

Chapter 7

Les amours et la chasse

Les amours, or courtly love, was the third member in the trinity of pastimes that occupied the medieval aristocracy. The practice, which was probably derived in part from Ovid's love poems and perhaps also from the poetry of Muslim Spain, developed in the south of France; it spread to the north by way of Eleanor of Aquitaine's marriages, first to Prince Louis of France and later to Prince Henry of England. According to the rules of courtly love, the (male) lover was the servant or vassal of the (female) beloved, who was often the wife of another man. The true lover did everything in his power to please his beloved and prove his devotion, up to and including engaging in displays of physical prowess or tests of psychological fortitude. When she rewarded him, he rejoiced; when she punished or ignored him, he reveled in his own pain. The act of love was often depicted in terms, sometimes violent and self-serving, of *les armes* or *la chasse*. The lover might be depicted as a prisoner of war or a victim of Cupid's arrow, or, on the other hand, as an army besieging a castle or a hunter chasing a fleet deer.

The Classical tradition of associating lovers with the hunt had reached the Middle Ages primarily by way of Ovid. In his *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid suggests myriad ways in which a lover can hunt, trap, or hook his or her beloved; in the *Remedia Amoris*, he suggests that the (male) lover can hunt wild beasts as a way to take his mind off of love when an affair has ended. In medieval literature, the trope of love-as-hunting takes a staggering number of forms. In its relationship to love, the hunt can appear in any number of configurations: as a passing allusion, a subsidiary or concurrent episode, or a central metaphor (the "love chase" or "love hunt"). A knight may stumble into erotic adventures while hunting in the woods; often, especially in

vernacular *lais* and romances modeled after them, he is led directly to his new mistress by a mysterious stag or boar. Even the love chase proper can take a number of different forms. The pursuit of an animal (generally a hart or stag) can serve as an allegory for the pursuit of the beloved or represent the torments of the lover hunted by Love. The allegorical hunter may be the lover, the beloved, Love itself, or a servant of Love; the quarry might represent the lover (or the heart or mind of the lover) or the beloved (or the heart or mind of the beloved). The death of the animal can symbolize the “capture” of the beloved’s affections, or, more ominously, the physical consummation of courtship.¹

The link between sexual desire and hunting would seem to be anticipated, and perhaps even influenced to some extent, by linguistic fortuity. The Latin words *venārī* (to hunt) and *venus, veneris* (sexual pleasure) are similar enough to cause confusion and facilitate a good deal of sly punning. The resulting Middle English word *venerie* (as well as its modern English derivative, *venery*) means both “a chase of game animals” and “the pursuit of (usually sexual) pleasure.”² (The word is not so obviously a pun in French, however: both the Old French *ven(n)erie* and the modern French *vénerie*, in their strict senses, mean only “hunting wild animals.”) All of these terms are ultimately derived from the Indo-European root *wen-*, “to desire, to strive for.” Significantly, other words that are derived from the same root include “wish,” “winsome,” “venison,” and “venom” (from Latin *venēnum*, “love potion, poison”).³

¹ For a history of the love hunt from its origins to the Middle Ages, see Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1993) 45-52; Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1974), ch. 3, “The Love Chase” and ch. 4, “Medieval Allegories of the Love Chase.”

² *Middle English Compendium* [computer file], 1998, U of Michigan, 22 December 2004 <<http://ezproxy.library.cornell.edu:2317/m/med/>>, s. v. *venerie* (n. 1) and (n. 2); *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2000, Oxford UP, 22 December 2004 <<http://resolver.library.cornell.edu/misc/3862894>>, s. v. *venery* (1) and (2).

³ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* [computer file], 2000, Bartleby.com, 22 December 2004 <http://encompass.library.cornell.edu:20028/about/1872>, s. v. *venery* (1), *venery* (2); *wen-* (Appendix I).

