Kaila Yankelevich

THE KNIGHT OF THE BEAR, THE KNIGHT OF THE LION: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO EARLY ARTHURIAN ROMANCE

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University Private University

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by

Kaila Yankelevich

(Argentina)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Kaila Yankelevich**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

In medieval literature, animals could play different roles, often being an expression of a specific view on the world, or of the connection of humans with the otherness that nature represents. In Arthurian romance, a genre in which the search for the identity of the male hero is a central theme, animals appear as a tool for shaping the identity of both the main character and the antagonist. This thesis explores the use of lions and bears, two interrelated animals in both biblical and bestiary traditions, for the shaping of the identity of heroes and antagonists of early French Arthurian romance. I focus on them when they appear as companions to a knight, this is, specific cases in which nature is subordinated to a male character. For understanding the symbolism that these two animals carry into the romance and that they project onto the human characters, I examine other discourses that were in circulation in the same cultural context as the Arthurian texts, such as the Bible and the Bestiary. This study is, therefore, synchronic, since it compares the role of bears with that of lions, and diachronic, as it examines the differences between portrayals of animals in French romances from the twelfth to the thirteenth century.

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Introduction

In medieval literature, the way animals are represented is very often the expression of a specific view on the world, on nature, and on the connection between humans and nature. As metaphors, characters or secondary narrative elements, animals can incarnate the otherness that defines everything that is civilized, domesticated or human. This thesis intends to study how two species of animals that were considered especially wild—bears and lions—were used in the early Arthurian French romance, particularly when they act as a companion to a hero or an antagonist. To better understand the cultural significance of these two animals in the context of the production of the literary texts, I will incorporate into my analysis their place in both the biblical and the medieval bestiary traditions.

As the chapters to come will show, the choice of bears and lions is not random. Already in the Bible tradition, and later in the Bestiary, bears and lions share some characteristics that make them similar and, at the same time, enhance the opposition between them. From their peculiar births to their disturbing strength and power, from their possible associations with good and evil to their kinship with human beings, bears and lions are interwoven on many levels and can be used in similar ways in the Arthurian tradition. As I will explore below, my intention in this thesis is to examine the ways in which lions and bears accompany knights in early French Arthurian romance, a genre in which identity plays a crucial role, and how their symbolic value is exploited to shape the identity of their human masters while expressing different ways of human dominion over nature.

Literature Review

During the last forty years, the emergence of new fields and perspectives, such as Animal Studies and ecocriticism, has encouraged the appearance of scholarship dedicated to the analysis of the role of animals in medieval culture. An undeniable milestone in the

intersection of Animal Studies and Medieval Studies is Joyce E. Salisbury's *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, a study of some aspects of animal-human relationships in a medieval context.[1] David Salter has brought attention to the use of animals for the definition of identities in two genres that he describes as highly conventional, hagiography and Middle English romance, while challenging Salisbury's use of them as sources which may disclose the actual thoughts and feelings of medieval people.[2] In *Medieval Identity Machines*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has provided a reading of how the interweaving of human, horse and the objects involved in chivalry create the complex body of the knight, which integrates these organic and inorganic elements.[3] Susan Crane analyzes some examples of vernacular literary works in which the encounter between animals and humans is especially meaningful, with special attention to horses and bestiaries.[4]

Some of these works engaged directly with the role of bears and lions in medieval French literature, more often than not with a focus on the lion: Sarah Kay examines the use of animals for defining human identity in French bestiaries, with a chapter dedicated to the use of the lion and its quasi-kinship with humans.[5] Finally, Peggy McCracken has provided a thorough study of the lion and the bear in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, looking mainly at the significance of the use of animal skin and of heraldic animals.[6]

There have been, too, some attempts at promoting the emergence of a comprehensive cultural history of both the bear and the lion during the medieval period. I can name here two interdisciplinary works that engage in the reading of different sources for creating a narrative

[1] Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within. Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York and London: Rutledge, 1994).
[2] David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 2001).
[3] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 35-77.
[4] Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters. Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
[5] Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 101-107.
[6] Peggy McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast. Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 68-78.

for these animals. In *The Bear. History of a Fallen King*, Michel Pastoureau looks at the figure of the bear since Prehistoric times, and argues that across Europe, around the eighth century, different actors belonging to the Church worked to replace the bear, until then considered the king of beasts, by the lion.[7] More recently, Nigel Harris has presented an account of some of the ways in which the lion was used during the Western Middle Ages, and created five categories of lion symbolism, namely the threatening lion, the Christian lion, the noble lion, the sinful lion, and the clement lion.[8] These studies will aid my research on the cultural background of both animals, the scope of which I will explain below.

Aims of my research

There are some texts which, to my knowledge, have not been analyzed yet looking specifically at how lions and bears are used in them. These are *Perlesvaus* or *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, *La Vengeance Raguidel*, and the Third Continuation of *Le Conte du Graal*, also known as the Manessier Continuation. Until recently, these texts were disregarded by literary criticism because of their so-considered low artistic quality and marginal position in the Arthurian canon. Moreover, there is a lack of a diachronic approach that, taking into account the evolution of Arthurian romance from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, looks at specific changes in the uses of particular animals between the two centuries.

In addition, besides the above-mentioned work by Pastoureau on the broad cultural story of the bear and McCracken's reading of Chrétien's use of the bear in comparison with the lion, bears have often been forgotten by scholarship; particularly the one in *La Vengeance Raguidel* has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. By placing these romances in the

[7] Michel Pastoureau, *The Bear: History of a Fallen King* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).
[8] Nigel Harris, "The Lion in Medieval Western Europe: Toward an Interpretive History", *Traditio*, vol. 76 (2021): 185–213.

broader context of biblical and bestiary traditions, I try to contribute to the scholarship on these topics with an original analysis.

For the purposes of the present study, I consider alterity to be central in the construction of identities. Specifically in Arthurian romance, (male) heroes are defined, as Simon Gaunt has demonstrated in *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, by the difference posed between them and an otherness, which in his analysis is the female character of romance.[9] The otherness that animals represent can similarly be used as a parameter for constructing the identity of the human characters; moreover, as Karl Steel argues, the violent domination and consumption of animals is at the core of the construction of the human.[10] I argue that, in the cases I will analyze, the construction of the identity by using specific animals works not by contrast, like it happens with gendered identities, but rather by a transference of the symbolic value of the animal to the human whom they accompany, and by whom they are dominated.

This thesis, then, intends to explore how animals are used for the construction of identity in early Arthurian romance. I will limit the analysis to animals that belong to a specific typology: wild beasts, namely lions and bears, acting as animal companions to a knight. They function as companions when they join the knight in his adventures, providing some sort of service for him, mainly aid in battle or guardianship of a territory. In this way, the animal companion has a one-to-one relationship with a particular knight, an animal that its master would not eat and who would not eat its master.[11] Very often, they exhibit a behavior that seems more appropriate for a dog than for a wild beast, but they are clearly not pets, as they do not

[9] Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 71-121.
[10] Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human. Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011).
[11] For this last idea about eating I am drawing on Donna Haraway's definition of "companion animal". Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 14.

have, as Cohen describes for defining pets, proper names and do not seem to be considered, at least not always, family members.[12]

Sources

Early Arthurian Romance

The focus of my analysis will be on texts that form part of the corpus of early Arthurian French romance. I will define this corpus by starting with texts produced by Chrétien de Troyes, the poet who consolidated the genre and created a sort of model for it by the end of the twelfth century, that is, from 1170 onwards. I follow the genre all the way to the moment in which the verse romances start to be arranged into the vast prose cycles around 1230. Following secondary literature from the last fifty years, such as the work of Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby in their book *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, I will consider Chrétien's structural and thematic influence to be essential for the development of the genre during the following decades.[13] With this in mind, I will follow the scheme included by Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann in her influential book on thirteenth-century romance for giving priority in my selection to works that are more closely related to Chrétien's romances.[14] I will also generally privilege verse romances over prose, with the exception of *Perlesvaus*, also called *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, in account of its temporal an thematic closeness to Chétien's texts, as well as its connection to verse romances in its manuscript tradition.[15]

[12] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 47.

[13] "Chretien's influence on later romance is undeniable, even if it is neither possible nor sensible to attribute every occurrence of a motif or structure to that influence." Norris J. Lacy, "The Typology of Arthurian Romance" in Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby (Eds.), *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, I (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 55.

[14] In the scheme, *Perlesvaus* is first in the list of prose romances that emerge from the precedent set by the Perceval section of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, as it was probably composed before the rest of the cycle Lancelot-Grail. *La Vengeance Raguidel*, meanwhile, comes just after the Gauvain section of the same text. Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Arthurian verse romance from Chrestien to Froissart*, Margaret and Roger Middleton, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.

[15] It is particularly interesting that a section of this work was included in the Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 472, alongside verse romances such as *Les merveilles de Rigomer*, *L'atre périlleux, Fergus, Hunbaut*, *Le bel*

Thematically, Arthurian romance is a good field for the aims of this research because, as scholars generally agree, one of the main themes of Arthurian romance is the search for the identity of the hero, who pursues adventures in order to find who he truly is. In the model proposed by Chrétien, "the hero begins the romance in a state of incompleteness", while at the end, after learning about himself, he emerges "a wiser and better man".[16]

The Bible and the Bestiary

To better understand the cultural significance surrounding the lion and the bear I will examine how they are portrayed in two discourses that were in circulation in the world of the authors of early Arthurian romance. I am talking about the biblical tradition, whose significance cannot be overlooked, and the bestiary tradition, especially as represented by the bestiaries that were produced before the end of the thirteenth century in the north of France and England, and that therefore belong to a similar cultural context as the literary texts defined in the previous subchapter. I will privilege manuscripts belonging to the so-called second family of Latin bestiaries, which was the most widespread.[17] The authors of medieval romance were educated clerics and it is impossible that they were not aware of the traditions transmitted by the biblical scriptures. In the particular case of Chrétien, Jean Frappier points out how he was familiar with the Scripture and made casual allusions to specific biblical passages in his works.[18] For the Bible, I will work with the King James Version online edition provided by the website God's View,[19] with some slight modifications: I will remove the archaic -th- from the third-person

inconnu, *La Vengeance Raguidel*, some branches of *Le Roman de Renart*, and Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* and *Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette*.

[16] Keith Busby, "The Characters and the Setting" in Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby (Eds.), *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, I (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 80.

[17] "Second- family manuscripts were the most favored and widely circulated group of bestiaries, moving over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries outward from monastic milieus to sermons for laypeople, educational settings, and aristocratic courts." Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 69-70.

[18] Jean Frappier, "Chrétien de Troyes," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 160.

[19] "Holy Bible, King James Version", God's View, accessed May 1, 2022, https://godsview.net/bible.html.

singular indicative present tense verbs, and I will change the archaic forms of second person verbs and pronouns to a modern style. For Augustine of Hippo I will use, specifically for his comments on David and Goliath, the translation and edition of the works by Caesarius of Arles, noted in the Bibliography, and, for the rest, the online edition managed by Città Nuova Editrice and the Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana.[20]

When it comes to bestiaries, even if there is no way of proving that the author of a specific romance was familiar with a specific manuscript or even family, most scholars agree that the second family version of the Bestiary was quite widespread, and was used as a tool for alphabetization in schools.[21] Susan Crane places these texts "near the margins of high learning",[22] while Julian Harris goes as far as to assure that "every schoolboy knew [the Bestiary] backwards and forwards".[23] Even if this last statement is probably an exaggeration, bestiaries are artifacts produced in the same geographical and temporal context as the romances of my corpus, and in that sense both groups of texts are likely to incorporate common traditions on the different animal species in general, and on the bear and the lion in particular.

As I stated above, for selecting my corpus out of the over three hundred bestiary manuscripts preserved, I started from the assumption that, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was an intense cultural exchange taking place between northern France, where the Arthurian texts that I will examine were probably produced, and England.[24] When it comes to Arthurian romance, Schmolke-Hasselmann argues that these texts were produced for an audience within the territories of the Angevin kings of England.[25] Bearing this in mind, I will

[20] "Sant' Agostino", Città Nuova Editrice and Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana, accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.augustinus.it/.
[21] Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins*, 14.
[22] Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters. Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 74.
[23] Julian Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain", *PMLA* 64, no. 5 (1949): 1148.
[24] David Badke lists around 379 manuscripts, between Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian and English versions, ranging from the eighth to the seventeenth century. David Badke, "The Medieval Bestiary", last modified April 29, 2022, https://bestiary.ca/manuscripts/manulocshelf.htm.
[25] Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Arthurian Verse Romance*, 255.

look mainly at the text and images preserved in bestiary manuscripts produced before or during the period in which the selected romances were composed, in the area encompassing southern England and northern France. Particularly in the case of the lion, who has a chapter dedicated to it in virtually every bestiary preserved, it will be useful to look at manuscripts belonging to different traditions.[26]

Even if there might be many other discourses that could be influencing the authors of medieval romance, such as hagiographical texts, it lies beyond the scope of the current thesis to examine all these sources comprehensively. The two discourses I have chosen, because of the strong cultural significance that they carry, will be enough to disclose the symbolism attached to each animal in the context of production of the literary texts. In only one occasion I will look in some detail at another literary text belonging to a different genre, *La Chanson de Roland*, because the precedent it sets in the use of the figure of the bear is of utter relevance for my analysis. When necessary, however, I will also appeal to secondary sources that examine other discourses and ways in which these animals could have been present in the medieval author's lives.

