6

Gender, moral, and sexual warfare in the *Roman de Silence*

Kathleen M. Blumreich

The *Roman de Silence*,[1] a thirteenth-century French romance, concentrates on the adventures of Silence, a girl reared as a boy in consequence of a royal ban on female inheritance. A quick study who soon excels at traditionally masculine activities such as jousting, wrestling, and skirmishing, Silence is forced at puberty to choose whether to continue the charade or to exchange her lances for sewing needles. Rebelling against a 'natural' order that would deem her worthy only for feminine pursuits, she runs away with a pair of minstrels in hopes of learning a marketable skill. Silence gains fame as a talented *jongleur*, is reunited with her parents, and makes her way to the English court. There, she becomes a favourite of the king, Ebain, and, to her detriment, his queen, Eufeme. Sent to serve the King of France, and narrowly escaping death, Silence continues to hone her skills in battle and chivalry; she is knighted in Paris at the age of seventeen. When civil war erupts in England, our heroine returns to fight against Ebain's foes. Yet, despite abundant proof of Silence's loyalty, the king capitulates to the demands of his wicked wife and sends his vassal on a quest to capture Merlin. Having completed this impossible mission, Silence returns to court where she is unmasked, her biological sex revealed. Simultaneously, the queen's treachery is exposed, and she and her secret lover are summarily executed. The king lifts the ban on female inheritance, takes Silence to wife, and the poem moves toward its close, with its author commenting on the appropriateness of censure for a bad woman and praise for a good one.

While Master Heldris of Cornwall,[2] the putative author, was clearly interested in composing a romance rather than a sermon, there is nevertheless an important thematic concern with morality that emerges. At nearly every turn, the poet presents his characters – and by extension, his readers – with moral choices, some easy, some fraught. A quasi-Ramist quality pervades the narrative structure, for each time a problem is introduced, the characters affected are confronted with (or imagine there to be) essentially two options:

follow truth or follow desire. Successive choices are further broken into dichotomies requiring deeper reflection on the part of the character, regardless of age, sex, or status. At the centre of this schematic is our heroine, Silence. As we shall see, she is in some respects little more than a pawn, moved about a politically, emotionally, and sexually charged chessboard by those with authority over her. Ironically, she is simultaneously the character with the greatest agency, for she is the only one who actively seeks to follow a righteous path.[3] That is, Silence is careful to balance what is expected or demanded of her against what she believes to be morally just and refuses to be ruled by her own passions or proclivities. From a modern position, we may chafe at her literal silence when she is forced from the prison of gender concealment to the prison of royal duty and its attendant domestic obligations.[4] Yet Heldris makes clear that Silence is heroic, stalwart throughout her journey, remaining above the fray even while she is in the thick of it. Disguises and war-gear help her to survive in the world and on the physical battlefield; honesty, a sense of personal honour, and assiduous exercise of right reason sustain her on the moral battlefield. In the context of a work concerned with the perils of revealing one's true self, this is no mean feat.

Indeed, the poem comprises a guidebook to right living, emphasising the triumph of virtue over vice.[5] And not surprisingly, in a work whose plot is catalysed and sustained by a cross-dressing trope, licit sexuality is often a crucial subtext. Although Cador and Eufemie, Silence's parents, emblematise heteronormativity, and Ebain and Eufeme reflect the realities of loveless royal unions as well as 'unnatural' appetites, Silence herself never seems to express desire for physical intimacy. Perhaps this is because she is the perfect 'maid' whose character cannot be sullied by base carnality; perhaps this is because she prefers asexuality; or perhaps this is because she must direct her energies toward maintaining the epicenity forced upon her by legal exigencies and filial duty. The poem, focused as it is on Silence's travails, is thus less about the protagonist's own sexuality than it is about the effect of her biological sex, appearance, and gender performativity on others.

The *Roman de Silence* opens rather conventionally, with Master Heldris speaking to his skill as a poet. He tells us that he 'is writing these verses strictly to measure' and remarks that 'A learned man might study long | to fashion rhyme and verse'.[6] Surprisingly, however, the author entreats anyone possessing his work to burn it rather than share it with people 'who don't know a good story | when they hear one'.[7] He further clarifies that he does not wish to have his poetry circulate 'among those who prize money more than honor, | or among people who want to hear everything | but do not care to make a man happy | with some reward they might wish to give'.[8] Heldris continues to rage against a contemporary milieu in which parsimoniousness reigns and where 'greedy, nasty, petty people' are 'intoxicated

with Avarice', eschewing honour and generosity in favour of wealth and false praise.[9] The reason for this jeremiad? Heldris confides:

> Before I begin my story for you,
> I really have to let it all out a little
> in order to get into the proper frame of mind.
> I want to get it all out of my system beforehand,
> so that when it's time to tell the tale,
> there'll be nothing left in me to spoil the telling.[10]

Although this prefatory material may initially strike us as divorced from the narrative proper, Heldris is here providing the ethical framework for his tale. When at line 107 the poet writes, 'Once upon a time Ebain was king of England',[11] we are already deep in a world where greed, the will to power, spite, and every kind of vice trump basic human decency.[12] By the time Heldris introduces Silence (*in utero*) at line 1671, we have met the majority of the romance's key players, all of whom have been or shortly will be presented with tests of their own moral fibre. These characters function as foils, sometimes to one another, but always to Silence herself. To fully appreciate Silence's comportment, then, we might begin by considering the degree to which her caregivers, travelling companions, and royal role models are successful in abjuring vice.