Furthermore, a common word to describe the pleasures of the chase (and the one that Gaston uses the most frequently) is *deduit*. The word has a broad range of possible meanings, including “merrymaking, gaiety,” “sport, amusement,” “game, quarry,” and “a place for pleasure.”⁴ The word is commonly used in connection with hunting, but even where it is unrelated to carnal desire, it easily takes sexual innuendo to itself. Geoffroi de Charny, whose arms manual *Le livre de chevalrie* we examined in the previous chapter, refers several times to the *deduis* (*deduiz*) of hunting and hawking, which, although they are pleasant enough, must not be indulged to excess (19: 121-130, pp. 114-115; 24: 108-109, pp. 138, 141; 25: 63-67, pp. 142, 145). In two instances, Charny follows a mention of cynegetical *deduiz* with a reference to the forbidden *plaisance* of brothels and taverns (24: 108-110, pp. 138, 141; 25: 63-72, pp. 142, 144-145). The most famous of all literary *deduiz* is, of course, the Jardin de Dedit of *Roman de la Rose*; this garden contains all earthly pleasures, with a special emphasis on sexual pleasures. As there is no precisely equivalent English word, Edward translates *deduit* variously as *solas* (MG 1: 119), *lust* (MG 1: 262, 263, 266, 271), *disporte* (MG 14: 1787), and *sport* (MG 14: 1779), all of which retain the ambiguous implications of the original. An exclusively English word, *trist* or *tryst* eventually came to mean “a romantic liaison” but originally was a hunting term meaning “an appointed hunting station.”⁵

The depth and complexity of the traditional associations between the chase for a beloved and the chase for animal quarry made the project of writing a hunting manual into a less-than-straightforward task. The titles of hunting manuals – such as Gace de la Buigne’s *Le roman des deduis* (1359-1377), which includes a debate between the allegorical figures *Amour d’oiseaux* and *Amour de chiens*, or Jacques du

⁴ La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire historique de l’ancien langage françois; glossaire de la langue françoise depuis son origine jusqu’au siècle de Louis XIV* (Paris, H. Champion, 1875-1882), vol. 10, s. v. *deduit*.

⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary Online* s. v. *trist* (sb. 2), *tryst* (sb.).

Fouilloux's La vénerie et l'adolescence (1561), which includes a wolf hunt that turns into an amorous rendezvous, and even William Twici's straightforward Art of Venery, which does not have any erotic overtones at all – allude, consciously or not, to the barely concealed tension between the two types of pursuit. Gaston Phébus must have recognized that a Livre de chasse written by a notorious hunter of pretty women, especially one who had a habit of seducing peasant girls and shepherdesses he met while hunting, would seem to include a salacious double entendre regardless of authorial intent.⁶

In the last chapter, we considered the relationships between arms and hunting, as well as the relationships between their respective didactic literatures. In this chapter, we will consider the relationship between love and hunting as it is presented in the hunting manuals. The world of the manuals is, for the most part, exclusively and aggressively masculine. Men live and work with each other and with domestic and wild animals. They live without the company of, or the desire for, women and they perform for each other, for themselves, and for God.

Marcelle Thiébaux suggests that amatory poets from the thirteenth century forward drew upon the technical language of hunting in order to please their aristocratic audiences, who would then have had the pleasure of hearing about two of their favorite sports at once.⁷ I will argue that the opposite force is also at work: the hunting manual authors, who were fully aware of their audiences' familiarity with the conventions of both courtly love and the literary love chase, deliberately distance themselves from those conventions. In fact, Gaston (and, to a much lesser extent, his translator Edward) writes a hunting manual that takes great pains to disengage itself from all things female and feminine, whether they be human beings, animals, sins,

⁶ At least one other hunting manual author was as fond of chasing women as he was of chasing wild beasts: Jacques du Fouilloux, author of La vénerie et l'adolescence. Ed. Gunnar Tilander (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1967) 6.

⁷ Thiébaux, The Stag of Love 103.

thoughts, or actions. Intentionally or not, the hunting manuals position themselves as “anti-love manuals,” treatises that warn the reader of the danger inherent in all things female and feminine and give him wise counsel regarding how he might best avoid it.