Methodology

My analysis will be mainly a comparative one, both synchronic and diachronic. I will take a synchronic perspective for the comparative and interdisciplinary study of the characteristics that bears and lions display in different discourses that were in circulation at the moment and place of production of the selected Arthurian texts. This comparison will be between the descriptions given in biblical passages and in bestiary chapters, the visual depictions of bears and lions in some bestiaries, the visual depictions of the lion in the

[26] In the case of Latin bestiaries, I will include examples from different families. I am aware of the discussions surrounding the concept of families, but I consider, as other scholars have before me, that the notion is an useful one. I will follow the classification provided by Badke in "The Medieval Bestiary".

illumination of Chrétien's romances, and the Arthurian corpus. For the analysis of the Bible and the Bestiary I will draw on the methods of interdisciplinary work of scholars who have provided a cultural history of the bear and lion in the Middle Ages through the interdisciplinary analysis of a variety of sources, specifically the already mentioned works by Michel Pastoureau and Nigel Harris. For the analysis of visual sources, I will build on secondary literature from art historians who have worked specifically with the manuscripts of my interest, such as Nancy Black[27] and James A. Rushing Jr.[28]

For the analysis of Arthurian literature and for *La Chanson de Roland* I will use the method of close reading. As Adam J. Goldwyn points out, scholars such as Steel have shown that traditional philological methods such as close reading can be helpful for disclosing "the ideologies of power and control that justified human control over nature";[29] in this sense it will help me to better understand the asymmetrical relationship between humans and animals in my sources.

The analysis will follow two axes: on the one hand, I will look for similarities and differences between representations of the lion and the bear; on the other hand, I will study the changes in representations of both animals from a diachronic perspective, that is, in the transition from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. To complement this analysis, I will use what I have learned about the cultural background of these two animals, as described in the paragraph above. I will draw on Dorothy Yamamoto's ecocritical reading of the *Knight's Tale*, in which she considers the following:

> Heraldry and Hunting, the subjects of the last two chapters, are both allied to privileged groups in society. In both, man's relationship to the world of the nonhuman is expressed. That relationship is one of control: animals are used to

[27] Nancy Black, "The Language of the Illustration of Chrétien de Troyes' *'Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)'*", *Studies in Iconography* 15 (1993): 45-75.
[28] James A. Rushing Jr., "The Adventures of the Lion Knight: Story and Picture in the Princeton 'Yvain'", *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 53, No. 1 (1991): 31-49.
[29] Adam J. Goldwyn, *Byzantine Ecocriticism: Women, Nature, and Power in the Medieval Greek Romance* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 24.

> say things about the identity of humans, and to this end their bodies are remade to answer human needs—metaphorically in the case of the heraldic bestiary, literally in the case of hunted animals like the deer, plumbed in every part before being ingested as both food and trophy.[30]

I will focus, then, on the ways in which the elite male hero or antagonist gains and maintains control over the wilderness represented by the lion and the bear, and on how that tamed wilderness, incarnated in companion animals, transfers some of its significance to the human—or, as I will show, not so human—identity.

[30] Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 132.

Chapter One: The Lion in Context

So Is a Wicked Ruler Over the Poor People: The Lion in the Bible

There are many references to lions in the Old Testament, at least 152.[31] The situation of the New Testament is different: there are only nine occurrences, none of them in the Gospels.[32] Both positive and negative uses of the animal can be found in all of the biblical tradition. The Old Testament regards the lion as one of the most dangerous animals, alongside bears, wolves, panthers and serpents.[33] As in many ancient cultures often connected with ideas of violence,[34] the mentions can be both negative and positive, although even in positive cases "the lion's power and strength is often associated with a certain dangerous, even bloodthirsty ferocity."[35]

As it will later be shown in the bestiary tradition, in the Old Testament the lion already occupies a position of predominance over the rest of the animals: "A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turns not away for any."[36] Courage is in this passage another main characteristic of the lion. Further associations with the concept of rulership include, for example, a list of four mighty things in Proverbs 30:31, of which both the lion and the monarch form part.[37] Further quotes from the Proverbs strengthen the connection between this beast and kingship, more specifically, to royal wrath: "the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: who

[31] Harris, "The Lion", 188. G. Johannes Botterweck *et al, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 274-377 list around 138 occurrences.
[32] Harris, "The Lion", 191.
[33] G. Johannes Botterweck *et al, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 233.
[34] "The Old Testament writers' strong sense of the lion's formidable menace chimes with the animal's presentation in other ancient cultures" Harris, *The Lion*, 189.
[35] Harris, "The Lion", 188-189.
[36] Proverbs 30:30.
[37] In addition to the lion, the passage lists "A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up." The king is not just a ruler, but an absolute monarch who admits no revolt against his power.

so provokes him to anger sins against his own soul";[38] "the king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass",[39] and, finally, "as a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people."[40] It is worth noting that the last of these passages, which is the one that casts a more negative light over the lion, shows it in close association with the bear.

Symbolically, the lion can stand for a variety of concepts. As Harris points out, in its positive or at least neutral connotations, "it can signify God and/or his voice (Isa. 31:4, Hos. 5:14), the nation of Israel (Ezek. 19:1–9), the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9), or commendably brave warriors (2 Sam. 17:10)."[41] Botterweck *et al* also list, as a highly negative meaning, the enemies of Israel.[42] In addition, they underline how, when associated with God, the lion often symbolizes his wrath or a punishment inflicted by him.[43] In a non-figurative way, the lion can too be the deliverer of a God-sent punishment, as it devours those who had offended him.[44] As I will show in chapter three, the bear can also take this role, as it happens in 2 Kings 2:24, when two bears devour forty-two kids because they made fun of the prophet Elisha.[45]

Because of its wild nature, the roaring of the lion inspires fear in everyone, as it signifies that violence is coming: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?"[46] In a similar way, the roaring of the lion can symbolize the voice of God, but also the danger posed by an enemy or by an enraged figure of power.[47] This last

[38] Proverbs 20:02.
[39] Proverbs 19:12.
[40] Proverbs 28:15.
[41] Harris, "The Lion", 188.
[42] In Amos 3:12, Isaiah 5:29, Jeremiah 2:14b, 15, 4:7, 25:38, 5:6, 51:38, 51:17, Nahum 2:12, and so on. Botterweck *et al*, *Theological Dictionary* 1, 386.
[43] As seen in Amos 5:19, Hosea 5:14, 13:17f, Jeremiah 49:19, Isaiah 38:13, 31:4. Botterweck *et al*, *Theological Dictionary* 1, 383-384.
[44] 1 Kings 20:36, 13:24. Botterweck *et al*, *Theological Dictionary* 1, 382. This also occurs in 2 Kings 17:24-40.
[45] "And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them."
[46] Amos 3:8.
[47] Botterweck *et al*, *Theological Dictionary* 14, 233.

connotation, that seems mostly negative but also associates the lion with royalty, can be seen in the already mentioned passage of Proverbs 28:15.[48] As Nigel Harris underlines, then, "the animal represents much of what is dangerously untamed, indeed untamable in life. Nevertheless they show lions also as potential representatives of God, and as contributing, sometimes indirectly, to much that is good and orderly."[49]

In the New Testament, as I have already anticipated, the lion appears nine times,[50] mostly in the Book of Revelation.[51] Harris argues that these mentions, alongside the ones in patristic and medieval literature that stem from them, show even more variety in the portrayal of the lion, being quite polarized.[52] However, some of the mentions keep the lion as a more or less neutral symbol of fierceness or violence, often connected to divine power; such is the case of Hebrews 11:33 and 2 Timothy 4:17, in which the lion symbolizes a danger that can be overcome with the help of God.[53] In the Book of Revelation, the lion or some of its body parts are used to describe the beasts and monsters that appear in John's vision, as it happens in Revelation 9:8, 9:17 and 13:2.[54] The lion is equally linked to more positive figures. In Revelation 4:7 the lion is one of the four beasts that will later be identified as representations

[48] "As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people."
[49] Harris,"The Lion", 191.
[50] Harris, "The Lion", 191.
[51] Hebrews 11:33; 2 Timothy 4:17; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 4:7, 5:5, 9:8, 9:17, 10:3, and 13:2.
[52] Harris, "The Lion", 191.
[53] "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion", 2 Timothy 4:17, and "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions", Hebrews 11:33
[54] "And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions", Revelation 9:8; "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone", 9:17, and "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority", 13:2.

of the four Evangelists, the lion being Saint Mark.[55] Revelation 10:3 describes the voice of an angel as being as loud as the roar of a lion.[56]

In the New Testament, there are two extreme quotes that support Harris' statement about the polarization of the figure of the lion. On the one hand, in the First Epistle of Peter, the roaring and hungry lion is directly associated with the devil: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour".[57] On the other hand, in the Book of Revelation, the lion is used as a metaphor of Christ: "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."[58] These two quotes that show two very different ways of using the figure of the lion explain the contradictory depictions of the animal in the centuries to come. Harris lists an extensive variety of authors who use the lion as a symbol of Christ or of the devil, and sometimes of both in the same work, as it is the case in *De universo* by Rabanus Maurus or in *Liber in distinctionibus dictionum theologicalium* by Alanus ab Insulis.[59] In some works the lion is also working in a positive context, even when it is not precisely a symbol of Christ: "numerous accounts of the Desert Fathers, for example, show lions, who in such instances might be seen as symbols of the instinct-bound wildness of nature, being helped, cured, and tamed by holy men armed only with the love of Christ".[60] The same happens in many Western hagiographical texts in which lions act as companions to certain saints.[61] According to Harris, the influence of the

[55] "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle."
[56] And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
[57] 1 Peter 5:8.
[58] Revelation 5:5
[59] Harris, "The Lion", 191-192.
[60] Harris, "The Lion", 191.
[61] "The leonine encounters of Jerome and Paul the Hermit were widely disseminated in the Middle Ages, and both feature in the enormously popular thirteenth- century compendium of saints' lives, *The Golden Legend* (*Legenda Aurea*) of Jacobus de Voragine". David Salter, "Animals in Late-Medieval Hagiography and Romance" in Bruce Boehrer, Molly Hand and Brian Massumi, eds., *Animals, Animality, and Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 86.

Physiologus was crucial in making the lion primarily a symbol of Christ for most medieval authors,[62] although the ambivalence of its figure is even mentioned by Augustine of Hippo: "the lion does not always signify the Lord".[63]

Princeps Est Omnium Bestiarium: The Lion in the Bestiary

In this subsection I will examine some of the general characteristics of the lion that are included in every bestiary family, as well as some illuminations. Even if each preserved bestiary is unique, I will specifically quote the Latin text preserved in the MS 24 of the Aberdeen University Library, also known as the Aberdeen Bestiary, which is a member of the most extensively preserved family, the second one. I will only include the text of other manuscripts if the discrepancies are relevant to my analysis.

Even if different families of bestiaries have their own selection and arrangement of beasts, the lion is always there and, what is more, appears first in the book.[64] It occupies, therefore, a symbolic and literally privileged position over the rest of the animals, and it is regarded as royalty: "For the Greek word for lion is translated 'king' in Latin, because the lion is the king of all the beasts".[65] Among other general characteristics of the lion, the Bestiary lists three main traits or natures,[66] each accompanied by an allegorical interpretation that links them to Christ.[67] These are also the ones that are depicted in the illuminations of the manuscripts, when there are any. This occurs even in bestiaries that are not written in Latin,

[62] Harris, "The Lion", 193

[63] "Non semper leo Dominum significat". Sermo 32:6.

[64] For a comprehensive survey of these different selections and rearrangements, see Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998).

[65] "Leo\ enim grece, latine rex interpretatur, eo quod princeps est omnium\ bestiarum". Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24, 7r. Both the transcription and translation of the Aberdeen Bestiary can be found in the webpage cited in the Bibliography.

[66] In the bestiary tradition, the word *natura* is used for the main characteristics of an animal, which are often accompanied by a Christian allegorical interpretation. I will use the word "nature" for those traits listed as *natura* in the medieval texts, and I will refer to secondary attributes simply as "characteristics" or "traits".

[67] This structure is found in all the chapters of the *Physiologus*, the text on which the Latin bestiaries are based. Baxter points out that "where more than one characteristic is assigned to the creature, this structure is repeated several times", which proves that the text was originally conceived this way. Baxter, *Bestiaries*, 33.

like *Le Bestiaire Divin* of Guillaume le Clerc,[68] or the only preserved Middle English bestiary, British Library, Arundel MS 292.[69]

These three natures are the following: first, that, after smelling a hunter, the lion covers up its tracks with its tail so it cannot be followed; in the same way, Christ concealed his love in heaven until he was prepared to incarnate. Second, the lion sleeps with its eyes open; thus, Christ died or fell asleep on the Cross, while his divine nature was still awake. Third, the cubs of the lion are born dead, and, after being watched over by their mother for three days, they are endowed with life by the breath of their father. This last nature is connected to the resurrection of Christ on the third day, awakened by his father, and can also recall the creation of Adam.

When the chapter on the lion is accompanied by a series of images, the most frequently depicted nature is the last one. In some cases, all three natures are shown, as seen in Bern Burgerbibliothek, MS 318, a copy of the *Physiologus* produced in the School of Reims around 830 (figure 1),[70] and in Bodleian Library, MS 764, created during the second quarter of the thirteenth century in England, which includes a second-family bestiary (figure 2.2):[71]

[68] Guillaume Clerc de Normandie, *Le Bestiaire Divin*, C. Hippeau Ed. (Geneva: Slatkine: Genève, 1970), 193-196.

[69] *The Early English Bestiary based on the Latin* Physiologus *of Theobaldus Episcopus*, Richard Morris, ed. (London: N. Trübner & Co: London, 1872; digital edition by David Badke, 2004), 2.

[70] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/bbb/0318.

[71] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1750.

Figure 1: Bern Burgerbibliothek MS 318 (Reims, c. 830) fol. 7v and 8r. The three natures of the lion.

Figure 2.1 (left) and 2.2 (right): Bodleian Library MS 764 (1225-1250, England) fol. 2r. and 2v respectively.

In some other manuscripts, only the third nature of the lion is present, perhaps because it is the one that allows an easier and more direct assimilation with Christ. Sarah Kay also mentions how this nature is one of the traits that reinforce "the affinity of Lion and man", the "quasi-kinship" that connects lions and humans.[72] I choose three out of many examples. The first one can be found in the British Library, Stowe MS 1067, a first-family bestiary produced during the first half of the twelfth century in England (figure 3).[73] The second one is depicted in Morgan Library, MS 81, also known as the Worksop Bestiary, a bestiary belonging from the first family transitional which originated around 1185, possibly in Lincoln or York (figure 4).[74] The third example belongs to Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), MS Français 14964, a manuscript produced in France in the thirteenth century, containing the *Bestiaire Divin* of Guillaume le Clerc (figure 5).[75]

Figure 3: British Library, Stowe MS 1067 (1100-1150, England) fol. 1r. The third nature of the lion.