Following a textbook romance courtship, Cador and Eufemie marry for love and set up a household where they live in mutual respect. When Eufemie becomes pregnant and delivers a girl, however, the couple's entire focus shifts to economic matters.[13] The parents are delighted to have a perfectly formed, beautiful daughter, but they realise that their estates are at risk, given King Ebain's ban on female inheritance. And since they do not know whether they will later have a male heir, or whether Ebain will reverse his judgment, Cador enlists the aid of a trusted cousin to serve as midwife and announce the birth of a son. With this lady's help, Cador and Eufemie further succeed in lying about the newborn's health and tricking a chaplain into christening their allegedly dying son with the name Silentius. The child is then sent to live with the lady and a loyal seneschal in the forest, where 'she' is raised as 'he'.[14]

On the surface, it appears that Cador and Eufemie behave as concerned parents: they wish to circumvent an unjust edict and thus protect their child's fortune.[15] Yet the strategy they employ is as morally untenable as the ban on female inheritance itself. Not only do Cador and Eufemie conflate parental responsibility and personal desire, they flout the law and seek to deprive the king of his rightful authority. Cador acknowledges that what they plan is wrong, but he brushes it off, claiming that if they do happen to have a son in the future, 'we'll turn this one back into a girl. | That way,

no one can accuse us | of treason or felony, | of wickedness or villainy'.[16] To compound their disloyalty, they engage conspirators to abet them. The lady and the seneschal may elect to render aid out of a sense of duty, but the ease with which they lie, accept monetary compensation for their efforts, and swear 'solemn oaths' not to reveal the deception is troubling.[17] Perhaps most problematic is that Cador and Eufemie seem not to consider how their duplicity might affect Silence, the very person for whose benefit they set their contingency plan in motion. Although her physical and educational needs are met by her caregivers, she is kept isolated, restrained from venturing beyond her lodging in the woods for fear that she might reveal her birth sex. In fact, when Silence 'was old enough | to understand he was a girl, | his father sat down to reason with him | and explain the circumstances | which had led them to conceal his identity this way'.[18] Assuring his 'Dear sweet precious son' that 'we are not doing this | for ourselves, but for you', Cador admonishes Silence: 'As you cherish honor, | you will continue to conceal yourself from everyone'.[19] The burden of her parents' decision – as well as her father's definition of honour – is thus put squarely on Silence's shoulders. More importantly, the literal security of all involved in the scheme depends upon how well Silence plays her role. What Silence feels about living as a boy, eschewing sexual intimacy altogether, and whether she might wish for a different life doesn't figure into the equation.[20]

The moral calibre of Silence's role models does not improve as the story develops. Having decided to run away from her sylvan prison, Silence is taken in by a pair of itinerant entertainers, one a harpist and the other a *jongleur*. At first, they treat her kindly, allowing her to serve as valet as they travel from performance to performance. Before three years pass, however, Silence – under the pseudonym 'Malduit' – has learned to play and sing so well that she surpasses her masters in skill and artistry; soon, she is the centre of attention and is earning the trio great sums.[21] Instead of being appreciative of Silence's continued service, proud of her rapid progress, or even grateful for her enrichment of their coffers, the men feel humiliated and grow increasingly envious of their protégé. Convinced that Silence's talent somehow diminishes their own, they contrive to murder her under cover of darkness, 'for such deeds are better done unseen'.[22] Interestingly, in keeping with Heldris's earlier diatribe on avarice, much of their conversation focuses on money, and they rationalise their plan by imagining that Silence will eventually rob them of their livelihood altogether.[23] Warned in a dream that her companions are dangerous, Silence manages to escape and makes her way back home, where she is reunited with Cador and Eufemie. Soon thereafter, she is summoned to court.

Whereas the *jongleurs* are motivated by pecuniary interests (and bruised egos), Queen Eufeme is motivated by desire of another sort, though one

that consumes her equally: lust, or more precisely, greed for sexual dalliance.[24] As queen, Eufeme should be the quintessential role model for women throughout the realm, demonstrating the virtues of honesty, integrity, and fidelity. What she manifests are their opposites. Trapped in a stultifying, sterile marriage to Ebain, Eufeme attempts to stave off boredom. When Silence is pressed into service as the queen's page and personal musician, the relationship is initially above board, Silence keeping Eufeme company and entertaining her by playing the harp. Rather than continuing to engage in such innocent pursuits, however, Eufeme determines that she must have the love of this 'boy', and her courtly façade rapidly deteriorates. The queen demonstrates her longing for this epicene figure clearly and aggressively, kissing and embracing Silence and exposing her own body to tempt 'him'. Her efforts at seduction failing again and again, Eufeme variously accuses Silence of acting coy, of being a prostitute trying to negotiate a higher price, and of being homosexual.[25] Utterly rebuffed, Eufeme then plots revenge, fabricating evidence of attempted rape and insisting that the king put his vassal to death for treason. When Ebain balks, Eufeme enlarges the constellation of her crimes through forgery, theft and illicit appropriation of the royal seal, breaking and entering, and attempted murder by proxy.

As noted earlier, Eufeme's activities eventually come to light and she is punished horribly for them. For this reason, we might view Eufeme as exemplifying how not to conduct oneself; certainly, her actions do not merit imitation. But given the bad behaviour of practically everyone that Silence has come into contact with, it is equally possible to see the queen as merely one more negative object lesson in the romance. Yet if the moral choices of Cador and Eufemie, the lady and seneschal, the *jongleurs*, and Eufeme leave much to be desired, nowhere is the contrast between right action and personal gratification more sharply drawn than in the character of King Ebain. The literal and metaphorical embodiment of duty and justice, Ebain actually spends much of his energy satisfying his own desires, manufacturing excuses to avoid responsibility, and engaging in ethically questionable activities.[26]

Heldris's initial depiction of King Ebain is nothing short of glowing: he is second only to Arthur, a generous ruler intent on maintaining chivalry and determined to ensure peace and justice in his kingdom through law and order. Shortly after we are told of the king's many virtues, we learn that he has been at war with King Begon of Norway, and that the Norwegian people have suffered tremendously as a result. While international conflict would certainly not have been unusual for the time period – and is a frequent *topos* in romance – what is striking is that the clash between Ebain and Begon started 'over something trivial'.[27] Suddenly, Ebain appears less the good king than the petty tyrant who, insulted over a slight of some kind,

goes on a rampage, laying waste to another country.[28] Only after Ebain's wise counsellors contract a marriage between their lord and Begon's daughter, Eufeme, does the war end. Significantly, Ebain's response to the offer of a political union is quite in keeping with his hasty desire to settle the score with Norway. Apparently forgetting his earlier bellicosity, he behaves like a giddy adolescent, and in an unwittingly telling statement, Ebain remarks,

> Now I have fought a good fight indeed:
> it was well worth the hard work
> if I can have this woman to wife,
> for there is no greater treasure on earth:
> I want to wed and bed her properly.
> I have suffered long for love of her.[29]

Ebain's idea of what it is to fight a good fight is hardly Pauline.[30] It is even more peculiar because, prior to this moment, we have heard nothing of Eufeme or of Ebain's burning desire for her. By the time we reach line 220 of the poem, we have already seen the king behaving less than nobly. While he may not have broken any laws or treaties, his conduct suggests that justice was not foremost in his mind either when he declared war on Norway or when he agreed to accept Eufeme as peace-weaver. That Eufeme is left to her own devices following the nuptials might also imply that once Ebain had wedded and bedded her, he lost interest. Or perhaps the bride-elect's reluctance to kiss Ebain when they first meet – 'for her heart was a little bitter | from the tiring journey across the sea'[31] – carries over into the marriage. In either case, this royal union does not appear to go much beyond a business transaction.