In order to see the similarities and oppositions between the hunting manual and the love manual, we must first examine the form and techniques of the latter. Hunting manuals, of course, were a popular genre in the later Middle Ages, and arms manuals even more so; however, manuals treating the finer points of *les amours* are conspicuously lacking, although amatory texts, especially those of Ovid and his imitators, were extremely popular.⁸ A prospective lover might cull some helpful ideas from a text like Romance of the Rose, but if he wished to find a comprehensive treatment of the subject, he would have to turn to Andreas Capellanus’ De amore (also known as De arte honeste amandi).⁹ This self-styled guide to love was written by the chaplain to Eleanor of Aquitaine near the end of the twelfth century. Most critics believe that it was written at the court of Marie de Troyes (Marie de Champagne, Marie de France) and perhaps at her request, though Andreas himself claims to be writing the book for the instruction of a young man named Walter. Although the accuracy and sincerity of the work are not beyond suspicion, it was nevertheless quite popular and translated into a number of vernaculars: French (twice), Italian (twice), Catalan, and German (twice); for whatever reason, it was never translated into English. Although Andreas refers to *amoris mandata* (I.ii), “treatises on the subject of love,” which with he is familiar, his own is the only one extant.

⁸ For the influence of Ovid’s amatory works on the medieval literary tradition, see Chapter 2, “From Rome to France: Under the Sign of Ovid” in Peter L. Allen, The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992).

⁹ Citations to the original Latin will be taken from Andreae Capellani regii Francorum De amore libri tres, ed. E. Trojel (München: Eidos Verlag, 1964). English translations will be taken from Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia UP, 1960).

The manual, which is loosely patterned after Ovid's texts on the art of love, is divided into three books. The first is a *mélange* of topics, including a pseudo-scientific definition of love, its forms and limitations, the ways that it can be acquired, and directions for (or injunctions against) beginning love affairs between men and women of various socioeconomic classes; this last section contains a series of sample dialogues between a pursuing man and a reluctant woman. The second book contains directions on how love between two people may be preserved, the essential points of which are summed up at the end in a list of thirty-one rules (not all of them of equal importance and with a good deal of overlap). The third book, a rather incongruous retraction of the earlier two, denounces love as the worst of sins and exposes the evils of women in order to dissuade the prospective lover.

Most of Andreas' amatory metaphors are military in nature: the work is riddled with phrases such as *amoris arma* ("the arms of love") and *amoris exercitu militare* ("to serve in the army of love"). However, Andreas also uses cynegetical metaphors, not only the image of love-as-hunt, but also the less common love-as-hawking and the still rarer love-as-fishing. The word *amor*, he claims, is derived from the word *amus* ("hook"), because the lover tries to ensnare his beloved in the same way that a fisherman attracts fish with his bait and capture them on his hook (I.iii). Several dialogues between pairs of potential lovers refer to birds of prey, thus alluding to, rather than directly stating, the relationship between erotic pursuit and falconry. Nevertheless, Andreas insists, he feels uneasy about writing about *huiusmodi venatibus*, "hunting of this sort" (Preface, p. 27).

De amore, like all medieval manuals, looks like a how-to guide for the as-yet-uninformed: it contains detailed instructions for initiating and maintaining a love affair, as well as encyclopedic entries on what love is and how and why it "works" or fails to work between two people. It is a valid rule book, insofar as it seems to

document the practice of courtly love as it was conducted in the French court of Eleanor of Aquitaine during the years 1170-1174.¹⁰ However, as with all medieval manuals, therein lies the rub: if it was, in fact, written at the request of the daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine (who was herself the woman who originally imported the idea of courtly love from southern France) – and if it is, indeed, an accurate document – it could hardly have been intended as an instruction book for its audience, who must have already known everything contained therein.

In reality, De amore, like every other medieval manual, is a popular work, and Andreas was, like every other medieval manual writer, a popular author. Although it pretends to be a work produced for private consumption by the otherwise unidentified “Walter,” the secondary audience (that is, the audience for whom he was actually writing) must have been much larger, presumably the court of the Countess of Champagne and possibly other aristocratic circles as well. The primer-like quality of the work, as well as the various techniques that, as we will see below, the author uses to make his text more appealing, are welcoming to any person who has access to the text, regardless of his or her socioeconomic status or knowledge of courtly practice. De amore continued to fulfill its popular aspirations for at least four hundred years, well into the seventeenth century – a fact which, if Andreas knew, would doubtless have pleased him a good deal.