[72] Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 101.

[73] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Stowe_MS_1067.

[74] For more information on this manuscript and access to its partial digital facsimile, visit http://corsair.themorgan.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=77019.

[75] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc455081.

Figure 4: Morgan Library MS 81, the Worksop Bestiary (before 1187, Lincoln or York) fol. 8r. The third nature of the lion.

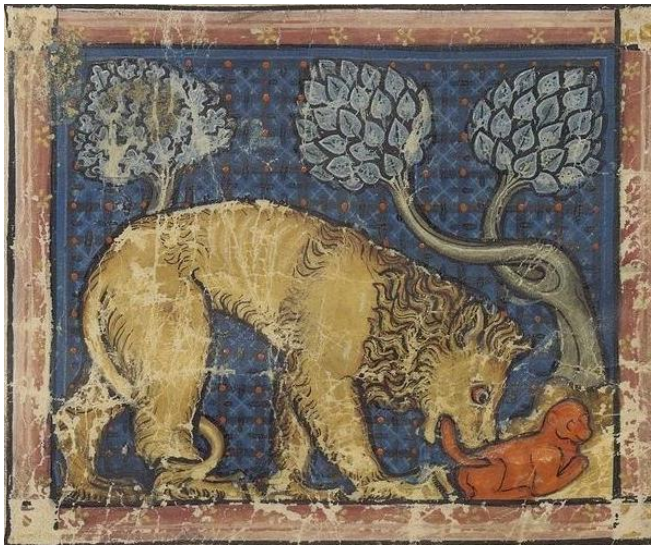

Figure 5: BnF, MS Français 14964 (13th century, France) fol. 120r. The third nature of the lion.

There are two cases that may be particularly noted here. One is the one found in BnF, MS Français 24428, produced in the thirteenth century in France (figure 6).[76] The picture shows, in addition to the illustration of the first nature of the lion, two lions mating in the back. Even if the text inscribed here is the early-thirteenth-century poem by Guillaume le Clerc, this

[76] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc53237q.

image follows the characteristic noted by Latin bestiaries: "lions mate face to face."[77] As I will examine in chapter three, the sexuality of the bear was often connected to human sexuality too.

Figure 6: BnF, MS Françcais 24428 (13th century, France) fol. 54r. The first nature and lions mating.

The second case is the illumination that appears in the manuscript BnF MS Français 14964, containing as I stated above the *Bestiaire Divin* of Guillaume Le Clerc, in which the bear is not mentioned (figure 5). Here, the third nature is depicted with a slight twist. Instead of showing a lion breathing on its dead offspring, as found in previously noted examples, the image displays a half-formed cub, flesh colored, and an adult lion licking it into shape. The body position of this lion seems also borrowed from the usual iconography of the bear, as it will be shown in chapter three (see figures 17, 18 and 19).[78] In both cases, but especially in the second, the slight deviance from the traditional visual depiction of the Bestiary lion brings this animal closer to the representation of the bear.

The second family bestiaries enlarge the chapter on the bear with a set of additional characteristics.[79] Before and after the text dedicated to the three natures of the lion, depending on the manuscript, other characteristics are added; some of them, such as compassion or

[77] "Adversi coheunt". Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, 7v.
[78] Figure 4 also seems to show lions licking its offspring into existence, although the cubs are already formed, and the body position of the parents is not too similar to the traditional depiction of the bear.
[79] Kay, *Animal Skins*, 102.

nobility of character, are traits that are connected with its royal status. As Kay notes, "the Lion emerges here as a model of the qualities expected of a human king or a warrior, gentle to the weak but unsparing of aggressors, and readers should imitate his example".[80] Lions are compassionate and they are not interested in harming humans unless threatened, a quality "apparent from endless examples".[81] Some visual depictions in which a mighty beast spares the life of a humble group of humans showcase the lion's compassion, as seen in Bodleian Library, MS 764, folio 2r (figure 2.1, center). Kay notes in this manuscript an interesting parallel between this image and the one in folio 2v (figure 2.2, bottom): "the Lion seems to be giving the humans life, as it does its cubs".[82] This strengthens the complex connection between the lion and God, and creates a sort of inversion with other pictures, in which the lion is the one being given life by God depicted in human form. Such is the case of the already mentioned Bern Burgerbibliothek MS 318, in which the creation of animals is depicted at the beginning. The first animal to be created is, of course, the king of beasts, the lion:

Figure 7: Bern Burgerbibliothek NS 318 (c. 830, Reims) fol. 7r. The creation of beasts.

[80] Kay, *Animal Skins*, 102.
[81] "Patet enim leonum misericordia exemplis assiduis". Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, 7v
[82] Kay, *Animal Skins*, 103.

In picture 7, as in the ones that accompany the romances by Chrétien de Troyes that will be analyzed in the next chapter, the lion looks slightly smaller than humans, more dog-like in its body position. This contrasts with the lion of figure 2.1, which is bigger and has sharp claws which emphasize its power over the humans whose life it is sparing.

A weakness of the lion that is often included is its fear of the white rooster, as already seen in figure 2.1, bottom, and as depicted in the thirteenth-century copy of the *Bestiaire Divin* BnF, MS Français 14969, produced in England or France (figure 8).[83] Second-family bestiaries add that the "king of the beasts, it is tormented by the tiny sting of the scorpion and is killed by the venom of the snake".[84]

Figure 8:BnF, MS Français 14969 (13th century, France) fol. 3r. The third nature and other characteristics of the lion.

Since, as it was shown above, in both the Bible and the Bestiary it is associated with royalty, the lion —or any big cat labeled as such— was seen as a fit diplomatic gift. Princes

[83] In this picture the third nature is yet again depicted in a privileged, frontal position.

[84] "Leo quidem rex ferarum,\ exiguo scorpionis aculeo exagitatur, et veneno serpentis\ occiditur". Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, 8r

exchanged them throughout the Middle Ages, and they seemed to have been an important part of many menageries.[85]

[85] For an overview of the archeological evidence on the big cats kept during the medieval period at the royal menagerie of London, the population of which was a fundamental part of said menagerie during many centuries, see H. J. O'Regan, A. Turner and R. Sabin, "Medieval big cat remains from the Royal Menagerie at the Tower of London," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 16, (2006): 385-394.

Chapter Two: The Lion in Romance

La Beste Gentil et Franche: The Lion in Chrétien's Romances

There are lions in all five of the preserved romances written by Chrétien de Troyes at the end of the twelfth century.[86] Either real animals, metaphorical ones or part of a decorative object, they are mentioned at some point in the romance. In this subchapter, I will focus mainly on *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, composed between 1177 and 1181 in parallel with *Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. In the story, the main character Yvain runs into a lion being attacked by a giant snake, while roaming the woods after having suffered an episode of madness from which he has already recovered. After being helped out of the situation by the knight, the lion becomes his faithful companion and dedicates its life to aid him in his adventures. This leads to Yvain calling himself "le chevalier au lion", the knight of the lion. I will now examine the figure of the lion in relation to some of its characteristics noted in the previous chapter.

The lion is first introduced in the text through a painful cry that Yvain hears in the woods. The knight then gets to a clearing where he sees the beast, which is in serious trouble: "[Yvain] saw a lion, in a glade,/ and a serpent who held it/ by the tail, and was burning him/ very much in his back with burning flame".[87] The knight decides to help the former, described

[86] The five preserved romances by Chrétien are *Erec et Enide* (c. 1170), *Cligès* (c.1176), *Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* (both written between c.1177 and c.1181; the last thousand verses of *Lancelot* were composed by Godefroi de Lagny under the direction of Chrétien), and *Le Conte du Graal* (a project started after c.1181 and left uncompleted around 1191, probably because of the death of the author or of his patron). The romances were extremely popular, each being preserved in around ten manuscripts, and were used as inspiration by numerous authors who came afterwards. The incompleteness of *Le Conte du Graal* triggered the creation of at least four major continuations, some of which are longer than this text.

[87] "Vit un lyon, en un essart,/ Et un serpant qui le tenoit/ Par la coe, et si li ardoit/ Trestoz les rains de flame ardant.". Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vv. 3350-3353. The English translations from Old French are mine unless indicated otherwise.

as "noble"[88] in contrast with the "venomous"[89] and "cruel"[90] serpent, even if this decision meant having to fight the lion later on: "if the lion attacks him afterwards/ the battle will continue".[91] This will of course not happen, as the lion recognizes his savior and bows to him while it sheds tears of gratitude, a highly humanized behavior[92] that literary criticism has described as parodic: "The anthropomorphism of the lion is so excessive that the pathos of the scene becomes comical and giving the impression that the romance parodies the mirror image typical of bestiaries".[9394] This relation of Yvain's lion with the lion of the bestiary tradition was already noted by Julian Harris.[95]

The introduction of the lion in the story is achieved through two of the general characteristics found in bestiaries mentioned above: on the one hand, the deadliness of venomous serpents towards it, places the lion in a position from which it cannot escape on its own; on the other, its nonaggressive nature towards humans allows it to commune with Yvain right away. The fact that lions won't attack humans unless directly threatened is highlighted by Yvain's unsubstantiated fear, and activates, from the beginning, the positive connotations of the lion: its nobility, its mercy, and therefore its association with rulership and its connection with Christ.

[88] The lion is called "la beste gentil et franche" in v. 3377. Both adjectives refer to its noble birth and status.

[89] The serpent is called "venimeus" in vv. 3359 and 3361. It then assembles three deadly characteristics that in bestiaries are often ascribed to different kinds of snakes: the venom, the fire and the strength of its embrace.

[90] The adjective "felon" and the associated noun "felenie" are used many times to refer to this animal, in vv. 3359, 3363 and 3386.

[91] "Se li lyons aprés l'asaut,/ La bataille pas ne li faut". Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 3371-3372.

[92] The patheticism of the lion's acts is heightened when it attempts to kill itself with his master's sword after it thinks that he has been killed, between verses 3506 and 3525.

[93] "L'anthropomorphisme du lion est si excessif que le pathétique de la scène tourne au comique et on a l'impression que le roman parodie la figure du speculum typique des bestiaires." Cristina Álvares, "Bestiaire en marge. Une lecture zoopoétique du *Chevalier au Lion* de Chrétien de Troyes", *Medievalista* 29 (2021): 23.

[94] Julian Harris has also described the behavior of the lion, in some occasions, as the behavior of a dog: "since he has never seen a man with a lion, he [Chrétien] describes a man with a dog which has the strength, courage, and nobility of a lion". Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion", 1148.

[95] Julian Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain." *PMLA* 64, no. 5 (1949): 1148.

During following episodes, the lion systematically assists Yvain on his adventures, fighting against his foes and even providing him with food.[96] In one scene that is reminiscent of its second nature in the Bestiary, the lion stays awake during the night and mounts guard on Yvain and his horse, with whom he seems to get along without trouble.[97]

Around halfway through the poem, Yvain starts to call himself "le chevalier au lion".[98] This name would normally be a reference to his coat of arms but, in this case, it refers to his actual animal companion: "perhaps the best semiotic trick that Chretien plays occurs when le chevalier au lion arrives at a castle bearing a shield which does not have the image of a lion painted on it, but bearing, rather, the real lion.".[99]

When it comes to combat, the lion engages in Yvain's duels only when some iniquity is being committed: it helps him kill the giant Harpin,[100] win a judicial duel against three treacherous knights,[101] and kill two sons of the devil that attack him together.[102] In all three of these situations, the combat is unbalanced and Yvain cannot triumph on his own. Each time, the intervention of the lion corrects the unfairness, even when Yvain is systematically tricked into leaving his lion out of the battle and on one occasion he even locks him up in a room.[103] Each time, when the animal sees that his master is about to be slaughtered, it disobeys his orders and finds the way of joining the combat, even when this can mean to be severely

[96] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, v. 3418-3480. The lion hunts for Yvain like a hunting dog and, after his master had eaten, proceeds to have the leftovers.
[97] "Et li lyons or tant de sens/ Qu'il veilla et fu an espens/ Del cheval garder, qui pessoit/ L'erbe qui petit l'engressoit./ Au main s'an alerent ensanble". Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 3481-3484.
[98] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, v. 4291.
[99] Eugene Vance, *From Topic to Tale. Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106.
[100] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4168-4247.
[101] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4509-4548.
[102] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 5596-5668.
[103] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, v. 5571.

wounded. In this sense, the lion acts as a sort of unselfish guardian of the chivalric rules that forbade unequal battle between knights.[104] The nobility of his character is once more affirmed.

The identification of the hero with the lion, which transfers some of the characteristics of this animal (nobility, strength, compassion) to him is not limited to Yvain, even if he is the most obvious example of it. Heraldic and decorative lions abound in all of Chrétien's romances and are, in the broad sense, associated with positive characters, although not always with the hero. Pastoureau notes the importance of the figure of the lion in the embellishments of medieval objects and buildings.[105] In Chrétien's romances, decorative lions can be found in objects worn by secondary, though positive, characters: Erec's friend Guivert uses a saddle with golden lions in *Erec et Enide*,[106] and Lancelot uses a shield with a golden lion in *Cligès.*[107]. In this text, which is filled with animal metaphors, lions are used for describing the battle prowess of the main character or his companions.[108] A middle ground between Yvain's real lion and Guivert's and Lancelot's decorative lions can be found in *Le Conte du Graal*, where Gauvain has to fight a lion and cuts its paws off; the claws stick to his shield and from that moment on he carries with him the bleeding proof of his chivalric prowess.[109]

The Lion in Parchment

When it comes to the illustration of the romances, two illuminated manuscripts containing at least one work by Chrétien survive: Princeton MS Garrett 125 was produced at

[104] And this is, in a way, a retribution to Yvain, who intervened in its favor in a fight that, because of the nature of the serpent, was unfair too.