Ebain next re-frames justice following the episode in which two counts, having wed twin daughters, quarrel over the inheritance. Since neither is willing to negotiate or to compromise, they resort to a duel. Each is 'so severely wounded in the fight | that they both died trying to prove themselves right'.[32] Upon hearing this news, the king is enraged, for he has lost good men; however, he places blame not on the obstinate counts but on the 'two orphaned girls'[33] and swears by Saint Peter that thenceforth, women shall be barred from inheriting. Although Ebain purports to be righting a terrible wrong, his knee-jerk response is a grossly abusive exercise of royal authority. Because two males could not settle their claims reasonably and civilly, all females will suffer discriminatory treatment under the law. Like the now-deceased counts, Ebain reacts with a distinct lack of reasonableness and civility and fails to consider the impact of his actions on others – his loyal, but son-less subjects included. Ironically, the king has inscribed on each of the counts' tombs: 'Greed has robbed many a man of his freedom, | and more than that if he gets hooked – | she makes him trot until he is dead'.[34]

Ebain remains blind to the fact that his edict serves no purpose other than as a means through which to vent his anger.

If the preceding examples give us a portrait of regal power guided by self-interest and acquisitive sexual desire, others further cement that perception. While on a journey from Chester to Winchester, Ebain and his men are attacked by a dragon. Unable to defeat the fire-drake himself, and mourning the loss of thirty of his entourage, Ebain offers a handsome reward – the warrior's *guerdon* – to any knight successful in slaying the dragon: 'I will give him a county | And let him have his choice | Of any woman in the kingdom. | Let him take the one he likes best, | Except, of course, if she's already pledged'.[35] On its face, this appears a clearly worded, unambiguous oath. Embedded in the king's promise, however, is a shrewdly crafted escape clause. 'Sans calenge', as translated by Sarah Roche-Mahdi, refers exclusively to the marriageability of the prospective bride. Since one meaning of *chalengen* is 'to claim (something) as one's right, due, privilege, or property',[36] we can appreciate Ebain's clarification: the prize-winner may not simply take another man's betrothed for his own. A second definition is 'to accuse (somebody), bring charges against';[37] therefore, we might translate 'sans calenge' as 'without accusations or charges pending against', which shifts the focus: if the knight were to select a bride whose reputation were less than spotless, Ebain could renege. It is also possible that Ebain is giving himself an out with respect to the dragon-slayer. If we read 'Mais solement soit sans calenge' as modifying the entire passage, we see that should there be any dispute as to who actually killed the dragon, or should the victor be of dubious integrity, Ebain could withdraw his proffered reward. What if, for instance, a mercenary or an individual hostile to the realm killed the dragon? Surely Ebain would not wish to bestow lands and a title upon or establish a political alliance with someone deemed unworthy or dangerous. A third gloss of the infinitive – 'to object or take exception to (a person, for example, as a candidate for jury or office)'[38] – is similarly important to our reading of Ebain's hidden caveats, for the phrase 'Mais solement soit sans calenge' could actually refer to either the chosen bride or the successful warrior. That is, objections by family, members of the court, or Ebain himself could be invoked to prevent the union. The king's oath is thus less a straightforward if–then verbal contract with any valiant man bold enough to risk his life than a shaky agreement filled with loopholes and fine print.

Not surprisingly, when Cador battles the dragon and emerges seriously injured but victorious, the king is slow to act. To some extent, of course, Heldris decelerates the narrative to a snail's pace in order to develop the relationship between Cador and Eufemie as well as to underscore the exquisite pain and anxiety that accompany romantic longing.[39] Yet even after the lovers tell him of their mutual consent to marry, the king delays, assembling

a council to advise him. The extended debate heightens dramatic tension and gives Ebain time to ascertain whether Cador and Eufemie are a socially acceptable match. Perhaps more significantly, the prolonged proceedings afford Ebain an opportunity to wash his hands of the matter should that become necessary: he can appear to have acted in good faith but still blame others for any negative outcome. By relying on the counsel of his nobles, Ebain also gains the advantage of seeming to be a disinterested party with respect to the distribution of wealth in England. Eufemie, as the only child of Count Renald of Cornwall, would stand to gain a substantial sum were it not for Ebain's earlier ban. In the absence of a legitimate heir, Renald's estate will revert to the crown upon his death; if Eufemie marries, all goods and chattels become the property of her husband. What better way for the king to retain control of this fortune than to accept the advice of his council and marry her to Cador, the king's own nephew? For Ebain, this is a win–win situation: he can maintain his image as the generous, thoughtful king while simultaneously satisfying his own greed.[40]

With age comes wisdom, or so we are told. As the years pass in the pages of *Silence*, however, this proves not to be the case with King Ebain. His moral compass never points true north. Indeed, Ebain's understanding of 'good' or 'right' continues to be influenced by whether he perceives some personal or political advantage to be had. When Eufeme accuses Silence of assault and attempted rape, Ebain sidesteps the matter, briefly consoling his queen and observing that boys will be boys.[41] It would be too bad, Ebain asserts, to ruin the reputation of a perfectly good vassal for one youthful indiscretion. Pressing the matter, Eufeme demands justice, arguing that Silence has committed treason and therefore deserves the death penalty. Ebain, with a measure of exasperation, finally addresses his real concern: his own reputation, and secondarily Eufeme's, would suffer. The king thus determines instead to send Silence to France, letter of introduction in hand. Nor does Ebain's penchant for expedience change after Silence has returned to England to fight against the baronial uprising. Following Merlin's revelations about Silence's true sex and Eufeme's adultery, Ebain once more turns the situation to his benefit. Instead of punishing Cador, Eufemie, and/or Silence for their disobedience, he listens carefully to Silence's history and immediately reverses the law barring female inheritance. By telling Silence 'I give you my friendship and protection',[42] Ebain effectively renders his former vassal untouchable. In essence, Ebain moves Silence into position for her later role as queen even while Eufeme still holds the title. By contrast, Ebain refuses to hear a word of defence from Eufeme or her transvestite-nun-lover, and immediately has the offenders put to death.