Like all popular works, De amore attempts to entertain its audience by presenting them with an acceptable but not entirely predictable variation of material that they have seen before and enjoyed. Andreas’ task was to wrap courtly love in a package that was attractive enough to present to an audience that was composed of the pioneers of courtly love themselves, or at least their first-generation acolytes. To this

¹⁰ This is the most widely held view. However, Alfred Karnein has suggested that the De amore was written not at the court Marie de Champagne but in the chancellery of the King of France; cited in Don A. Monson, “Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony,” Speculum 63 (1988): 547.

end, he uses many of the same sorts of tactics that we have seen in other manuals. De amore presents itself as an encyclopedic compendium of love-related topics, thereby demonstrating not only how complicated is the subject of love but also, flatteringly, how much the reader him- or herself knows about it – and, of course, how much the author must know about it in order to write such a manual. In the interest of keeping the reading pleasantly varied, De amore utilizes an assortment of genres and formats, sometimes in tandem or with one nested inside of another: dialogue or debate, fable (Fifth Dialogue), romance (II.viii), personal letters (Seventh Dialogue), lists of important points (Fifth Dialogue), personal experiences and observations, hypothetical situations, and sham “court cases” judged by various female love authorities (the Countess of Champagne, Queen Eleanor, Lady Ermengarde of Narbonne, the Countess of Flanders, and a nameless “court of ladies”).

The positive reception of the work and its author are fairly easy to establish; it is more difficult to know precisely what kind of entertainment Andreas’ text might have provided for its secondary audience. Later audiences likely had an antiquarian interest in the work, though of course this possibility would not have occurred to its author. The text seems to have been used as an instruction book in the court of King Juan of Aragon,¹¹ though this sort of usage, I would contend, was probably not what the author intended. Then, too, a number of critics have suggested that the text might be deliberately ironic or parodic. One school of thought suggests that the third book is ironic, meant to appease disapproving clerics while not diminishing the pleasure of the first two books for an aristocratic audience; another school posits that the entire text is ironic and should be read as a condemnation of courtly love rather than a promotion of it. Still other critics have seen it as an intentionally humorous work that parodies love games or the literature describing or celebrating them, or as a set of veiled (but crudely

¹¹The Art of Courtly Love, trans. Parry 23.

humorous) references to and metaphors for the act of love itself.¹² Andreas' irreverent tone throughout the first two books and the inconsistency of the work as a whole certainly suggest that he might not be entirely serious. Nevertheless, without an independent first-hand account of Aquitanian courtly love to serve as a reference point, we cannot know how close the De amore reflected actual practice and we can only guess at what (if anything) Andreas might be altering, exaggerating, or parodying.

I am inclined to think that the first two books of De amore are ironic and deliberately humorous, but not for any of the reasons mentioned above. Rather, I would suggest, the humor comes from a contradiction that is built into the genre of the medieval manual itself. There is an inherent tension between the stated purpose of the text (to teach an innocent named Walter about love) and the obvious fact that the text is useless as a how-to guide, despite the fact that its earnest author-speaker pretends to be unaware of his own ineffectualness. The joke, it would seem, is on those who do not understand that a manual is not intended to be a guidebook.

Andreas assures us that “an elaborate line of talk on the part of the lover usually sets love’s arrows a-flying” (I.vi, p. 34), but it soon becomes obvious that unless the beloved can be convinced to follow her script as it is written, all of the lover’s *ornatum amantis eloquium* will be in vain. Even if the lover can persuade the object of his affections to read her lines on cue, however, he will not be much better off: in three-quarters of the Dialogues, the man is shot down unmercilessly despite displaying excellent forensic technique. The two exceptions to this unsettling trend happen to be cases in which the man is socially equal or superior to the woman he is wooing (the Fourth and Fifth Dialogues), though desirable social status is certainly no

¹² For a summary of the various theories regarding Andreas’ alleged irony or humor (to 1988), see Monson, “Irony.” Monson goes on to suggest that Andreas’ irony, if it exists at all, is at least largely unintentional.

guarantee of victory. Success in love, apparently, is one part socioeconomic advantage and at least two parts luck; eloquent speech of the sort that Andreas offers to teach his disciple Walter would seem to have nothing to do with it.