[105] "Sont nombreuses les images de lions dans les églises, sur les bâtiments civils et les monuments funéraires, sur les œuvres d'art et les objets de la vie quotidienne (...) ils abondent dans les décors profanes, dans les manuscrits enluminés, dans les textes littéraires, dans les armoiries". Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 63.

[106] Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, v. 3692.

[107] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, v. 4781.

[108] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, vv. 1743-1744 and vv. 3684-3687.

[109] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, vv. 7851-7861. Afterwards, between lines 8698 and 8712, Gauvain is forced to show the claws as proof of his slaying the lion after another knight refuses to believe his story.

the end of the thirteenth century in Picardy, France,[110] and BnF MS Français 1433 during the first half of the fourteenth century, also in the north of France.[111] In both cases, *Le Chevalier au Lion* is one of the romances in the compilation. In the first manuscript, the section of the romance includes one historiated initial and seven illuminations, and in the second, an historiated initial and nine illuminations.

In Princeton MS Garrett 125, the lion appears in four of the illuminations; three of them depict the uneven combats that the lion balances out (figures 9, 11 and 12), and one of them shows the episode in which Yvain saves it from the serpent (figure 10):

Figure 9: Princeton MS Garrett 125 (late 13th century, Picardy) fol. 26v. Battle against the devil's sons.

[110] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://dpul.princeton.edu/msstreasures/catalog/pz50gx50b.

[111] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc44883v.

Figure 10: Princeton MS Garrett 125, fol. 37r. Yvain saves the lion.

Figure 11: Princeton MS Garrett 125, fol. 56v. Battle against the giant Harpin.

Figure 12: Princeton MS Garrett 125, fol. 58v. Battle against the three treacherous knights.

In the illustrated fights, Yvain and the lion function as two figures mirroring each other, rather than two independent members of a team. In figure 11 they are both piercing the giant, either with a sword or with teeth and claws. In figure 12 the lion has been initially told to stand to one side of the duel and is patiently sitting by his master, who is also shown motionless. Finally, in figure 9, the final part of the duel against the two sons of the devil is illustrated: the lion has been initially locked up, but after realizing that his master is in serious danger, escapes and joins the battle. This moment, in which Yvain's luck changes for the better, seems to be the one depicted here.[112]

An intriguing feature of the illumination of the battle against the three knights (figure 12), is Yvain's representation as a still figure, contrasting his dynamic rendering in all other

[112] "The antagonists' clubs seem ineffectual, and their bodies are inclined backwards to signify a defensive stance. Because the lion has joined in the battle, scratching his way out of confinement to help Yvain, the tide of battle has turned. Thus, the presence of the lion in this scene again emphasizes the power of love to conquer in the face of hate." Nancy Black, "The Language of the Illustration of Chrétien de Troyes' *'Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)'*", *Studies in Iconography* 15 (1993):54.

combat scenes. This visual peculiarity indicates that the way the lion is depicted affects the way the knight is shown, and not only the other way around.

In each of the mentioned illuminations, Yvain bears arms with a lion painted on them. However, in the one in which he is, forced by the circumstances, fighting his friend and King Arthur's nephew Gauvain, who is a positive figure, he has a generic armor with an eagle depicted on it. This may show an intention, as Nancy Black suggests, "to impart allegorical significance to the battle, for the names and identities of the embattled knights are not important (...) The generic eagle imposes a universal quality on the battle itself".[113] But it could also be a way for the illustrator to avoid a conflict that may arise when depicting two very positive heroes who are fighting each other in the same panel. The lion is the heroic heraldic figure by default, and if Yvain is shown with lion arms, then Gauvain will automatically be rendered as a negative antagonist. By showing two generic shields, the illuminator avoids showing preference for any of the two knights.

The lion shield associated in pictures with any positive hero also occurs in BnF MS Français 1433. The manuscript compiles two romances, *L'âtre périlleux* and *Le Chevalier au Lion*. Gauvain, who is the protagonist in the first romance, is shown (figure 13) as bearing the exact same arms as Yvain in the second one (figure 14), blue with a golden heraldic lion painted on them. In addition, Yvain has with him his lion arms even before he encounters the actual lion. The difficulty that was mentioned above, regarding the duel between heroes, remains, and the depiction of the battle between Yvain and Gauvain shows two knights whose shields do not have lions on them, while the lion itself is absent from the battle too (figure 15).

[113] Black, "The Language of the Illustration", 54.

Figure 13: BnF MS Français 1433 (13th century, northern France), fol. 55r. Gauvain in L'âtre périlleux.

Figure 14: BnF MS Français 1433 fol. 90r. The adventures of Yvain.

Figure 15: BnF MS Français 1433, fol. 104r (detail). Yvain and Gavuain duel, then embrace.

In these pictures, there is an overlapping of the figures of the lion and the horse, as Yvain's horse is wearing the same arms as his master. The visual composition shows a symbolic harmony between the two animals, a peaceful coexistence that will find a contrast with the lions of thirteenth-century romances, as I will show in the next subchapter. The overlapping is ever more significant since the horse is an animal that carries a deep symbolic meaning for medieval society in general and for chivalry in particular. As Susan Crane points out, "in chivalry's myth of origin, the horse defines the knight by contrast to other men".[114] The horse is at the core of the concept of chivalry, since it is the main tool and attribute of the medieval knight, and it can also be considered part of the system that is the knight's identity.[115] Medieval authors were conscious of this significance, as Jordanus Rufus shows in the first half of the thirteenth century: "no animal is more noble than the horse, since it is by horses that princes, magnates and knights are separated from lesser people".[116] The superposition of both figures is, then, highly significant.

[114] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 140.
[115] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 35-77.
[116] Quoted in English in Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 28.

One last difference between the two illumination cycles is that, while the one in MS Garrett 125 is mostly concerned with showing "the adventures of the lion-knight not as a symbolic or allegorical progression, but as a series of exemplary scenes of knightliness",[117] the one in MS Français 1433 goes into exploring further questions, for example, the wider role of women in Arthurian romance.[118] This is reflected in that the lion, in the first manuscript, appears only in scenes of conflict, while in the second one it is also included in courtly and positive situations, like the happy ending in which Yvain lies in bed with his wife:

Figure 16: BnF MS Français 1433, fol. 118r (detail). Yvain with his wife.

While in both cycles the lion is quite small in comparison to his master, in this last picture he appears even more dog-like and tamed, much smaller in size than the lions that are rarely shown alongside humans in bestiaries (figures 2.1, 6 and 7 of chapter one).

Seeking Vengeance for the Beast: The Lion Beyond Chrétien

When it comes The lion as a companion to a knight does not appear only in *Le Chevalier au Lion*. After Chrétien and into the thirteenth century, many authors continued with his legacy

[117] James A. Rushing Jr., "The Adventures of the Lion Knight: Story and Picture in the Princeton 'Yvain'", *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 53, No. 1 (1991):49.
[118] Black, "The Language of the Illustration", 67.

and wrote Arthurian works that engaged in different ways with the model that he established. Chrétien's last romance, *Le conte du Graal*, was left incomplete because of the death of either the author or his patron. During the following years, many continuations arose. A lion accompanying a knight appears both in the Third Continuation, also known as Manessier's Continuation, and in the anonymous prose romance *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, also known as *Perlesvaus*. I will now briefly analyze those episodes, which I think bear many interesting resemblances.[119]

In the *Perlesvaus*, composed certainly after 1191 but before 1215,[120] fragments of which are extant in ten manuscripts,[121] there is not one main protagonist whose adventures are central, but rather many of them. The narrative follows the adventures of a variety of Round Table knights, especially Perceval, turned into Perlesvaus, Gauvain, Lancelot and Arthur, and shifts the focus from one character to the other through a complicated tapestry of interwoven episodes divided into long chapters called 'branches'. Lions are present in many of them, acting as a menace that has to be overcome, and, as it is usual in this text, functioning as an allegory invested with Christian connotations. In a text so influenced by the ideology of the Crusades,[122] the significance of the lion provides a symbol and a justification for Christian violence.[123] It is

[119] There are other early-thirteenth-century texts in which a lion appears as a companion to a character, as it happens for example in *La Quête du Saint Graal*, in which Perceval lives a similar episode as the one in which Yvain rescues the beast from the serpent in *Le Chevalier au Lion*. In this text, there is also an allegorical explanation in which the lion appears in its positive connotation, signifying Christ. Nevertheless, I consider that it would exceed the scope of the thesis to analyze the texts of the huge prose cycles of the thirteenth century. As I explained in the Introduction, I prefer to center on the romances that are directly modeled after Chrétien. In addition to this, I find that in these romances the figure of the lion is more complex and serves better to the purpose of my analysis.

[120] Victoria Cirlot, "Introducción" in *Perlesvaus o El Alto Libro del Graal* (Madrid: Siruela, 2000), 29.

[121] These are Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 113; Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 11145; Chantilly, Bibliothèque et Archives du Château, MS 472; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton, MS 82; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal, MS 3480, XV; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal, MS 5177; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Français 120 XIV; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Français 1428; Washington, Library of Congress, MS 69, piece 31, and Wells, Cathedral Library, Cosyn Ms. (II). Most of these are only fragments, and modern editions are based mainly on the versions preserved in Bruxelles, Oxford and Paris MS 1428.

[122] Cirlot, "Introducción", 25.

[123] This aligns with what Harris notes about literature on the Crusades: "High-medieval writers on the Crusades were of course able to draw on biblical and later Christian perceptions of the lion, as well as on earlier ones of its

the case of the white lion that Perlesvaus encounters in branch IX, who helps him overcome danger and who can be seen as a representation of the good thief.[124] The animal, in the context of a book loaded with Christian symbolism, shows that Perlesvaus has the divine blessing for carrying on his mission.

There are, nevertheless, only two lions that fit in the typology of the companion animal that I have described before, and those are the lions of Meliot de Logres and of the Red Knight. Meliot de Logres and his lion first appear in branch V, where Meliot is just a child. Gauvain, the protagonist of the adventures portrayed in this branch, arrives at a chapel where a hermit receives him and shows him, inside an enclosed garden, the six-year-old Meliot mounting a lion: "And my lord Gauvain contemplates the child who so gladly rode the lion".[125] At first it seems like the lion is faithful to the boy in a similar way as the lion of Chrétien is faithful to Yvain, but soon after it is evident that human dominance, in *Perlesvaus*, is not so simple. When the hermit calls Meliot by his side, "The boy descends from the lion and striking him with a whip leads him into his den, and gets the door closed, so he cannot get out."[126] The whip and the cage are symbols of human dominion over nature, technologies of domestication, and the lion is presented as a beast that has to be tied down, so it is not harmful to others. Unlike Yvain's lion, who instinctively knows who and who not to hurt, Meliot's lion needs to be artificially restrained. Later, in the branch VI, there is an allegorical explanation to the scene that Gauvain sees in the garden, in which a priest explains to Gauvain that the child with the lion is an allegory of Christ: "The child signifies the Savior of the world who was born in the old law and was circumcised, who was humble before the whole world, and the lion that he

threatening rapacity. This meant that the animal proved invaluable not only in representing bellicose fury, but also in justifying it in religious terms." Harris, "The Lion", 200.

[124] J. Neale Carman, "The Symbolism of the Perlesvaus", *PMLA* 61, no. 1 (1946): 46.

[125] "Et mesire Gauvain esgarde l'enfant qui chevauchoit le lion molt volentiers" *Le Haut Livre du Graal* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2007), 268-270. The translations from Old French to English are mine.

[126] "Li vallés descent del lion et fiert d'une corgie et le maine en se cave et fait l'uis fermer, qu'il ne puist fors issir". *Le Haut Livre du Graal* , 270.

rode signifies the world and the humanity who is inside it, and the beasts and birds that no one could master and dominate but His power."[127] The lion stands, quite literally, for nature, and there is a religious reason why only the child can dominate him.

Meliot's lion appears a second time in branch VIII. In the episode, a knight called Clamados of the Shadows finds some damsels that cannot ride through a pass because there is a lion blocking the way. When the lion comes towards the group, one of the ladies warns that it might kill the knight's horse: "Sir,' said the damsel, 'if you do not descend on your feet, your horse will be dead in the first encounter".[128] For enticing the knight to kill the lion, the damsel refers to it in her speech using a highly negative word that will arise again in the next chapters, *felon*.[129] Clamados, not knowing that the lion belongs to Meliot, who is now an adult, kills the beast and hangs its head for everyone to see. In connection with Chrétien's lion, this one also cries out when it is hurt: "The lion roars so loudly that all the mountains reverberate".[130] One of the servants of Meliot witnesses the scene and tells Clamados that he has made a great mistake, to which the knight responds alluding to the elements of human ownership that should have been present in the animal: "but the lion was so vile that he wanted to kill me and the ones who were passing by. Your lord should have chained him up, if he loved him so much!".[131] An unchained, undominated lion, without the signs of human ownership displayed onto his body, is just a wild animal, and it should be, in the eyes of Clamados, fair to kill it. The servant replies that the lion was loose on purpose, because it was guarding the pass of the enemies of Meliot,

[127] "Li enfés signefie le Sauveor del mont qui nasqui en la viés loi et fu circuncis, qui s'umilia vers tot le mont et li lions qu'il chevauchoit signefie le monde et le pule qui dedens est, et bestes et oisaus que nus ne porroit justisier ne gouverner se sa vertu non." *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 332.

[128] "Sire, fait la damoisele, se vos ne descendés a pié, vostre chevaus iert mors a cest premerain encontre!". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 410.

[129] "Sire, fait ele, ch'est li chans deu lion: il i a un lion si felon et si orrible que nus ne vit onques plus cruel". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 410. "Sir, she said, this is the Field of the Lion: there is a lion so cruel and so horrible that one more ferocious has never been seen."

[130] "Li lions brait si durement que totes les montaignes en retentirent". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 412.

[131] "Mais li lions estoit vilains qui voloit ochire moi et les trespassans. Vostre sire lui deüst avoir enchaené, puis qu'il l'amoit tant!". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 412.

and insists that it was not necessary to hang his head up. Clamados ignores his concerns and rides away.