It may be no wonder that Ebain is drawn to Silence, for she is everything that Eufeme is not: young, beautiful, loyal, and, we might assume, capable

of bearing children. Yet given the swiftness with which Ebain abandons one royal edict for another, we might pause to consider the possibility that the king – like his queen – has found Silence sexually appealing all along. Only after Silentius has proved to be Silentia is it 'safe' for Ebain to act on any latent erotic impulses. When Ebain's courtiers bless the warrior–maiden, and his most trusted advisors urge him to marry her, once again the king's focus is on himself, on his own material and carnal desires. He neatly overlooks the fact of his and Silence's consanguinity and ignores procedures required by canon law.[43] Silence remarks that 'It is by his acts that one knows who is truly king'.[44] If this is the case, what we've seen of Ebain's kingship does not inspire confidence.

The foregoing may seem a long prelude to discussion of Silence herself, but to understand who a character is, it is often helpful to understand who that character is not. By exploring the context in and out of which Silence develops, we can gain deeper appreciation for how she emerges from the moral quagmire that threatens to swallow her. A further benefit of this approach is that it allows us to see more clearly what Silence represents beyond the fictional boundaries of the narrative. Medieval romance generally

> serves as a virtual guidebook, a manual of instruction for the integration of the hidden self within the public sphere. The romance hero is precisely he who, having lived through a series of internal crises, either achieves … a balance between personal desire and social necessity, or who … is excluded from society altogether.[45]

On at least two occasions, Silence is referred to as 'the mirror of the world'; as such, she is the glass in which we are invited to check our reflections.[46] Both character and poem function in a way similar to other medieval literary 'mirrors' which give us images of ideal behaviours and attitudes, for '[b]y looking into such a mirror the addressee can measure him/herself against the 'ideal' in order (at least in principle) to ameliorate his/her behavior'.[47] Silence is the 'mirror of ideal female form and apogee of male chivalric prowess [that] also demonstrates the inward beauty of moral rectitude'.[48] Thus, while the particulars of characters' experiences may be their own, the lessons taught through them are intended for Heldris's readership. The paramount lesson is that we should see Silence as our exemplar and reject the models of comportment embodied by her parents, companions, and social superiors, all of whom are ruled by and fall prey to desire.

From the moment Silence is introduced, we are made aware that she is extraordinary, set apart from run-of-the-mill humanity in terms of both external and internal qualities. Created from a special mould, Silence is lovely: from her bright blonde hair to her little ears to her slender fingers to her shapely thighs to her perfectly proportioned feet and toes, Silence is

Nature's masterpiece. As Heldris informs us, 'there is absolutely nothing wrong with this girl – | except that she's too beautiful. | … Nature will never work so well | on any mortal being again'.[49] To be sure, in fashioning Silence's beauty, Nature is fastidious. But Heldris de-emphasises the importance of the physical by drawing attention to Nature's use of only the most purified raw materials in her crafting of Silence. Nature's goal is to make a noble person, which is only possible if the clay is finely sifted, for 'this coarse matter attacks the heart right away. | … | The body is mere sackcloth, | even if it's made from the finest clay, | and the heart made of coarse mixed with fine | isn't worth a crab-apple'.[50] Purity of heart is, ultimately, Silence's most notable feature. She can – and does – disguise her beauty so as to appear more boyish: she chops off her hair, often gets sunburned or resorts to smearing her face with berry juice, covers her feminine contours with male clothing, and, no doubt, re-shapes her body through the exercise required for knightly endeavours. What she cannot hide, from herself or from readers, is a conscience that refuses to allow her to behave badly. This is not to say that Silence appears to us in holy illumination; Heldris's protagonist is not on the verge of sainthood, nor is she superhumanly good.[51] Over the course of the romance, Silence manifests a broad range of emotions, from happiness to anger to hope to confusion, and she is certainly motivated by survival instinct more than once.

During battle against the rebel barons, Silence gets caught up in the bloodlust and behaves every bit an Achilles to Hector or an Odysseus vis-à-vis the suitors:

> Silence didn't feel like fooling around,
> he didn't want to stop fighting;
> he kept slicing off enemy legs and feet and fists.
> The French came and helped him.
> There was not one who failed to respond
> to his cry of 'Montjoie!':
> the enemy fled; the French pursued.
> God was on Silence's side, as you can plainly see,
> for he won the war.[52]

Nevertheless, in contrast to the other characters populating the narrative landscape, Silence consistently puts a premium on morality, elevating proper action over personal desire. Even in his description of Silence's frenzy, Heldris is quick to point out that God is on the side of our heroine and thus her rage is appropriately – even righteously – directed. The arming scene just prior to battle confirms this through images reminiscent of Paul's in his letter to the Ephesians: Silence is dressed in a tunic of padded silk, followed by a light, flawless hauberk, leggings, and hood of fine mesh. On her head

is laced a helmet: 'There wasn't another like it anywhere. | It was covered with precious stones and a golden circlet | that were worth a fortune. | … | The nose-piece held a deep-red ruby'.[53] At her side is girt a good sword. On her feet are fastened spurs crafted of beautiful gold. After mounting her war-horse without having to grip the saddle-bow, Silence, 'as an experienced leader',[54] addresses the thirty Frenchmen in her company:

> Lords, you have consented
> to follow me to this land.
> Now I should like to urge you
> to conduct yourselves in such a way
> that none may accuse us
> of arrogance, excess, or folly
> unless they do it out of sheer envy.
> I am pledged to you and you to me.[55]

Instead of goading her men to violent slaughter, Silence encourages them to fight honourably – with justice, moderation, and reason.

Silence's inherent goodness comes to the fore early in Heldris's recounting of her history. As a child, Silence is an excellent student, easily learning her letters as well as practical skills like hunting and riding. But she takes equally to tougher knowledges: she is schooled to be respectful, humble, obedient, loyal, kind, generous, and honourable. Heldris writes, 'The child was not ungrateful; | he was very glad of such learning – | that was the effect of his good nature. | The child's innate qualities were such | that he taught himself'.[56] And when given good advice and urged to be good, 'He was receptive to their teaching | and heeded their admonitions well. | … | His heart itself schooled him | to eschew foolish behavior'.[57] Regardless of their motives for keeping Silence hidden away in the forest, the lady, seneschal, Cador, and Eufemie are effective teachers. They strengthen the naturally solid moral foundation upon which Silence will stand throughout her adventures, even when minor cracks appear.