His original audiences may indeed have enjoyed Andreas' conscious humor or irony. However, the inescapable fact that many, if not most, commentators (both medieval and modern) seem to have found nothing funny in it calls the value of his text as a humorous read into serious question. The primary source of the work's appeal surely lies not in its ambivalent tone but in the fact that it, like all medieval manuals, is a work of imagination-stimulating literature. Like the arms and hunting manuals that we have examined, it works on two levels. If the reader is knowledgeable about courtly love, he or she can have the pleasure of reading about its finer points, watching it play itself out in various situations, and comparing those situations to what he or she knows from experience. If, on the other hand, the reader knows nothing about courtly love (which would of course be impossible for the members of the secondary intended audience but quite likely for later audiences), he or she has a chance to learn about it while perusing a work that is a veritable florilegium of love-related materials, supplemented by the wisdom of some of the highest authorities in Europe.

No less important, though more apt to be overlooked, is the fact that De amore also provides the reader with the rather nasty pleasure of watching other people do things that he or she does not particularly want to do him- or herself. A male reader can watch the (generally unsuccessful) attempts made by another man for the affections of a well-guarded woman without ever once having to expose himself to the danger of humiliation. A female reader can have the satisfying experience of watching a woman deflect unwanted attention (or succumb to desirable attention) without experiencing any of the unpleasantness or anxiety that such situations tend to

cause in real life. We can watch the “trials” of greedy, unfaithful, or unresponsive lovers of either sex in the court of love; our curiosity is indulged at the same time that our sense of justice is satisfied, and it is a relief to know that these are other people’s love problems, not ours.

From this point of view, it does not matter whether or not the De amore is ironic or parodic, or whether or not its author is sincere or sarcastic: regardless of tone or authorial intention, the text’s multifarious functions – a reminder of past events, a suggestor of future subjunctive ones, and a voyeuristic keyhole into the lives of those both happier and more wretched than oneself – all remain undiminished. Though this may not seem immediately obvious, a modern example will quickly convince us that it is so: let us consider romantic comedies, though almost any modern film genre would do as well. Despite the fact that they often consist of stock characters acting out improbable or outlandish narratives, even the most tongue-in-cheek romantic comedies are popular precisely because their stories are recognizable enough to be uncomfortably familiar, but comic because they happen to someone else. They remind their viewers of things they have already experienced or seen others experience (the misunderstandings, the missed opportunities) and things they would like to experience in the future (the invariably happy ending). They create a forum wherein which the viewer can safely contemplate the humorous misfortunes of others (all of which, if they happened to him, would not be funny at all) while fantasizing about the things he wishes to fantasize about – which usually include a variation on the shop-worn theme of romance, whether medieval or modern: “despite incredible odds, love conquers all.”

According to De amore and the hunting manuals, the requirements for, and the benefits accrued by, a true lover and a good hunter are quite similar; however, as we

will see, the hunter is at a definite advantage in several respects. Andreas explains that a true lover must be relatively youthful but fully mature (he suggests that a man is not fit to serve in the army of love before the age of eighteen), have two good eyes so that he can see the object of his affections, and not be burdened by an excess of passion. Similarly, although a boy starts his training early, he is not promoted to the rank of *aide* (an independent under-hunter) until he is twenty years old and has proved his worth (LC 44). Furthermore, if he wishes to be successful at his profession, he must be discreet and cool-tempered (LC 30: 30-31). The fact that a hunter should also have two good eyes that he may be able to see his quarry clearly is obvious enough not to warrant mention.

In addition, both hunting and love are intimately related to inner nobility. Enthusiastic and proper (to say nothing of skillful) engagement in either sport is a sign that the practitioner is possessed of a noble spirit, regardless of his wealth or social standing. In turn, participants in each pastime are automatically imbued with an inner nobility for the very reason that they are participants (De amore I.x). But whereas love is not entirely inseparable from financial status – poverty makes it difficult for a man to love or be loved because he is too preoccupied with his financial problems and unattractive as a result of them – the love of hunting enhances the character of any man, regardless of whether he is poor or rich (LC Prologue: 58).¹³

Hunting, like love, is an all-consuming passion, and the devotees of each sport think on their avocations constantly. Three very similar mandates in De amore attest to the single-mindedness of the proper courtly lover: “A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved” (rule #25), “A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved” (rule

¹³ Gaston, however, conveniently fails to point out the fact that character-ennobling hunting was, in practice, available only to the very rich or those in their direct employ.