Later in the same branch, Clamados actions catch up with him. Vengeance is one of the main themes of *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, and almost no violent deed goes unpunished in its narrative, which only leads to more and more violence. Indeed, Meliot finds the one who has slain his lion and challenges him to fight. First, there is an argument in which both sides repeat the main points that were mentioned before: Clamados claims that the lion would have killed him given the chance, and Meliot insists on the unfairness of the exhibition of the head. Then, the duel takes place, but it does not come to a clear end as both knights get wounded and retire to be healed. The narrative thread goes then down a different path, and it is only later, in branch IX, that we learn about the fate of the knights through a damsel who talks to Perlesvaus: "and [she] told him that Clamados had died of the wound that Meliot de Logres gave him, and that Meliot de Logres was healed".[132] Even when Clamados thought that he was in the right, even when he was attacked by the loose lion before wounding it, the defeat of the beast ends up costing him his life. In this case, the figure of the lion is, at the same time, just a regular wild animal dominated by a specific human knight, and the symbol of all that is worldly; when functioning as an allegory, the Christological symbology of the lion is displaced from the animal to the human boy that accompanies him.

That in *Perlesvaus* the lion is a positive animal whose assassination deserves to be avenged as if it was human seems the natural conclusion to this analysis. Nevertheless, there is another lion that accompanies a knight in the book. In branch XI, Perlesvaus needs to avenge his cousin, who has been slain by the Red Knight, and he looks for him in a forest, where he dwells with a lion as his companion. Perlesvaus finds the lion, who is waiting for his master

[132] "et [elle] li dist que Clamadoz estoit mors de la plaie que Melios de Logres li avoit faite et que Melios de Logres estoit garis". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 480.

and is described as an intelligent animal: "the lion who was lying down in the middle of a moor under a tree and waited for his master, who was far in the forest; and the lion knew well that this place was in the path of the knights, and that is why he was staying there".[133] When it sees Perlesvaus, this lion, like Meliot's lion, attacks the horse first: "the lion attacks the horse with its claws over the rump and pulls on the skin and the flesh over its tail".[134] In this case, the horse fights back. Again, the lion acts like Meliot's lion, screaming when hurt: "and the horse, who feels itself wounded, strikes [the lion] with its two feet before it can get away, so hard that it shatters its main teeth from its jaws; the lion launches a cry so loud that all the forest resonates".[135] The Red Knight comes to the rescue of his animal, only to find him dead, which causes him great pain. He accuses Perlesvaus of having committed treason, to which Perlesvaus responds that the Red Knight has killed his cousin.[136] After a brief fight, Perlesvaus achieves his vengeance.

In this second case, then, the lion belongs to a knight who loves him and wishes to avenge him but is not able to. The Red Knight attempts to treat his lion like a human companion, when he accuses Perlesvaus of treason, more likely because the knight attacked the beast without formally challenging it. Unlike Clamados, who tried to diminish the importance of the lion's death, Perlesvaus understands the violent rules of the world in which he lives. So, instead of arguing about the lion, he just responds with his own family reasons for going after the Red Knight: in the world of *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, blood always gets paid

[133] "Le lion qui gissoit en mi une lande desoz un arbre et atendoit son seignor qui estoit alé loig en la forest; et savoit bien li lions que c'estoit alecques li trespas des chevaliers; por ce i estoit il arestez." *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 936.

[134] "li lions aert le cheval as ongles desore la crupe si li abat le quir et la char deseure sa coue" *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 936-938.

[135] "et li chevaus qui bleciez se senti le consivi des .ii. piez deriere ainçois qu'il l'esloignast, si tres durament que il li brissa les maistres denz de la gole; li lions geta un si grant brait que tote la forest en tentist". *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 938.

[136] "Quant li chevaliers vit mort son lion, si en fu molt dolans: 'Par mon chief, fait il a Perlesvaus, vos avez fait grant outrage! — Encore fesistes vos greignor, fait il, quant vos ocesistes le fil mon oncle de coi ceste damoiselle porte le chief!" *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 938. "When the knight saw his lion dead, he was in much pain: 'for my head, he said to Perlesvaus, you made me a great affront! — You have done a greater one, said he, when you killed the son of my uncle of whom this damsel carries the head!"

with blood. A lion in itself is neither good nor bad: it does not represent Christ, but the world, and it does not necessarily serve a good knight. But when it is slain, vengeance is always seeked.

A similar episode occurs in the Third Continuation of Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, also known as the Manessier's Continuation, composed at some point between 1211 and 1244 and extant in eight manuscripts.[137] It is the most extensive of the four known continuations, as it brings the story to a conclusion after adding some ten thousand more lines.[138] In the episode, which resembles both episodes of *Perlesvaus* in which the lion is killed, Perceval arrives at a meadow in which there is a tent, and when he tries to go inside, he is attacked by a lion who is guarding it. Perceval kills the lion and goes inside the tent, only to find that the knight inside it is very angry about the assassination of his beast:

> Perceval said: 'There's no need to talk like that, good sir! I've come in with a drawn sword but I've done you no wrong: I came here only to look for lodging! But I saw a lion in the meadow, huge and fierce, and it attacked me and I had to defend myself – and I killed it, I'm pleased to say! That's the reason my sword was drawn.' 'Is that right?' said the knight, proud and fierce and brimming with hostile rage. 'Who told you to kill my beloved lion? I'll avenge the beast, by God I will! Bring me my arms! I'm going to do battle![139]

Perceval then defeats the knight, whose name turns out to be Abrioris of Brune Mons, in battle. He spares his life and makes him prisoner because Abrioris' damsel intercedes in his favor, and the episode draws to an end with both knights departing from each other in friendly terms. Although not very significant for the narration, the episode bears some similarities with the ones from *Perlesvaus*: the lion belongs to a secondary character rather than to one of the

[137] Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates, 19. 1. 5; Mons, Bibliothèque publique, 331/206; Montpellier, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, H 249; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 1429; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 1453; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 12576; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 12577; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 6614.

[138] Albert Wilder Thompson, "Additions to Chrétien's *Perceval*," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 215.

[139] *The Complete Story of the Grail. Chrétien de Troyes'* Perceval *and its continuations*, Nigel Bryant, trans. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), The Third Continuation, Kindle.

protagonists; it is mostly a wild beast, who can be slightly smart but who will show aggression to every knight who is not his master, despite of the knight having good or bad intentions; in all this cases, the mindless attack of the beast leads to its being killed, and in all the cases, the owner of the lion is determined to avenge it. Out of the three characters who own lions in the cases described above, only Meliot de Logres, who is the most positive one as he is friends with Gauvain, achieves the vengeance of his animal.

Chapter Three: The Bear in Context

As If a Man Did Flee From a Lion, and a Bear Met Him: The Bear in the Bible

Like lions, bears are mentioned more times in the Old Testament than in the New one, as they appear thirteen times in the former and only once in the latter. The mentions in the Old Testament are more numerous and varied, including both negative and more positive depictions of the animal. Out of fourteen total mentions, four times it is mentioned alone, ten times it is mentioned alongside the lion, and in only four of these occasions there are more dangerous animals mentioned with them. I tried to classify the quotes according to the significance that they give to the sign of the bear. No matter what, in all these occasions the characteristic of the bear that prevails is its ferocity: "the bear is primarily a wild, carnivorous, and untamable animal like the lion, with which it is often connected, or like the leopard, which is mentioned along with the lion and the bear."[140] Other characteristics, as I will show, include voracity, sometimes even gluttony, and protectiveness.

On the one hand, bears have a positive trait, as protective mothers. In Hosea 13:8, 2 Samuel 17:8 and Proverbs 17:12, contains references to a bear that is robbed or bereaved of her whelps. In the two first cases the image serves as a simile for rage and prowess; first, alongside lions and leopards, it symbolizes the wrath of God;[141] and then on its own, it is a metaphor for the prowess of human warriors.[142] Even if it recalls extreme violence, the image

[140] G. Johannes Botterweck *et al*, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 71.

[141] "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: 8 I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them." Hosea 13:7-8.

[142] "For, said Hushai, you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and your father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people." 2 Samuel 17:8.

casts a positive light upon the bear-mother, since her rage is justified and so is the destruction it represents. In the third case, a bear robbed of her whelps symbolizes extreme danger, but it is still used in a positive way, since it is shown as being the preferable one between two evils: "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly."[143] It is interesting to note that the other times that "whelps" are mentioned in the Bible, they are lion's whelps.[144]

On the other hand, bears can be used as a negative danger or as a symbol for the evil and negative feelings attached to the world. This is the case in several places from prophetic books.[145] In Amos 5:19, there is a progression of danger that goes from lion, to bear, to serpent.[146] Alongside these other wild beasts, a bear is worse than a lion, but does not carry such a heavy connotation of moral danger as the serpent does. In Isaiah 11:7 the bear and the lion are used together in a prophecy, in which the prophet shows that the danger and evil that they symbolize is defeated and their aggressiveness is neutralized.[147] In a later passage from the same book, namely Isaiah 59:11, the roar of the bear is a metaphor for despair.[148] Finally, Samuel 17: 34-37 recounts how a young David explains to Saul that he will be able to defeat the giant Goliath, evoking his precedent victories against a lion and a bear that had attacked his flock.[149] In this passage, David mentions three times, always together, the lion and the bear, and finally makes a connection between the two and Goliath: "David said moreover, The Lord

[143] Proverbs 17:12.

[144] This occurs in Genesis 49:9; Job 28:8; 4:11; Jeremiah 51:38; Ezekiel 19:2; 19:3; 19:5; Nahum 2:12, and Deuteronomy 33:22.

[145] Amos 5:19, Isaiah 11:7, Isaiah 59:11 and 1 Samuel 17:34-37. In this last episode, bears are mentioned thrice.

[146] "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Amos, 5:19.

[147] "And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Isaiah 11:7

[148] "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us." Isaiah 59:11

[149] "And David said unto Saul, Your servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." 1 Samuel 17:34-37.

that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."[150] Lions and bears represent here the wild otherness that David defeats before facing Goliath, who as both a gentile and a giant represents both the religious and the monstrous Other. Like the bear, whose proportions and ability to stand on its back legs provide him with an almost human silhouette, the giant inhabits the frontier of what is considered human, and this liminal location makes him unsettling. As I will show in the next chapter, there is a further connection between the giant and the bear in one of the romances that I will analyze. In his commentary on this passage, reworked by Caesarius of Arles, Augustine of Hippo says that "Both the lion and the bear typified the devil".[151]

The bear is also used as a more positive or at least neutral danger, when it is associated with divine punishment. In 2 Kings 2:24, the prophet Elisha curses a group of children who are mocking him, and immediately some of them are slaughtered by two bears: "And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." This scene evokes the already mentioned examples in which the lion is also used as an instrument for inflicting a punishment sent by God.[152]

Fourthly, alongside the lion, the bear can be shown as a tyrant or oppressor. In Lamentations 3:11, Jeremiah talks about God as an enemy: "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places." The phrase is not about the attack or the violence of the beasts, but rather about the potential damage they can cause. In Proverbs, 28:15, lions and bears are associated with unfair rule: "As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over

[150] 1 Samuel 17:37.
[151] Sermon 121:4.
[152] 1 Kings 20:36, 13:24. This also occurs in 2 Kings 17:24-40.

the poor people." It is interesting that, when associated with royalty, the connotation is negative for both the lion and the bear.

Lastly, the bear is one of the four allegorical beasts that Daniel sees in his dreams in the seventh chapter of his book, the others being a winged lion, a winged leopard and a horned beast.[153] In this passage, the beasts stand for the enemies of Israel, the Median Empire, the Babylonian, the Persian and the Greek, respectively; the bear represents Media because it controls the regions of the north.[154] The only mention of the bear in the New Testament is similar to this one. It occurs in Revelation 13:2, where it is part of the description of the beast of the Apocalypse, alongside leopards, lions and dragons.[155] The beast is described as having feet "as the feet of a bear" and "his mouth as the mouth of a lion", which aligns with the belief that the bear's strength resides in its extremities. Augustine points to this characteristic, while referring to the David and Goliath story: "Since a bear possesses his strength in his paw and a lion has his in his mouth, the same devil is prefigured in those two beasts".[156]

This last characteristic of the bear, the astounding strength that it has in its extremities, is later described in the bestiaries: "The bear's head is not strong; its greatest strength lies in its arms and loins; for this reason bears sometimes stand upright."[157][158] This trait is even more shocking in that it makes the bear closer to the human, as I pointed out above: the fact that bears look so similar to humans is one of their more abject qualities. Strength is also one of the most notable characteristics of the bear since Antiquity, and it is mentioned in authorities such

[153] "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, 'Arise, devour much flesh'" Daniel 7:5.
[154] Botterweck *et al, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 3, 71.
[155] "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:2.
[156] Sermon 121: 4.
[157] Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24, 15r.
[158] The bestiary tradition takes this characteristic, as I will mention in the next subchapter, from the description given by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies*. The passage on the bear can be found in book XII, *De animalibus*, XII.ii.22. Isidore of Seville, *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 252-253.

as Aristotle and later Pliny.[159] This last author, as Pastoureau has noted, was particularly hostile towards bears and described them as being stupid and evil, a depiction that probably influenced the patristic view on this animal.[160]

Mater Lambendo in Membra Componit: The Bear in the Bestiary

Unlike the lion, the bear is not included in all preserved bestiaries. In the bestiaries produced before the end of the thirteenth century, it appears in some of the Latin ones of the first family transitional,[161] in various belonging to the second family,[162] and in some single manuscripts of other works like the Dicta Chrysostomi, the *Bestiaire d'amour* of Richard de Fournival, or the *Topographia Hiberniae* by Gerhard of Wales.[163] According to this evidence, it seems that the section on the bear was not part of the *Physiologus* or of the B text, and that it rather comes from the incorporation of sections of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*.

