flanders, September 9 or November 1
• Pantaleon (3rd century), Bithnian doctor and martyr, July 27
• Paul (1st century), apostle, martyr, June 29
• Paul the hermit (3rd century, apocryphal), January 10
• Peter (1st century), apostle, martyr, June 29
• Peter the Venerable (1094-1156), abbot of Cluny, December 25
• Protaios (535-615), bishop of Lausanne, November 6
• Remacle (d. c. 664), abbot and bishop of Stavelot, September 3
• Rémi (d. 533), bishop of Reims, January 15
• Rémi (d. 875), bishop of Lyon, October 28
• Renaud (d. 1104) hermit from Picardy, September 17
• Riquier (d. 655), abbot, missionary, hermit in Picardy, April 26
• Sampson (d. 565), Irish missionary, bishop of Dol, Brittany, July 28
• Simeon Stylite (d. 459), monk in Syria, July 27
• Simon the Zealot (1st century), apostle and martyr, October 28
• Simon of Crépy (1050-1082) Norman soldier, diplomat, monk, September 30
• Simon (d. 1148), abbot of Saint-Bertin, February 4
• Sylvester (6th century), bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, November 29
• Thomas (1st century), apostle, July 3
• Thomas Becket (1117-1170), English bishop and martyr, December 29
• Vincent of Saragossa (d. 304) deacon and martyr, January 22
• William of Gellone (d. 812), soldier, monk, May 28
Figure 1: The Portal of Saint-Ursin de Bourges
Figure 2: Renart's Funeral (manuscript O, BNF 12583)
Figure 3: Pilgrimage routes in France to Saint James of Compostela
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