#30), and “Every act of the lover ends in the thought of his beloved” (rule #24). The lover’s meditations have a tendency to lead him to torment, but the hunter’s preoccupation leads him to nothing except happiness and a sin-free existence:

... þe ny3t byfore he schal leie him adoun in his bed and schal nat thenke but for to slepe and to don his office wel and busiliche as a good hunter schal do, and schal not haue ado ne þenke but of þe nedes þat he is ordeined for to do and he is nat idul, for he haþe ynowe a do ... (MG 1:150-154).

In many ways, hunters and lovers share the same traits and enjoy the same benefits. Yet in the final analysis, at least according to the hunting manual writers, hunters come out on top: the same things that make lovers suffer provide untold pleasures and benefits to the hunter. According to Andreas, love is a physical and emotional suffering that may or may not end in the hoped-for solaces. This suffering comes from excessive meditation; the lover thinks nothing but thoughts of his beloved and how he may please her, and he continually fears that she will reject him or that what he has worked so hard to win will be stolen by another. The lover is patently unhealthy, identifiable by a pale color (rule #15), trembling when his beloved is near (rule #16), and an inability to eat and sleep (rule #23). In the third book, Andreas warns that the physical suffering that comes from love weakens the body, renders a man unfit for war, causes premature aging and death, disturbs the brain, and causes the lover’s soul to suffer, for love “deprives [the lover] of the grace of the Heavenly King.”¹⁴

In stark contrast to the anemic and fretful courtly lover, the hunter is the picture of ruddy good health. If he suffers in the line of duty, he is amply compensated at the end, even if he is unsuccessful, by tangible rewards and the

¹⁴ The Art of Courtly Love, trans. Parry 210.

knowledge of a job well done. All of the exercise gives him a hearty appetite and he eats well and often, though he never overindulges and his food is simple: wine, bread, game he has caught himself – and, Edward suggests, some cabbage on the side (MG 1: 230). Nor does he have any problem sleeping at night, after the exhausting labors of the day; the unstated implication is that his sleep is all the more pleasant and salubrious because he is alone. He thinks of nothing untoward or uncleanly while lying in his bed because he has quite enough to do with thinking about the things he must do on the next morning (LC Prologue: 23-25), or because he is too contented with his own place in life (LC Prologue: 46), or simply because he is too tired to think about anything at all (LC Prologue: 29-30). Love results in a decline in vitality and an early death, but hunting ensures lifelong vigor, enhanced military skills, and a long life, for “*veneurs vivent plus longuement que nulle autre gent*” [“hunters live longer than any other folk”] (LC Prologue: 48). Andreas warns that the lover will obtain “all the delights of the flesh in fullest measure; but the grace of God, the companionship of the good, and the friendship of praiseworthy men you will with good reason be deprived of, and you will do great harm to your good name, and it will be difficult for you to obtain the honors of this world.”¹⁵ Gaston, on the other hand, promises exactly the opposite: that the delights of the flesh (leaving aside erotic pursuits, which are no longer of any interest to him) will provide the hunter with the grace of God, the companionship of the good, and the honors of the world.

To some extent, Gaston was only doing justice to his subject matter by excluding mention of women. Although hunting was a stock metaphor for the pursuit of fairer sex, in reality it was an almost exclusively male sport. A few writers do mention female involvement with the chase, although it is not certain how closely this

¹⁵ The Art of Courtly Love, trans. Parry 211.

reflected actual practice. Women were more welcome to hunt in England than in France, but even there it would seem that they only regularly took part in bowhunting for deer.¹⁶ In the colophon to the Shirley MS, Edward of Norwich duly avows that he wrote Master of Game “... to put the crafft, the termes ond the exercyse of this sayde game more in remembrance, oponly to the knowlegge of alle lordes, ladyes, gentylnen and wymmen.”¹⁷ There is less evidence pointing to regular female involvement in French hunts. Nevertheless, in his poem “La Chasse” (15th c.), Jacques de Brézé describes an unnamed woman, “la rose/ Des dames,” who directs a stag *chasse a force*.¹⁸

A more remote connection between women and hunting occurs in the Boke of Huntyng. This text first appears in a manuscript dated c. 1400, about the time that both Livre de chasse and Master of Game were written, and forms the second part of the four-part Boke of St. Albans (1486). The text, as it occurs in the Boke of St. Albans, ends with the colophon “Explicit Dam Julyans Barnes in her boke of huntyng.” The Boke of St. Albans is now catalogued by libraries under the name of “Juliana Berners” or some variation thereof, and much effort has been expended in identifying the alleged authoress, but there is no proof that any part of it was written by a woman of this name, or, indeed, that any part of it was written by a woman at all.¹⁹ For whatever it may be worth – and that is probably not much – the Boke of