The chapter does not necessarily include any allegorical interpretations that link this animal to either Christ or the Devil. The main characteristic of the bear, found also in the *Etymologies,* is the fact that, as shown with the lion above, it is born without life: "The bear is said to get its name because the female shapes her new-born cub with her mouth, giving it, so to speak, its beginning, *orsus*. It is said that they produce a shapeless fetus and that a piece of

[159] Michel Pastoureau, *The Bear: History of a Fallen King*, Trans. George Holoch (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 35.
[160] Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 120.
[161] Such as Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.81 (also known as *The Worksop Bestiary*) or Trinity College Library, MS R.14.9.
[162] Such as Aberdeen University Library MS 24 (also known as *The Aberdeen Bestiary*); Bibliothèque Municipale de Douai MS 711; Bibliothèque Nationale de France lat. 3630; Bibliothèque Nationale de France lat. 6838B; Bibliothèque Nationale de France lat. 11207; Bodleian Library MS. Ashmole 1511 (or *The Ashmole Bestiary*); Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 533; Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 764; British Library Additional MS 11283; British Library Harley MS 4751, and St John's College (Cambridge) Library, A.15.
[163] Bibliothèque Nationale de France lat. 10448; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fr. 1951, and British Library, Royal MS 13 B VIII, respectively. There are sections dedicated to the bear also in encyclopedic works such as the one in Museum Meermanno, MMW, 10 D 7, or in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat. also known as *Liber Floridus*.

flesh is born. The mother forms the parts of the body by licking it."[164][165] This nature has strong similarities with the lion and, at the same time, marks a difference between the two animals: where the male lion gives life with its breath, strongly resembling biblical stories, the female bear shapes the cub, merely a lump of flesh, with her tongue, a much less aethereal second birth. Furthermore, far from bringing the bear closer to Christ, this form of birth can be seen as chastising the female bear as a bad mother, since she forces herself to give birth prematurely so the male would want to mate with her again.[166] Pastoureau argues that the focus on the negative aspects of the bear forms part of a wider process in which the discourses of the Church systematically try to disempower the bear, which was a figure of power in pagan cults, and displace it as the king of animals in favor of the lion, a figure more rooted in literary discourse and therefore easier to manage.[167] According to him, by the last quarter of the twelfth century, the lion had definitely replaced the bear as the king of beasts.[168]

When it comes to illuminations, the nature of the bear that is more often illustrated is this birth as a lump of meat, and the licking into shape of a fleshed-colored cub. Examples of this can be found in the already mentioned Worksop Bestiary (figure 17), in the second-family Aberdeen Bestiary, produced around 1200 in England and preserved in Aberdeen University Library, MS 24[169] (figure 18), and in the also already mentioned Bodleian Library, MS 764 (figure 19):

[164] "Ursus fertur dictus\ quod ore suo for\met fetus quasi orsus.\ Nam aiunt eos in \ formes generare\ partus et carnem\ quandam nasci. Quod\ mater lambendo\ in membra componit." Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, 15r.

[165] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, XII.ii.22, 252.

[166] Michel Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 2011), 64.

[167] "L'Église part donc en guerre contre un tel animal qu'elle cherche à faire descendre de son trône. Partout, entre le VIIIe et le XIIe siécle, elle assure la promotion du lion, animal issu de la culture écrite, plus facile à contrôler, et non pas de traditions orales". Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Âge*, 63. For a comprehensive study of this process see Pastoureau, *L'Ours. Histoire d'un roi déchu* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).

[168] Pastoureau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Âge*, 62.

[169] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/.

Figure 17: Morgan Library MS 81, the Worksop Bestiary (England, possibly Lincoln or York, before 1187), fol. 37v. The birth of the bear.

Figure 18: Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, the Aberdeen Bestiary (c. 1200), fol. 15r. The birth of the bear.

Figure 19: Bodleian Library MS 764 (England, c. 1225-1250), 22v. The birth of the bear.

The hairy texture of the skin of the bear is sometimes, but not always, depicted. As I mentioned in chapter two, I have found that, on at least one occasion, in a French thirteenth-century manuscript, this pictorial motif is used to represent the lion, thus confusing or reinforcing the bond between the two animals (figure 5). In the image, the lion, rather than breathing life into its offspring, appears licking a half-formed, fleshed-colored cub into shape.

Furthermore, the other deviation from the traditional representation of the lion that was mentioned in chapter one also corresponds to a characteristic it shares with the bear. In Paris, BnF MS Français 24428 (figure 6), the nature of the lion that is depicted is its mating face to face: "they do not mate like other quadrupeds but embrace each other when they copulate, just like the couplings of humans."[170] Even if this characteristic is shared by other animals of the Bestiary, it is interesting that the text dedicated to the bear reinforces the similarity between it and the mating of humans. The dangerous sexuality of bears, too close to the human one, facilitates the emergence of stories, widespread in the popular imagination, of hideous

[170] "Coeunt non itidem quo quadrupedes alie, sed apti\ amplexibus mutuis velud humanis coniugationibus co\ pulantur." Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Library, MS 24, 15v.

intercourse between male bears and human women: "an ancient belief, which came down to the Middle Ages from various sources and was passed on to modern times, held that bears were fond of girls and young women".[171]

The dangers posed by the bear, then, seem to go beyond the immediate physical menace that any wild animal represents. In addition to the threat of sexual violence towards women, there was also, at least to some extent, a danger directed to men. Crane mentions how the "contact with wild species in hunting was widely represented as perilously destabilizing; a well- known example was the madness that afflicted Pierre de Béarn, Gaston's half- brother, after killing a bear."[172] The notion of otherness embodied by the bear, brings to the space of the hunt, the main courtly entertainment, disturbing dangers that go beyond the physical ones. The fifteenth-century story about Pierre de Béarn illustrates how the bear was still regarded as an unsettling figure centuries after the romances that I will analyze were composed.

[171] Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 72.
[172] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 109.

Chapter Four: The Bear in Romance

In this chapter I will briefly look at a precedent of the bear used as a symbol for treason in medieval French literature, namely in *La Chanson de Roland*, for underscoring how negative literary representations of the bear already existed at least in the eleventh century, and how they transcended genres. I will then move on to look specifically at the bears in Chrétien de Troyes' romances and in the thirteenth century *La Vengeance Raguidel*.

The Gift of a Traitor

The bears are coded as a symbol for treason in the *chanson de geste* known as *La Chanson de Roland*, which oldest extant manuscript dates from the second half of the twelfth century.[173] Even when the *chanson* may have been in circulation in multiple oral forms before this date, this particular version was probably written down a little after 1086, in the North of France.[174] Because of this hybrid nature that involves oral and textual instances of composition, the extant version probably conveys details taken from the literary culture of the time, alongside the ones coming from popular traditions. The analysis of the motif of the bear as a symbol for treason in the text may be useful for understanding some of the notions related to this animal that were in circulation in the North of France, a century before the composition of the romances that I will analyze next.

The bear or its cub are mentioned in the *Chanson* many times. First, it is part of the collection of gifts that the Saracen King Marsilie sends to Charlemagne as a token of peace, alongside other beasts that symbolize royalty or, because of their connection with hunting, nobility: "bears and lions, hunting dogs with leashes".[175] The list of gifts is mentioned thrice

[173] This version is called the Oxford version and it is written in Anglo-Norman. It is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby, 23, f. 1r-72r (manuscript O), which dates from between 1140 and 1170.
[174] Ian Short, "Introduction" in *La Chanson de Roland* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1990), 10.
[175] "Urs e leüns, veltres enchaïgnez". *La Chanson de Roland*, v. 128. All translations from Old French are mine.

and includes other material goods.[176] This may seem like a positive use of the bear, which, as Pastoureau indicates, is used as a sumptuous present intended for a monarch.[177] Exotic animals were exchanged as diplomatic gifts all throughout the Middle Ages and not only in Europe. Charlemagne himself famously received an elephant, called Abul Abaz, from the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid in 802.[178] An example of a bear documented as a royal gift can be found in the eleventh century, when two male bears were sent to Reims in 1051 as part of the dowry of Anna Yaroslavna, daughter of the grand prince of Kiev.[179] Later, during the thirteenth century, Henry III was presented with a polar bear. The animal, sent by the king of Norway in 1252, wore a special chain long enough for him to hunt for fish in the river Thames.[180] In these cases, the bears are animals that come from beyond the limits of Western Europe. Their usage as royal gifts is yet another connection that ties bears and lions together.

Nevertheless, in *La Chanson de Roland*, the bear as gift can be seen in a more negative light, since the alleged ally ends up betraying his peace pledge. With this consideration in mind, the fact that bears are listed first among the gifts may reflect negatively on them. It could be, then, that they are functioning as an indication of the lack of sincerity of the Saracen king, and this hypothesis strengthens if some of the other appearances of the bear in the *chanson* are taken into consideration. As I will show, there is a strong connection between the bear and Ganelon, the traitor of French medieval literature *par excellence*, who is called *fels*, cruel and violent, many times throughout all the text.[181] After the treason is committed, Ganelon is seized

[176] A similar list was mentioned in v. 30 and is repeated later in v. 183.

[177] "Until the twelfth century, if monarchs were concerned, the gift generally had to be a bear. In the *Chanson de Roland*, for example, the Saracen King Marsilie sends to Charlemagne, with whom he wants to make peace, a collection of sumptuous gifts that the author enumerates three times: bears always come at the head of the list". Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 59.

[178] Friedrich Kurze and Georg H. Pertz (eds.), *Annales regni Francorum, inde ab a. 741. usque ad a. 829*, vol. 39 (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1895), 117.

[179] Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 59.

[180] Caroline Grigson, *Menagerie, the History of Exotic Animals in England (1100 – 1837)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

[181] Examples of this can be found in vv. 674, 844, 1457, 3735 and 3829.

by Charlemagne's men. The treatment they give him is very telling: "they beat him well with staffs and canes,/ and they put a chain around his neck,/ in this way they chain him up like a bear".[182] This image, which imposes yet again the tools of forced human domestication over the body of a wild animal, resonates with the ones of chained bears that can appear in bestiary manuscripts, like the one depicted in BnF, MS Latin 3630, a second-family bestiary produced during the third quarter of the thirteenth century in England:[183]

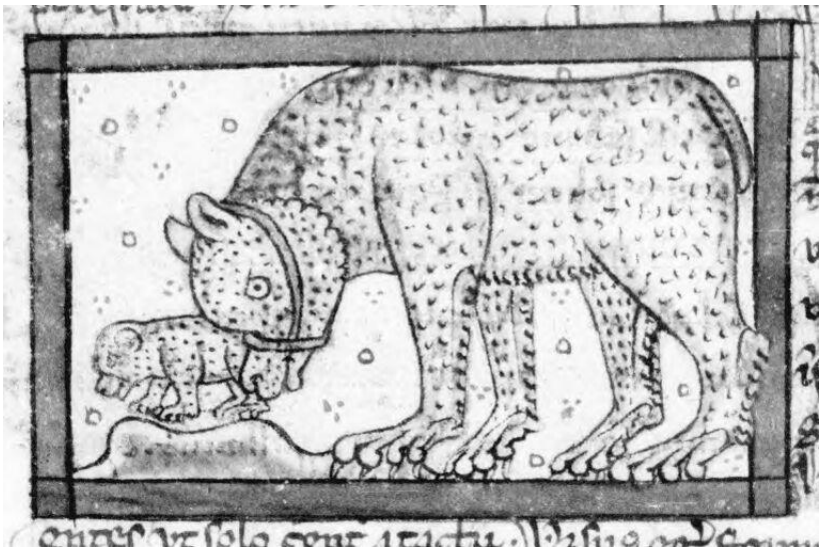

Figure 20: BnF, MS Latin 3630 (England, c. 1250-1275), fol. 79v. The bear.

The chain relegates Ganelon to the terrain of bestiality, of wilderness and evil that must be—and, through the clasping of the chain, is— dominated by the civilizing and oppressive strength of men.

Around seven hundred verses later, Charlemagne has the fourth of his allegorical dreams.[184] In it, Ganelon is represented as a chained bear, in line with the punishment that he received before: "he [Charlemagne] held a bear cub in two chains./ He saw thirty bears coming

[182] "Ben le batirent a fuz e a bastuns,/ E si li metent el col un cäeignun,/ Si l' encäeinent altresi cum un urs". *La Chanson de Roland*, vv. 1825-1827.

[183] For more information on this manuscript and access to its digital facsimile, visit https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc61573x.

[184] The bears have another negative appearance in the third dream, alongside beasts like leopards, serpents and dragons (vv. 2542-2543), for symbolizing the evil that is menacing Charlemagne's kingdom. Nevertheless, I will not look at this passage here, as it does not contribute to the analysis of the connection between the bear and the concept of treason, nor does it provide a counterexample to my interpretation.

from the Ardennes/ each of them spoke just like a man would".[185] The bear metaphor is here extended from Ganelon to all his kin, since the thirty bears represent his thirty relatives that play a role in the story.[186] But the image remains in the liminal space between what is considered human and what is considered animal: in the narration Ganelon is a man treated like a bear, and in the dream inside the narration, his thirty relatives are bears who act like humans. As it happens elsewhere, the dangerous proximity of bears to humanity is one of the characteristics that renders them monstrous.

In short, there is in *La Chanson de Roland* a strong connection between the bear and treason that works on many levels: on the one hand, it is a symbolic warning before the treason is accomplished, aimed most probably at the extradiegetic public, as the characters don't seem to regard the gift as a dangerous one. On the other hand, the treatment associated with the subjugation of the bear is the punishment that the traitor receives after the treason is committed. And finally, the bear is the allegory for the traitor and all his kin. I think this is an important precedent to the treatment the bear receives in *La Vengeance Raguidel*, where he is called a traitor many times and where he is accompanying a knight who is a traitor too.