During her twelfth year, Silence experiences her first crisis of conscience, represented via a debate among Nature, Nurture, and Reason.[58] Having bested her male peers to the point that 'none was his master any more. | … | Silence was deeply disturbed about this, | for her conscience told her | that she was practicing deception by doing this'.[59] Scolding Silence for ruining her feminine beauty, running around like a savage, and tricking women into falling in love with her, Nature demands that Silence abandon her masculine ways. Nurture then asserts that her claim on the 'boy' is firmer since she has already undone Nature's work. When Reason steps in, she first warns Silence that giving up the only identity she has ever known would be tantamount to suicide. Reason then reminds Silence of what is at

stake: should anyone discover her birth sex, Silence would lose her chance to train for knighthood and her rightful inheritance. Most importantly, though, Silence realises on her own that betraying the secret would prove her father a liar; it is this fact, not merely the fear of losing male prerogative, that convinces her to remain a 'boy'. For Silence, obedience to her father's – and mother's – wishes, and ensuring their continued safety must take precedence over everything else, Nature included.

As the plot of the romance continues to unfold, we see that it is Silence's commitment to moral behaviour that sustains her. When our heroine decides to run away with the *jongleurs*, she does so out of a sense of social obligation: should she prove 'slow at chivalry',[60] she would have no useful employment. Should King Ebain die and women become eligible to inherit again, Silence would be deficient in the skills necessary to run a household. While in service to the musicians, Silence performs her duties with care and courtesy, demonstrating respect for her tutors as well as taking every opportunity to learn. And even when the *jongleurs* prove to be full of malice and envy, she does not respond in kind. Instead, she shames them into remorse by reminding them of the Golden Rule. Similarly, when Queen Eufeme shows her true colours, Silence remains unflaggingly loyal and deferential; never is she intent upon getting revenge, though one could hardly blame her if she were. The same holds true when Silence learns that her king is in danger. Although she has become a renowned knight in France, she does not hesitate to leave that behind and go to the aid of her lord – a lord who has not shown her the same level of fidelity or love. Finally, at the close of the romance, it is out of a sense of responsibility to her parents that Silence relates the tale of her upbringing and strange adolescence: her aim is not to defend herself for having engaged in a masquerade, but to ensure that Ebain knows why her parents chose to defy the law.

Feminist readers of the *Roman de Silence* have found the conclusion to the poem troubling. When Silence is stripped of her masculine attire, dressed in queenly garb, and taken to wife by her great-uncle, King Ebain, she is simultaneously stripped of her male identity and the freedom that she enjoyed as a boy. Her days as a fierce knight are over; we fear that she will be truly silenced, her armour relegated to some dusty closet. This seems all the more likely because 'After Nature | had recovered her rights, | she spent the next three days refinishing | Silence's entire body, removing every trace | of anything that being a man had left there'.[61] Yet, Silence has run away before, first to preserve her sense of self and later to save her own life. Why, then, does she not seek escape now? Perhaps she stays because she has been defeated, by Nature as well as by a patriarchal system that would have her lovely, obedient, and voiceless. But equally possible is that Silence realises that in a very real sense she has won. She has proved her physical, emotional, and

moral mettle, and as queen, she will have more power, more influence than she had as a knight. As Silentius, she was in constant fear of discovery; as Silentia, she can exercise the kind of royal prerogative that might keep Ebain in check and might improve circumstances for women throughout the kingdom. If she has always been aggressive – not merely assertive – in doing the right thing, why should we imagine that she would suddenly reverse direction? Even if during the Middle Ages women were taught to abjure traditionally masculine behaviours, including adopting leadership roles and engaging in battle, history demonstrates that at times such action was deemed not only necessary but admirable.[62] Before she is made queen, Silence is fully capable of determining when conditions are right for her to be Silentia and when to be Silentius. It is difficult to imagine her retreating to a serene domesticity merely because her personal circumstance has changed.

In the end, the *Roman de Silence* has much to tell us about right living, about appropriate sexual and gendered behaviour, about morality itself. As we have seen, alongside instances of physical conflict and combat there are numerous examples of invisible warfare throughout the poem. At some point, every character – major or minor – must decide whether to allow ethical behaviour or greedy, sometimes lust-driven, self-interest to prevail. Where we would expect to find exemplars of rectitude, however, we encounter very few. Those granted the most authority are precisely the ones who exercise it most poorly, proving themselves incapable of rendering good decisions; most often, we find them resorting to expedience or succumbing to their own egocentric desires.

Through the character of Silence, Heldris encourages us to seek a different pattern of action. Rather than embrace appetite or desire, we should weigh our choices carefully, act with purity of intention, and prefer reason to either the pull of nature or the conditioning of nurture. This does not mean that the cultivation of virtue should be construed as a passive exercise. Were that the case, Silence's adventure might well have ended before it could begin, with Silence heeding Nature's warning and heading off to learn sewing. On the contrary, throughout the romance Silence examines her situation thoughtfully and plans accordingly, adopting a strategy that mediates between blind obeisance and equally blind desire. When the occasion demands, she is unafraid to be assertive, transgressive, aggressive, or all three. At the close of the poem, Silence's chainmail, jewelled helmet, and sword may be hidden away, but her moral armour remains. As queen, Silence will be able to show women how to reclaim their 'masculinity' despite the strictures of a socially constructed notion of 'femininity'. For Heldris, and for his readers, it is not merely that Silence fought, but that she continues to fight a good fight and will do so until she finishes the course, regardless of others' imperfections, failings, and inability to rule themselves.

Notes

1 All textual quotations are from the facing-page translation, Heldris de Cornuälle *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992).

2 Nothing more is known about the poet. For the purposes of this essay, I will not distinguish between 'Master Heldris' and the 'narrator' as some critics have. Sources and analogues of the romance are discussed in Heldris, *Silence*, xii–xvii and Michèle Perret, 'Travesties et transsexuelles: Yde, Silence, Grisandole, Blanchandine', *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 328–340.