¹⁶ See MG 36; also, John Cummins, The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988) 7. Cf. the humorous episode (which may or may not be a disparagement of female hunters) in Thomas Malory’s Morte Darthur in which Sir Launcelot is accidentally hit in the buttock by the arrow of a huntress who is following a hind (The Works of Thomas Malory, ed. Eugène Vinaver and P. J. C. Field, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) XVIII.21/1104:3-XVIII.22/1106:3).

¹⁷ Quoted in Cummins, The Hound and the Hawk 249.

¹⁸ Jacques de Brézé, “La Chasse faicte et composee par messire Jacques de Breszé grant senschal de Normandie,” La chasse; Les dits du bon chien Souillard; et Les louanges de Madame Anne de France, ed. Gunnar Tilander, *Cynegetica* 6 (Lund: C. Blom, 1959) 7.10-8.1).

¹⁹ The colophon of one manuscript that contains additional material on hunting and hawking similar to that found in the Boke of Huntyng reads “Explicit Iulyan Barne”; the name *Iulyan*, if it does indeed refer to a real person, could just as well be a man’s name as a woman’s. Furthermore, the putative author’s last name seems a little too perfect: a *berner* is a hunt attendant in charge of the hounds. For a

Huntyng is mostly comprised of a monologue of a knowledgeable “dame” instructing her “chylde” (or “childer,” “sonne,” or “sonnys”), though some of it is a dialogue between a “mayster” and his “man.”

Such instances of female participation in cynegetical practice were deviations from the norm, however: for the most part, women tended to function only as decorative marginalia around the solidly masculine text of the hunt. Neither Gaston nor Edward mentions whether women would be able to take part in the opening ceremonies of the assembly, though they would almost certainly be present at the celebratory banquet following the day’s sport. On a more prosaic level, it seems fairly certain that the lady of the house would be responsible for seeing that the day’s winnings were properly cooked, even if she had had no part in acquiring them. Women were honored with the best parts of the carcass,²⁰ just as they might be recipients of prizes that the men had won in tournament, though this presentation was probably only symbolic and the meat was presumably later served to the entire party. If circumstances allowed, they might watch the hunters at work; indeed, the only mention of women in Livre de chasse is as appreciative spectators of the staghunt (LC 45: 36-38). The famous Unicorn Tapestries (ca. 1500) support the depiction of limited female participation that is furnished by medieval hunting literature. Out of six tapestries illustrating the hunt of the unicorn by a late-medieval hunting party, women are present in only two of them: the fragmentary fifth (in which a sly maiden is used to lure the unicorn to its death) and the sixth (in which women come out of a castle to greet the returning hunters).²¹

discussion of the probably mythical “Juliana Berners,” see Rachel Hands, English Hawking and Hunting in the *Boke of St. Albans* (Oxford UP, 1975) xiv-xv, xlvi, lv-lx.

²⁰ Cummins, The Hound and the Hawk 7.

²¹ The seventh tapestry of the series is a still-life of the unicorn in captivity, miraculously brought back from the dead. See Margaret B. Freeman and Linda Sipress, The Unicorn Tapestries (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974).

However, the overwhelmingly masculine nature of the sport does not explain why Livre de chasse not only shuns but actively denigrates everything female and feminine. The hunting manuals explain that female animals force male animals into humiliating and often deadly situations. Men are constantly surrounded by temptations of the flesh, the world, and the Devil, and even the innocuous-seeming forest contains erotic snares of its own. Although the warrior lives in a homosocial arena, he fights at least in part in order to win the approval of his mistress or to catch the eye of a potential mistress (and if he does not, there is something a bit off about him). But the hunter's world is undisturbed by poisonous feminine influences; he hunts solely for the approval of his peers, himself, and God. For the most part, Edward of Norwich translates Gaston's antifeminist sentiments verbatim; such faithfulness to the original would seem to indicate that even if Edward did not entirely agree with his source, he also did not strongly disagree with it.