The Skin of the Enemy

The bear can be found only once in the surviving romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Nevertheless, it is extremely interesting that this appearance occurs in *Le Chevalier au Lion*, the romance in which the lion occupies such a privileged position. The bear is in there associated with a highly negative character that is also a major milestone in Yvain's journey, the giant Harpin de la Montagne, who has armed his chest with a bear skin.[187] Harpin is

[185] "En dous chäeines s'i teneit un brohun./ Devers Ardene vëeit venir trente urs/ Cascun parolet altresi cumë hum" *La Chanson de Roland*, vv. 2557-2559. I follow Ian Short in translating "brohun" as "bear cub".
[186] Short, *La Chanson de Roland*, 177.
[187] "Ferir le va enmi le piz/ Qu'il ot armé d'une pel d'ors" Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4196-4197.

dangerous for a variety of reasons: on the one hand, he is a giant, thus, to some extent unnatural and monstrous and, as the tradition of the romance already indicates and will continue to insist upon, vicious. On the other hand, his actions pose a very concrete threat of violence to some members of the nobility, and above all, of sexual violence against a secondary female character depicted as young, beautiful and part of the elite. The threat of sexual violence against women is common in Chrétien's romances and it can be both punished by the hero, as by Gauvain in *Le Conte du Graal*,[188] or exploited by him, as Erec in *Erec and Enide*.[189] In the case of Harpin, the menace is particularly terrible: he holds a nobleman's sons hostage and threatens to kill them unless the noble surrenders his daughter, whom he plans to give to his servants.[190] This threat of sexual violence is even more unbearable because it transcends social strata, therefore carrying within it the denigration of the whole elite group. This is significant because, as Pastoureau explains and as I mentioned in the last chapter, there is a tradition of stories in which male bears kidnap and rape women, sometimes even producing with them a hybrid son.[191] As the bear whose skin he wears as an armor, Harpin poses a particularly monstruous threat to the sexual integrity of young civilized women.

The fact that Harpin wears the skin of the bear, instead of being accompanied by the beast or of having it in his coat of arms, is also significant. The environmental oppression indicated by the use of a dead animal's body part signals Harpin as a character who is, in a way, above animals, rather than being relegated to their status, as it happens with Ganelon: "in the joining of the animal and the human skin lies the identification of the human animal with the others over which he rules."[192] It may also be a sign of a more archaic way of ruling over

[188] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, vv. 7113-7115.
[189] For a comprehensive study of the uses of the motif of rape in Chrétien's romances see Kathryn Gravdal, "Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian, and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence", *Signs* 17 no. 3 (1992): 558-585.
[190] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4166-4124.
[191] Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 77.
[192] "Dans l'adhésion de la peau animale à la peau humaine passe l'identification de l'animal humain aux autres qu'il domine." Cristina Álvares, "Bestiaire en marge. Une lecture zoopoétique du *Chevalier au Lion* de Chrétien de Troyes", *Medievalista* 29 (2021): 15.

nature: “Harpin's crude threats, violent actions, and bearskin armor locate the giant outside of courtly culture and the customs of chivalric battle that organize it, but also perhaps in a past time when warriors wore skin instead of metal.”[193] This preference is also shown in the images of Princeton MS Garrett 125, fol. 56v. (figure 11 in chapter two), while in BnF, MS Français 1433, fol. 90r (figure 14) the color of Harpin’s robe suggests that the illuminator is referencing the bear skin. As Peggy McCracken explains, the fact that the bear skin is omitted in the Princeton manuscript while Yvain’s shield displays a heraldic lion shows

> not just Yvain’s victory over the giant, but also the triumph of heraldic symbolism over the literal use of an animal's pelt. The lion has displaced the bear in this image, and the symbolic appropriation of the companion animal has displaced the use of an animal's pelt as armor, suggesting that heraldry is the refined, courtly way to cover oneself in animality.[194]

The predominance of the way of using the lion over the mode of use of the bear appears, then, in many discourses at the same time.

Nevertheless, Harpin is not the only character of the romance that wears the skin of an animal deemed inappropriate by the nobility.[195] In the narrative there is a sort of precedent to this character in the wild man that guards the bulls at the beginning of the same romance, who wears the skins of two bulls or two oxen.[196] Like Harpin, he is not entirely human and yet rules over animals which are perceived or described as wild; in this case, the bulls are as “wild as leopards”.[197] There is a further connection between these two characters in the animal metaphor that describes the cry of the giant when he dies: “in this way he screams and cries like a bull,/ because the lion has wounded him so much.”[198] The similarities stop, nevertheless, in that the

[193] McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 73.
[194] McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 73.
[195] Elite characters wear animal skins all through the five romances of Chrétien, but their garments are limited to a selection of luxury materials like vair or ermine.
[196] “Einz ot a son col atachiez/ Deus cuirs de novel escorchiez,/ Ou de deus tors ou de deus bués” Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 309-311.
[197] “Tors salvages come lieparz”. Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, v. 278.
[198] “Si bret et crie come tors,/ Que mout l’a li lyons grevé”. Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4228-4229.

wild man rules over his oxen and nothing more, and even if he seems menacing, he helps the knights on their quest.[199] Harpin, on the other hand, pretends to extend the scope of his dominion beyond what the nobility allows, claiming the bodies of the sons and daughter of an elite household. Both monstrous beings that are not quite human and yet rule over nature, the one associated directly with bulls remains neutral, while the one connected to the bear turns into an enemy.

Even if not completely human, Harpin is depicted here as ruling over wild animals, therefore as a powerful antagonist. At the same time, the description shows him as deviating from the rules that would never allow a courtly knight to wear such an armor: his way of oppressing nature involves another kind of violence, less sophisticated than the one used by the elite men, and more literal. As McCracken points out, the episode confronts two ways of using animals for displaying identity: "the episode stages a confrontation between the use of an animal's skin for protection and perhaps inspiration and the symbolic display of an animal as an identifying sign."[200] It is not by chance that only after defeating this enemy Yvain is finally given the name of "chevalier au lion".[201]

Ausi Come un Diables Vis: The Bear in *La Vengeance Raguidel*

Unlike Chrétien's works, there is an actual bear in the verse romance *La Vengeance Raguidel*, composed before 1230[202] and preserved in four manuscripts.[203] Because of its

[199] There is a specular connection too between the wild man and Yvain himself, who in his madness roams the forest completely naked and eating raw meat. Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human*, 176-187.
[200] McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast*, 74.
[201] Yvain identifies himself with this name for the first time in v. 4291.
[202] Gilles Roussineau, "Introduction", in *La Vengeance Raguidel* (Genève: Droz, 2006), 9.
[203] These are Chantilly, Bibliothèque et Archives du Château, 472 (A); Nottingham, University Library, Mi LM 6; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, français, 2187, and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 1263. The last two only contain fragments and the second one lacks the 90 last verses.

humorous tone and of the fact that the author names himself twice as Raoul,[204] the work has been attributed to Raoul de Houdenc, author of other romances such as *Meraugis de Portlesguez*, although not all scholars agree on this attribution.[205]

Highly misogynistic, the text continues many of the conventions established by Chrétien's romances while also giving them an ironic tone.[206][207] In it, Gauvain is charged with the responsibility of finding and fighting the murderer of a dead knight —Raguidel— that has been brought to the Arthurian court. King Arthur's nephew searches, then, for the romance's main antagonist, a knight called Guengasouains, only to learn that he has magic weapons, and that he has trained a bear to protect him. Thus, Gauvain has to do two things: he needs to use the weapon that has killed Raguidel, which is the only one that can damage Guengasouains through his magical armor, and he needs to find a (human) companion that takes care of the bear while he fights the knight.[208] There is a first opposition, then, between two groups: on one side, two knights, a purely human team, and on the other, a knight and a beast, a hybrid one.

In the story, Gauvain first learns about the bear through a maiden who informs him of this danger. She explains that: "the bear is cruel and full of irritation,/ and is big and strong in excess."[209] The adjective *fels*, which I translated as "cruel", deserves some consideration. On the one hand, it is the epithet that the traitor Ganelon receives many times in *La Chanson de Roland*, as indicated above. On the other hand, it is also the same that was applied to the serpent

[204] This happens in v. 3320 and v. 6102.

[205] For a summary of the debate around the authorship of the text, beginning in the late nineteenth century with the first modern edition of the work, see Roussineau, "Introduction", 11-17.

[206] Alexandre Micha, "Miscellaneous French Romances in Verse," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 366.

[207] Lacy, "The Typology of Arthurian Romance", 48.

[208] As explained by the damsel in vv. 5129-5141, only two knights together can achieve the vengeance. It is usual in Arthurian romance that the knight who is destined for a concrete adventure is selected by a slightly fantastic test. In this case, the knight who must carry out the vengeance of Raguidel is the one that can extract the lance that killed him from his chest, an achievement only Gauvain can accomplish. And the one destined to help is the one that can take the rings off the dead man's fingers, a young knight called Yder.

[209] "Li ors est fels et plains d'anui,/ Et grans et fors outréement". *Messire Gauvain ou la Vengeance de Raguidel*, ed. C. Hippeau (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1862), vv. 5284-5285. All translations from Old French to English are my own.

that fights the lion in *Le Chevalier au Lion*.[210] It is also, as I have already anticipated, the word chosen by the damsel in *Le Haut Livre du Graal* to get Clamados to kill Meliot's lion. This is a highly negative qualification that automatically groups the bear with the main antagonists of French medieval literature.

The explanation that comes with this classification, nevertheless, does nothing to prove that the bear is indeed cruel or treacherous:

> If his master was to encounter
> A knight, and joust with him,
> The bear lays and sits at the side;
> And peacefully refrains from fighting.
> If his master can overpower him
> For him the bear will not move;
> But if there is more than one knight
> The bear will jump straight to their face,
> Just like a living demon,
> Bite with his teeth and harm with his paws,
> That there was never hauberk strong enough
> That could last against him.[211]

This, the girl explains, happens because Guengasouains was told that he was going to be killed by two knights; to avoid the prophecy being fulfilled, he trained the bear.[212] Another opposition can be noted here, between the treacherous training of the animal by Guengasouains, and the spontaneous pledge of the lion to Yvain, who does not need to train it for obeying his orders. The noble beast recognizes the good knight by his actions and acts in consequence, while the wild beast is deprived of reason and morality. The bestiary tradition may partially explain this particular difference, since there is an insistence in the lion being a forgiving beast that does not attack unless necessary, while there is no such description in the chapter of the bear.

[210] The adjective is applied to the serpent in verses 3359, 3379 and 3386 in the form *felon*; and its noun form, *felenie*, is associated with it in verse 3363.

[211] "Se ses sires vuelt encontrer/ Un chevalier, et il i joste,/ Li ors laist et se siot de joste;/ En pais ses esgarde à conbatre./ Se cil puet son signors abatre/ Por lui ja l'ors ne movera;/ Mais se plus chevaliers i a/ Li ors lor saut en mi le vis,/ Ausi come un diables vis,/ Mort des dens et des pates fiert/ Que ja nus haubers si fors n'iert/ Qu'il puisse contre lui durer.". *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5288-5299.

[212] "Guensgasouains issi l'a duit,/ Por ce qu'il set et a enquis/ Qu'il ne serra jamais conquis/ Fors par deux chevaliers ensanble." *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5302-5305."Guengasouain has trained him in that way,/ Because of what he knows and has inquired,/ That he will never be defeated/ Except for two knights together."

However, despite all the differences that make Guengasouains a main antagonist and his bear a negatively coded animal, it is not so difficult to see some similarities between the beast and Yvain's lion. Faithful to his master, the animal seems to keep watch over the chivalric codes that forbade uneven combat: for some reason, each time its master is attacked by an opponent, that is deemed unfair and the beast engages to ensure the compliance of the rules for a fair duel.

When the combat with Guengasouains finally occurs and the bear gets involved, the descriptions of the damage caused by the animal are bloody. The knight who fights alongside Gauvain, called Yder, has thrown Guengasouains off his horse, and only then the bear is upset and intervenes: "The bear saw him, and was upset/ For his master, whom he saw in the ground;/ He raises to his feet, bares his teeth,/ He runs towards sir Yder,/ More wicked than a demon from hell."[213] The expression *les piés drece*, which I translated as "raises to his feet", might be indicating the vertical position that bears can adopt and brings them so dangerously close to the human figure. The attack of the bear, a sudden reaction to seeing his master in danger, recalls the she-bears of the biblical tradition that so furiously protect their cubs.

The attack is then described in a very violent fashion, as the bear misses Yder and bites instead his horse, which it proceeds to devour:

> The bear jumps towards him, and harms
> His horse behind the saddle,
> In such a way that it thrusts all the way to the lung
> The right paw inside the body;
> After the blow he bit the flanc,
> In such a way that he rips out the main rib.
> And the horse fell on his side,
> Because he felt wounded to death;
> And the bear hurts him with his teeth and bites
> So much that he has quickly devoured it.[214]

[213] "Li ors le voit, si fu maris/ De son signor, qu'il vit à terre;/ Les piés drece, les dens desserre,/ Si cort à monsignor Yder,/ Plus caus que diables d'enfer." *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5584-5588.

[214] "Li ors saut á lui, si feri/ Son cheval deriere l'arçon,/ Si qu'il l'i mist jusqu'al pomon/ Le destre pié dedens le cors;/ Après le cop l'a el flanc mors,/ Si qu'il li traist le mestre coste./ Et li chevals caï sor coste,/ Qu'il se senti navré à mort;/ Et l'ors le fiert as dens et mort/ Tant qu'il l'a errant devoré." *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5590-5599.

Like the wild lions in the thirteenth century romances analyzed in chapter two, the bear attacks the horse first. As I already stated, the horse is at the very core of chivalric identity and the fact that the wild animal attacks it is very suggestive. The actions of the bear are even more transgressive because he does not only kill the horse, a common destiny for these animals in romance, but eats it. The voracious bear is an image that, as mentioned above, appears in the biblical tradition, and it is also connected to the concept of gluttony in some French literary productions contemporary to *La Vengeance,* for example the stories of the *Roman de Renart*.[215] In addition, as Rob Meens shows, eating horse meat was taboo in some places during the Middle Ages, and in others it was seen as an adequate possibility only in times of great famine.[216] Even if there was not a specific taboo attached to the consumption of horse meat at the time of the production of *La Vengeance*, the act of devouring a horse must have been seen as something that was not supposed to happen in the battlefield. The bear displays its violence and asserts dominion over his enemy in a way that is particularly inadequate for a chivalric combat.