3 An exception might be the King of France who, intuiting the goodness and nobility of Silence, refuses to execute her at Ebain's alleged direction. Since the *lettre de cachet* has been forged by Eufeme, the king's perspicacity is especially fortunate.

4 See Jane Tolmie, 'Silence in the Sewing Chamber: *Le Roman de Silence*', *French Studies* 63.1 (2009): 14–26. Whereas I read the poem as offering a series of branching choices, Tolmie argues compellingly that the romance invites us 'to investigate the collapse of binary systems' and conflates images 'of a woman's life with images of death and captivity', 14.

5 For a discussion of didactic messages within the romance, see Suzanne Kocher, 'Narrative Structure of the *Roman de Silence*: Lessons in Interpretation', *Romance Notes* 42 (2002): 349–358.

6 'Escrist ces viers trestolt a talle', l. 2; 'Uns clers poroit lonc tans aprendre | Por rime trover et por viers', ll. 14–15.

7 'Que, quant il oënt un bon conte, | Ne sevent preu a quoi il monte', ll. 7–8.

8 'par gent | Qui proisent mains honor d'argent, | N'a gent qui tolt voellent oïr | Que si n'ont soing c'om puist joïr', ll. 10–13.

9 'Avere gent, honi et las', l. 31; 'enbevré en Avarisse', l. 39.

10 'Ainz que jo m'uevre vus conmence, | M'estuet un petit que jo tence | Por moi deduire en bien penser, | Car jo me voel tost desivrer, | Que quant venra al conte dire | N'ait en moi rien qui m'uevre enpire', ll. 77–82.

11 'Ebans fu ja rois d'Engletiere', l. 107.

12 The spelling of the king's name – anglicised to Evan by Roche-Mahdi – varies within the text, from Ebans to Ebains to Ebain. For consistency, I have adopted the third spelling throughout this essay.

13 Significantly, this is the point at which Euphemie adopts a traditional gender role, yielding to her husband's judgement in matters of import.

14 Much has been written about gender 'slippage' in the romance, including the way in which Heldris refers to Silence with both masculine and feminine pronouns. See, for example, Kate Mason Cooper, 'Elle and L: Sexualized Textuality in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 341–360; Simon Gaunt, 'The Significance of Silence', *Paragraph* 13.2 (1990): 202–216; Edward J. Gallagher, 'The Modernity of *Le Roman de Silence*', *University of Dayton Review* 21.3 (1992): 31–42; Peggy McCracken, '"The Boy Who Was a Girl": Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*', *Romanic Review* 85.4 (1994): 517–536; Kathleen M. Blumreich, 'Lesbian Desire in the Old French *Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 7.2

(1997): 47–62; Elizabeth A. Waters, 'The Third Path: Alternative Sex, Alternative Gender in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 7.2 (1997): 35–46; Emma Campbell, 'Translating Gender in Thirteenth-Century French Cross-Dressing Narratives: *La Vie de Sainte Euphrosine* and *Le Roman de Silence*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49.2 (2019): 233–264.

15 Ironically, when Cador later believes that Silence has been abducted, he banishes minstrels from his land, on pain of death.

16 'Cesti ferons desvaleter. | Nus ne nos en pora reter | De traïson, de felonie, | De malvaistié, de vilonie', ll. 2046–2050.

17 See lines 2175–2200. Since the seneschal builds what is tantamount to a fortress in the woods and the lady has to lie about why she is living there, we have greater reason to suspect their motives. It is also worth noting that once Silence has gone missing, her caregivers are greatly distressed, though less for her absence than for fear of what their lax security might cost them.

18 'est de tel doctrine | Qu'il entent bien qu'il est mescine, | Ses pere l'a mis a raison, | Se li demostre l'oquoison | Por que on le coile si et cuevre', ll. 2439–2443.

19 'Bials dols ciers fils, n'est pas por nos | Cho que faisons, ainz est por vos … Si chier come l'onor avés, | Si vos covrés viers tolte gent', ll. 2453–54, 2456–2457.

20 A brief overview of the relationship between Cador and Silence appears in Catherine White, 'Not So Dutiful Daughters: Women and Their Fathers in Three French Medieval Works: *Le Roman de Silence*, *Erec et Enide* and *Le Livre de la cité des dames*', *Cincinnati Romance Review* 18 (1999): 189–198.

21 Silence chooses this alias, Malduit, 'Car il se tient moult por mal duit, | Moult mal apris lonc sa nature. | Et sil refait par coverture' ('because he thought himself very badly brought up, | very badly educated with regard to his nature, | and also to conceal his identity'), ll. 3178–3180. Discussion of Silence's re-naming and the importance of 'jonglerie' in the poem can be found in R. Howard Bloch, 'Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère', *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 81–99; Cooper, 'Elle and L', 341–360; Gallagher, 'Modernity', 31–42; Perret "Travesties et transsexuelles', 328–340; and Loren Ringer, 'Exchange, Identity and Transvestism in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Dalhousie French Studies* 28 (1994): 3–13.

22 'Car tels fais n'a soig c'on le voie', l. 3402.

23 On more than one occasion, Heldris suggests that the minstrels have been incited to evil by the devil. This is doubly ironic since the pair are wont to swear by various saints and often call on God for blessings and protection. As we see later, Eufeme similarly asks for divine aid both when she is lusting after and when she is seeking to destroy Silence.

24 Eufeme's function as a direct contrast to Eufemie is fairly obvious. The latter is depicted as noble, good, compassionate, and faithful to her husband; she is also a trained physician with a talent for healing others. Eufeme, on the other hand, is of royal lineage, but she is wicked, spiteful, and unfaithful to Ebain. Eufeme is also more intent on destruction than on conservation or creation. Scholarly appraisals of the poem's female characters abound. See, for instance, Kathleen J. Brahney, 'When Silence was Golden: Female Personae in the *Roman de Silence*', in *The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the*

International Courtly Literature Society, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1985), 52–61; Heather Lloyd, 'The Triumph of Pragmatism – Reward and Punishment in *Le Roman de Silence*', in *Rewards and Punishments in Arthurian Romance and Lyric Poetry of Mediaeval France: Essays Presented to Kevin Varty on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Peter W. Davies and Angus J. Kennedy (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 77–88; Sharon Kinoshita, 'Male-Order Brides: Marriage, Patriarchy, and Monarchy in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 12.1 (2002): 64–75; Kristin Burr, 'A Question of Honor: Eufeme's Transgressions in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Medieval Feminist Forum* 38 (2004): 28–37; Katie Keene, '"Cherchez Eufeme": The Evil Queen in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 14.3 (2004): 3–22.

25 Cf. Guenevere's similar accusation against the hero in Marie de France's *Lanval*.

26 Portions of the argument below are taken from my unpublished paper: Kathleen M. Blumreich, '"*Sans calenge*": Legal Technicalities in the *Roman de Silence*', delivered at a meeting of the International Courtly Literature Society, Vancouver, British Columbia, July 1998.

27 'par petite oquoison', l. 149.

28 Interestingly, Heldris alludes to Ebain's hot temper when he says that lawbreakers, whether right or wrong, would not get out of prison alive. See Heldris, *Silence*, ll. 115–118.

29 'Or ai ge moult bien guerriié | Et bien mon traval emploié | Se jo a feme puis avoir; | Il n'a el mont si chier avoir, | Que jo tant aim et tant desir | Par us d'eglise od li gesir. | Piece a l'amors de li me poinst', ll. 179–185.

30 Cf. Ephesians 6:11–17; II Timothy 4:6–7.

31 'Car son cuer ot un poi amer | De la lasté et de la mer', ll. 245–246.

32 'En la bataille si blecié | Qu'il en sunt mort par lor verté', ll. 302–303.

33 '.ii. orphenes pucieles', l. 310.

34 '… Par covoitise | Tolt a maint home sa francise, | Et plus avoec – quant s'i amort | Troter le fait jusque a la mort', ll. 329–332.

35 'Jo li donroie une conté: | Et feme li lairai coisir | En mon roiame par loisir. | Ki miols li plaira, celi prengne, | Mais solement soit sans calenge', ll. 382–386.

36 John A. Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988), 23.

37 Alford, *Piers Plowman*, 23.

38 Alford, *Piers Plowman*, 24.

39 Like Tristan and Isolde, Cador and Eufemie privately agree that exile together would be preferable to the agony of separation. See Heldris, *Silence*, ll.1345–1389. For discussion of the ways in which the *bos* offers freedom from the patriarchal constraints of life at court, see Jessica Barr, 'The Idea of the Wilderness: Gender and Resistance in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 3.1 (2020): 3–25. See also Miranda Griffin, 'Figures in the Landscape: Encounters and Entanglements in the Medieval Wilderness', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49.3 (2019): 501–520.

40 Ebain's penchant for land- and power-grabbing has been discussed by numerous critics. See, for instance, Sharon Kinoshita, 'Heldris de Cornuälle's *Roman de*

Silence and the Feudal Politics of Lineage', *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 397–409; Kinoshita, 'Male-Order Brides', 64–75; Craig A. Berry, 'What Silence Desires: Female Inheritance and the Romance of Property in the *Roman de Silence*', in *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 217–34; Erika E. Hess, 'Inheritance Law and Gender Identity in the *Roman de Silence*', in *Law and Sovereignty in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Sturges (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 217–235.

41 See Brahney, 'When Silence was Golden', 59.

42 'Amer te voel et manaidier', l. 6639.

43 See Christopher Callahan, 'Canon Law, Primogeniture, and the Marriage of Ebain and Silence', *Romance Quarterly* 49.1 (2002): 12–21. We might also recall that Ebain's trusted advisors have not proved very trustworthy: among those urging the union between Cador and Eufemie was the count of Chester, one of the rebel leaders.

44 'al fait pert quels est li sire', l. 6646.

45 R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 226; quoted in Heldris, *Silence*, ed. and trans. Roche-Mahdi, xxiii.

46 See ll. 3061–3065 and 3115–3116.

47 Kathy M. Krause, '"Li Mireor du Monde": Specularity in the *Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 12.1 (2002): 85–91, 86.

48 Krause, '"Li Mireor du Monde"', 89.

49 'En li n'a niënt a blasmer | Fors solement qu'ele est trop biele. | … | Ainc n'ovra mais si bien Nature | A rien ki morir doive vivre', ll. 1950–1951, 1956–1957. Heldris devotes more than 150 lines to Nature's artistry in the creation of Silence.

50 'Cil gros se trait al cuer en oire. | … Li cors n'est mais fors sarpelliere, | Encor soit de la terre chiere; | Mais li cuers ne valt une alie | K'est fais de grosse et de delie', ll. 1839, 1845–1848. See also Heldris, *Silence*, *ed. and trans.* Roche-Mahdi, xix.

51 Apparently, Silence's only blemish is a cruciform birthmark on her right shoulder, ll. 3647–3648. The symbolism here is understated, but nevertheless important. The cross appears on the right side of her body – as opposed to the left, or 'sinister' side; moreover, it literally marks her as a Christian in need of God's grace, protection, and guidance. It also underscores her role as a Christian warrior.

52 'Silences n'a soig de juër: | Ne violt pas le guerre atriuër, | Cui colpe jambe, u piet, u puig. | Li Franchois vienent al besoig; | A "Monjoie!" que il escrie | N'i a un seul qui se detrie, | Cil de fuïr, cil del cacier. | Savoir poés que Dex l'a cier, | Silence, ki le guerre fine', ll. 5639–5647.

53 'N'en a si bon en nul roialme. | Pieres i a et cercle d'or | Ki valent bien tolt un tressor. | … | El nasal a un escarboncle', ll. 5336–5360. Perhaps it is not pushing the matter too far to suggest that the 'cercle d'or' is intended to call to

mind a halo. The function and significance of the arming *topos* in the poem is discussed by Lorraine Koschanske Stock, '"Arms and the (Wo)man" in Medieval Romance: The Gendered Arming of Female Warriors in the *Roman d'Enéas* and Heldris's *Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana* 5.4 (1995): 56–83.

54 'com senés', l. 5375.

55 'Segnor, jo vos ai amenés | Par vos mercis en ceste tiere. | Or si vos voel jo moult requierre | Que vos soiés ensi par vos | Que nus ne puist dire de nos | Orguel, oltrage, ne folie, | Se il nel dist par droite envie. | Jo sui a vos et vos a mi', ll. 5376–83.

56 'Li enfes pas ne la desdegne, | Ainz est moult liés de l'apresure | Car cho li fait bone nature. | Li enfes est de tel orine | Que il meïsmes se doctrine', ll. 2382–2386.