There is a second opposition, then, between the animal that accompanies the good knight Gauvain, the horse, and the antagonist Guengasouains, the bear. When analyzing this opposition it could be productive to think about Cohen's deleuzian reading of the medieval knight as a hybrid identity machine, a circuit that combines organic and inorganic elements: horse —or other animals crucial to elite identity, like greyhounds and hawks, but mainly horses,— human, arms, bridle and saddle.[217] Guengasouains is definitely human and not a monster like Harpin or the wild man of *Le Chevalier au Lion*, but he deviates from the rule in

[215] Pastoureau, *The Bear*, 62.
[216] Rob Meens, "Eating Animals in the Early Middle Ages: Classifying the Animal World and Building Group Identities," in Angela N. H. Creager and William C. Jordan, eds., *The Animal–Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 4-11.
[217] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, *passim*.

that the elements that compose his identity, namely the animal and the weapons, are not what is expected from a proper knight. To normal arms he opposes magical ones, and to the domestic animal, a wild one.

Finally, the bear is killed by Yder, and the description of this action also involves vivid images of the animal's lacerated body.[218] Guengasouains, however, does not come to the rescue of his bear: "Guengasouain saw him die,/ But he does not go to rescue him,/ Because he was in such a way troubled/ And in despair from seeing/ Sir Gauvain who was coming".[219] Guengasouains puts himself before his bear, in striking contrast with Yvain, who is extremely troubled when he sees that his lion is in danger.[220] What is even more, Yvain explicitly cares more for his lion than for himself; he has been wounded, "but he is not so troubled by this/ as he is of his lion who is in pain".[221] In a similar way, the owners of lions in the thirteenth century romances that I analyzed in chapter two are furious about their animals being slayed, and seek active vengeance against their killers. In the case of Guengasouains, rather than a companion, the bear is merely an instrument of his master, crafted for a specific purpose, and is to be disposed of if the situation requires it.

More similarities between the bear and its master arise when doing a close reading of the text. In the final combat between Gauvain and Guengasouains, just before the bear is killed, Guengasouains is so afraid to die that he resorts to a frankly un-chivalric trick, killing his opponent's horse. This echoes with the unsettling and highly symbolic devouring of Yder's

[218] "Mesire Yder a trait l'espée/ Por lui desfendre et il l'enguele, / Et il li enpaint en la guele/ L'espée et le bras jusqu'al coute/ L'espée est fors et il le boute,/ Tant que li saut parmi le flanc,/ Puis l'en retrait à tout le sanc/ Le bras et l'espée del cors". *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5610-5617. "Sir Yder has taken out the sword/ For defending himself and puts it in his mouth,/ And presses it inside his mouth/ The sword and the arm all over to the elbow./ The sword is strong and he hits him/ So much that he takes it out through the side,/ Then he takes it back out of the body/ The arm and the sword all covered in blood."

[219] "Guengasouains le vit muerir,/ Ainc par lui ne fu secours,/ Car il estoit si esperdus/ Et entrepris de ce qu'il voit/ Monsignor Gauvain qui venoit". *La Vengeance Raguidel*, vv. 5622-5626.

[220] "Quant messire Yvains voit blecié/ Son lyon, mout a correcié/ Le cuer del vantre, et n'a pas torta;/ Mes del vangier se poinne fort." Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4549-4552.

[221] "Mes de ce pas tant ne s'esmaie/ Con de son lyon qui se dialt." Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 4564-4565.

horse by the bear. Furthermore, the expressions used to describe the knight at this point are *fel* and *plain de traïsson,* full of treason.[222] Like his animal companion, he is described as being cruel, and like the bear in *La Chanson de Roland*, he is a traitor.

In *La Vengeance Raguidel*, then, the bear is mainly a negative animal, attached to the antagonist yet not protected by him. As a sign, it can function in opposition to the human, to the horse and to the lion. In all these instances the bear occupies a symbolic position against chivalry and the fair rules of chivalric combat. This aligns with the depiction of the bear as a symbol for treason in *La Chanson de Roland,* and helps define the identity of the antagonist as a treacherous and coward knight, who actively avoids fair combat. In accordance with the description by Pliny, the bear does not appear to have ideas and feelings of its own, besides the rage that makes it attack when it sees its master in danger. This last characteristic connects it with the fierce protective she-bears of the biblical tradition, who will protect their cubs at all costs. Also in line with the biblical tradition, the dangerous voracity or even gluttony of the bear is shown in the bloody way in which it devours the horse. Like the bear of the Bestiary, the strength of the bear resides in its paws, which are mentioned often. This contrasts with the bear of *Le Chevalier au Lion*, which appears in conjunction with another monstrous being, the giant, as it happens in the Old Testament in which both bear and lion are shown as adversaries similar to Goliath. This association between giant and bear reinforces the unsettling similarity of the bear with humans, which is also reflected in the sexual threat it poses to a young elite woman. In this text, the bear skin is also a sign in opposition to Yvain's heraldic lion, which shows again a contrast between these two animals.

[222] "Le fel, li plain de traïsson", *La Vengeance Raguidel*, v. 5500.

Conclusions

From the analysis carried out in the last four chapters it is possible to draw certain conclusions regarding both representations of the bear and the lion in a variety of discourses, which allows me to point out some similarities and differences between them.

Of Bibles and Bestiaries

In the discourses analyzed to study the cultural background of both animals, textual and visual representations of the bear and the lion are tightly intertwined. Both in the Bible and in the Bestiary the lion is mentioned much more often than the bear and appears as a complex sign that can signify, for medieval authors, contradictory concepts such as Christ or the devil. Both animals can be used in association with violent notions such as the oppression of a ruler—an earthly king or God himself—and with the fear of that violence. In the Bible, most mentions of the bear occur next to a mention of the lion. I argue that, when this happens, the negative aspect of the latter is activated: bears can create a connection with monstrosity, like in the case of Goliath, or simply bring out, in the lion, what it has of menacing, of dangerous, of wild.

Biblical discourse makes certain traits primary in one animal. On the one hand, bears are presented as protective mothers many times in proportion to their total mentions, more often than lions are, even when this trait is used in connection with their wild nature and voracity. Lions, on the other hand, are frequently associated with kings and kingship, a connection they will have in the bestiary tradition too.

In bestiaries produced in France and England before the end of the thirteenth century, lions and bears, when they are included, show further connections. The strongest similarity that they share is their peculiar birth: the cubs of both animals are infused with life only after being born. This trait is crucial: it is the one characteristic of the bear that is shown in its iconography,

and the one very often chosen for depicting the lion.[223] There is at least one case, as I demonstrated, in which the iconography of the bear is used for the lion, thus further strengthening the links between the animals.[224]

The parallel of this birth with the biblical story of the creation of man facilitates the use of the lion as a Christological figure, and in general reinforces the possible kinship of both animals with human beings. But what in the lion is aethereal and paternal, in the bear is fleshy and maternal. The parallel that brings the lion closer to Christ makes it a noble beast, a model for humans to follow, while the similarities of the bear with humans, often connected with sexuality, make it fearsome and unsettling.

Companion Animals in Early Arthurian Romance

Both bears and lions appear as companion animals in early Arthurian romance, and again the number of extant texts featuring lions surpasses those with bears. In the French literary tradition from the eleventh century onwards, there are several examples in which bears are associated with the negative portrayal of a knight or a similar figure who becomes an antagonist to the hero. Bears can be used as a way of symbolizing traitors, like in the case of Ganelon, or for underlining the dangerousness of a monstrous being, reminiscent of Goliath, as well as his perverted tendencies in the realm of sexuality, as it happens with the giant Harpin. In *Le Chevalier au Lion*, the bear appears as a lifeless skin that Harpin wears. Wild nature is subordinated to a negative character in the most primal way, in sharp contrast with Yvain's and his lion's mutual, quasi-feudal bond.

In *La Vengeance Raguidel*, the voracious, overly protective and irrational bear appears as a companion animal to a knight who, like Ganelon and Harpin, is a negative antagonist that

[223] See figures 1-5 and 8 of chapter one, and figures 18-20 of chapters three and four.
[224] Figure 5 of chapter one.

does not comply with the rules of chivalry. Traitors and cowards, Guengasouain, Ganelon and Harpin are labeled *fels* or *felons*, just like bears and serpents are, and display cruelty towards positive elite characters who suffer or are slain because of them. Guengasouain's bear displays traits found in the biblical and bestiary traditions as described above: it is voracious, aggressive and wild; smart enough to be trained, but not enough to have judgment of its own; and it is overly protective of its master in an almost maternal way. Its nature, alongside its function as a symbol in opposition to chivalric values, is manifest in its devouring of the horse, a highly symbolic animal which represents much of what chivalry stands for. [225]

In contrast with the bear, the lion appears as a companion animal in many texts, while it does not seem to be used as a skin for a character to wear. When represented on material objects, the lion is rather an adornment described in the text or a figure in the coat of arms of a positive knight, in the illuminations. An extreme case is the display of real lion's paws in Gauvain's shield in *Le Conte du Graal*; the overlapping of lions and shields can be, in Chrétien's texts, quite literal, but it is always relegated to the field of heraldry. The use of the skin of a large wild predator as an armor seems to belong to a time before chivalry, to which the lion does not belong. Furthermore, the lion is associated, on account of its connection with Christ and, therefore, with concepts of forgiveness, nobility, and kingship, with positive characters. These are heroes who function as a model of chivalry, such as Yvain in the twelfth century or Meliot de Logres in the thirteenth. Nevertheless, also in the thirteenth century, it can accompany a more neutral character, such as Abrioris of Brune Mons, or even a negative one, as is the case of the Red Knight in *Perlesvaus*. In these last two examples the characteristics of the lion switch its more negative aspect, as the knights whom it accompanies are more irascible than courageous. I found that this change in the uses of the lion, which enlarges the scope of its representations, is a diachronic one.

[225] An action mirrored, as I have shown, by its treacherous master.

This diachronic perspective also seems to reveal a change in the representations of bears and lions in general. The companion animals in thirteenth-century texts are very different from Chrétien's smart lion, who knows when to obey or disobey his master's orders according to its own adjusted criteria, intervening in battle only to rectify an unfair combat. Rather, they are wild animals trained for performing a specific task, weapons intended for the battlefield or for guarding a territory. They all attack mindlessly, and they are all killed in combat. While the bear is neglected by his owner, in sharp contrast with Chretien's lion, whose master does everything to heal it and keep it alive, thirteenth-century lions provide a middle ground in that they are slain while their master is away, but there is an attempt to seek vengeance for the beast afterwards. Even Meliot de Logres' lion, which is at the beginning a positive figure in that it allows its knight to be shown as a figuration of Christ, ends up being killed when it irrationally attacks a knight who was not an enemy. Moreover, even when used as part of a Christian symbol, the lion does not signify Christ but rather the world. This shows how in the thirteenth century texts the most positive connotations of the lion are being displaced.

The diachronic change in the way of portraying lions reflects a wider change in the way of understanding chivalry and its connection to nature. Into the thirteenth century having a lion as a companion, let alone a bear, is not proper or good anymore. Wild animals can be displayed as heraldic figures, but when a breathing beast gets involved in chivalric deeds, conflict and violence multiplies and, ultimately, the order must be restored through the slaying of the animal. Even if the killing of the animal is not always a fully positive action, it is shown as necessary, and it is always carried out by a male elite character. Nature is not trusted to remain under human control; therefore, human dominion needs to become more assertive, inscribing itself in the animal body through the use of chains and muzzles, or bringing annihilation.

In the thirteenth century, the word, as incarnated in bears and lions, is perceived as a more aggressive place. Nature does not submit itself to humans spontaneously just because

they display Christian values, as it happens with Yvain, whose domestication of the lion reflects a natural order of things in which the male elite knight of noble character is necessarily a ruler of the world's wilderness. Rather, it needs to be tamed in an aggressive way which renders the animals mere instruments of the knights. And as a tool, animals can be used for either noble or unfair purposes.

In all these occasions, the tension between the wild animals and chivalry is reflected in their direct attack on the conspicuously symbolic animal that is the horse, and in the difference between bears and lions in that the latter just attacks, while the former devours. This poses an important contrast with the relationship that Chrétien's lion has with Yvain's horse: the lion guards the horse as well as his master, and the fact that both stand for chivalric values is visually displayed in the superposition of the lion and the horse in some representations, particularly in BnF, MS Français 1433.[226] In Princeton, MS Garrett 125, this harmony is reflected in the fact that Yvain and his lion are depicted as a mirror of each other. [227]

Lastly, even the most negative animal here analyzed, Guengasouain's bear, and the most positive one, Yvain's lion, present some similarities. Faithful of their masters, they both intervene when the knights are in danger of being killed in a fight. But while the lion always seems to reflect on how to balance a frankly unfair combat, the bear engages in battle only because of the cowardly instructions of his master. The mindless, chaotic attack of the bear is reminiscent of its protective nature as a mother, while the way in which the lion relates to Yvain seems to be almost feudal, as it acts as a companion and vassal to his lord.

[226] Figures 13 and 14 of chapter two.
[227] Figures 9, 10, 11 and 12 of chapter two.

Possible perspectives

It is clear that the lines of investigation that I proposed in this thesis can be enlarged in a variety of directions, and I wish to display here a non-exhaustive list of some of the ideas that may inform future research. A study encompassing a similar examination of the uses of horses, dogs and hunting birds—which requires the incorporation of aviaries to the sources—would provide an interesting contrast between the role of domesticated and wild animals for the purpose of demining identity in Arthurian romance. Incorporating to the analysis the prose romance cycles assembled after the first decades of the thirteenth century, which were widely read, or non-Arthurian romances such as *Valentin et Orson*, could provide a contrast between Arthurian verse romance and other forms of textuality. Finally, a third new line of research could be the comparative study of the sources analyzed in this thesis with representations of wild companion animals in hagiographic texts, which very often circulated between similar, when not completely overlapped, audiences.

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