57 'Il est de tel entendement | Qu'il croit bien lor castiement. | … | Ses cuers meïsmes bien l'escole | Al deguerpir maniere fole', ll. 2467–2468, 2489–2490.

58 If Reason here is the equivalent of the medieval 'ratio', the character allegorises the God-given faculty through which human beings discern right from wrong.

59 'N'i a un seul de lui plus maistre. | … | Silences forment s'enasprist, | Car ses corages li aprist | Ke si fesist par couverture', ll. 2493, 2497–2599.

60 'lens … en chevalerie', l. 2863.

61 'D'illuec al tierc jor que Nature | Ot recovree sa droiture | Si prist Nature a repolir | Par tolt le cors et a tolir | Tolt quanque ot sor le cors de malle', ll. 6669–6673.

62 See, for instance, Megan McLaughlin, 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe', *Women's Studies* 17 (1990) 193–209; Katrin E. Sjursen, 'Weathering Thirteenth-Century Warfare: The Case of Blanche of Navarre', *Haskins Society Journal* 25 (2013): 205–222; V.S. Sergeeva, 'The Feminine and the Masculine in *Roman de Silence*', *Studia Litterarum* 3.4 (2018): 116–139 (in Russian).

Bibliography

Primary sources

Heldris de Cornuälle. *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi. East Lansing MI: Colleagues Press, 1992.

Secondary sources

Alford, John A. *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction*. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988.

Barr, Jessica. 'The Idea of the Wilderness: Gender and Resistance in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 3.1 (2020): 3–25.

Berry, Craig A. 'What Silence Desires: Female Inheritance and the Romance of Property in the *Roman de Silence*'. In *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early*

Modern Literature, ed. Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton, 217–234. Tempe AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005.

Bloch, R. Howard. *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Bloch, R. Howard. 'Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère'. *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 81–99.

Blumreich, Kathleen M. 'Lesbian Desire in the Old French *Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 7.2 (1997): 47–62.

Blumreich, Kathleen M. "*Sans calenge*': Legal Technicalities in the *Roman de Silence*.' Unpublished paper, delivered at a meeting of the International Courtly Literature Society, Vancouver, British Columbia, July 1998.

Brahney, Kathleen J. 'When Silence was Golden: Female Personae in the *Roman de Silence*'. In *The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor, 52–61. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1985, 52–61.

Burr, Kristin. 'A Question of Honor: Eufeme's Transgressions in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Medieval Feminist Forum* 38 (2004): 28–37.

Callahan, Christopher. 'Canon Law, Primogeniture, and the Marriage of Ebain and Silence'. *Romance Quarterly* 49.1 (2002): 12–21.

Campbell, Emma. 'Translating Gender in Thirteenth-Century French Cross-Dressing Narratives: *La Vie de Sainte Euphosine* and *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49.2 (2019): 233–264.

Cooper, Kate Mason. 'Elle and L: Sexualized Textuality in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 341–360.

Gallagher, Edward J. 'The Modernity of *Le Roman de Silence*'. *University of Dayton Review* 21.3 (1992): 31–42.

Gaunt, Simon. 'The Significance of Silence'. *Paragraph* 13.2 (1990): 202–216.

Gilmore, Gloria Thomas. '*Le Roman de Silence*: Allegory in Ruin or Womb of Irony?' *Arthuriana* 7.2 (1997): 111–123.

Griffin, Miranda. 'Figures in the Landscape: Encounters and Entanglements in the Medieval Wilderness'. *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49.3 (2019): 501–520.

Hess, Erika E. 'Inheritance Law and Gender Identity in the *Roman de Silence*'. In *Law and Sovereignty in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Robert S. Sturges, 217–235. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011.

Keene, Katie. "Cherchez Eufeme': The Evil Queen in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 14.3 (2004): 3–22.

Kinoshita, Sharon. 'Heldris de Cornuälle's *Roman de Silence* and the Feudal Politics of Lineage'. *PMLA* 110.3 (1995): 397–409.

Kinoshita, Sharon. 'Male-Order Brides: Marriage, Patriarchy, and Monarchy in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 12.1 (2002): 64–75.

Kocher, Suzanne. 'Narrative Structure of the *Roman de Silence*: Lessons in Interpretation'. *Romance Notes* 42 (2002): 349–358.

Krause, Kathy M. "Li Mireor du Monde': Specularity in the *Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 12.1 (2002): 85–91.

Lloyd, Heather. 'The Triumph of Pragmatism – Reward and Punishment in *Le Roman de Silence*'. In *Rewards and Punishments in Arthurian Romance and Lyric Poetry of Medieval France: Essays Presented to Kevin Varty on Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Peter W. Davies and Angus J. Kennedy, 77–88. Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987.

McCracken, Peggy. "The Boy Who Was a Girl': Reading Gender in the *Roman de Silence*'. *Romanic Review* 85.4 (1994): 517–536.

McLaughlin, Megan. 'The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe'. *Women's Studies* 17 (1990): 193–209.

Perret, Michèle. 'Travesties et transsexuelles: Yde, Silence, Grisandole, Blanchandine'. *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 328–340.

Ringer, Loren. 'Exchange, Identity and Transvestism in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Dalhousie French Studies* 28 (1994): 3–13.

Sergeeva, V.S. 'The Feminine and the Masculine in *Roman de Silence*'. *Studia Litterarum* 3.4 (2018): 116–139. In Russian.

Sjursen, Katrin E. 'Weathering Thirteenth-Century Warfare: The Case of Blanche of Navarre'. *Haskins Society Journal* 25 (2014): 205–222.

Stock, Lorraine Koschanske. "Arms and the (Wo)man' in Medieval Romance: The Gendered Arming of Female Warriors in the *Roman d'Enéas* and Heldris's *Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 5.4 (1995): 56–83.

Tolmie, Jane. 'Silence in the Sewing Chamber: *Le Roman de Silence*'. *French Studies* 63.1 (2009): 14–26.

Waters, Elizabeth A. 'The Third Path: Alternative Sex, Alternative Gender in *Le Roman de Silence*'. *Arthuriana* 7.2 (1997): 35–46.

White, Catherine. 'Not So Dutiful Daughters: Women and Their Fathers in Three French Medieval Works: *Le Roman de Silence*, *Erec et Enide* and *Le Livre de la cité des dames*'. *Cincinnati Romance Review* 18 (1999): 189–198.