In the manuals, the female animal is a second-class citizen, only important to the hunter insofar as she affects the behavior of the male and engenders male offspring. Male animals play many roles: they are depicted as lovers, husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons, but also hunters, warriors, travelers, lords, vassals, and sometimes murderers and thieves. Female animals, on the other hand, are mothers, wives, or whores, or any combination thereof. Despite the fact that she may be as fleet or dangerous as her male counterpart and provide just as much pleasure in the chase, the female animal – especially for those species with pronounced sexual dimorphism – is considered a noncombatant, and there is always some shame in engaging with her. Thus, for example, among the various species of deer, the male is a legitimate beast of chase, but the female is not. According to Master of Game, females and underage male deer are considered of no value as quarry and are grouped together under the

category of *rascaill* or *folie* (MG 3: 512-516),²² words that emphasize their worthlessness.²³

As discussed in Chapter 5, male animals are knights with whom the aristocratic hunter engages according to pre-determined rules of combat. Like human knights, animal knights are generally noble, though their nobility often lies in their ability to evade capture. Female animals, especially those pregnant or with young, tend to be even more clever and malicious than their male counterparts, but there is nothing noble in their behavior: their cunning is portrayed as self-serving and unnatural. Thus the wolf uses his shrewdness to engage with his human enemy, but the she-wolf uses her still greater cunning to outwit her own mate. Even if one raises a wolf from a cub, he will always do mischief, for “ne puet il laissier sa mauvaise nature” [“it cannot abandon its bad nature”] (LC 10: 76). The she-wolf with cubs, on the other hand, consciously overrides her evil nature so that she does nothing that will endanger her young (10: 58-59). The bear is only dangerous when attacked by men and dogs, but the she-bear will kill her cubs if they so much as scratch her while nursing (LC 8: 14).

The forest is full of cautionary tales warning against succumbing to the embarrassing and dangerous business of love. There is something distinctly pathetic about the male animal during mating season: the mating call of the wild goat is an ugly sort of singing (LC 4: 23-24); that of the roe deer is “a foule songe,” like the cries of a goat being attacked by dogs (LC 5: 28; MG 5: 732-733). The sexual impulses of the female animal, in contrast, are inconvenient at best and dangerous at worst.

Pregnant or lactating bitches are useless for the chase, and unmated bitches in heat are

²² The *Boke of St. Albans* seems to contradict this information to some extent, calling a doe a “beast of chase” (*Boke of Huntyng*, ed. Tilander 22: 10-11).

²³ Aside from the meaning specified above, *rascaill(e)* can also mean “the foot soldiers of an army, common soldiers,” “the common people, the lower orders,” “a worthless person,” “a rabble, mob,” or “refuse, trash.” *Folie(e)* can mean, variously, “foolishness” or “imprudence,” or actions or talk displaying those qualities; “sin, wrongdoing”; “insanity, anger”; or “harm, injury, damage” (*Middle English Compendium*, s. v. *rascaile* (n.), *folie* (n.)). There are no exact French equivalents for these hunting terms.

nearly as bad. On the other end of the scale, the vixen, an animal with a venomous bite and even more ingenuity than the she-wolf, has a mating cry like that of a mad dog (LC 11: 14-15; MG 8: 1083-1084). A female animal in heat will push all of the surrounding males to displays of strength that are at best foolish and at worst fatal. If the male does achieve his desire, the act of mating is weakening, degrading, and sometimes lethal. The rabbit, which does not even have to physically compete for mating rights, is still damaged by the act of love: after it mates, it falls over in an exhausted swoon “un petit comme se il estoit mort” [“a bit as if it were dead”] (LC 7: 8). As the manual writers see it, sexual desire is a highly contagious disease, love is a dangerous medical condition, and, the human hunter would clearly do very well to avoid both. The loving gestures of animals are even, on occasion, dangerous to humans: Gaston warns that the hunter must be very wary of the bear, “quar il acolerait et bayseroit non pas trop gracieusement” [“for it embraces and kisses [the hunter] quite ungraciously”] (LC 52: 17-18).

Love is a harsh endeavor for all male animals, but it is the worst for the stag and the wolf; perhaps uncoincidentally, these are the two species whose mating rituals most closely resemble those of medieval courtly love, and whose suffering most closely echoes that of the regulation medieval lover. A stag in mating season continually thinks thoughts of his beloved(s), wanders distractedly, flies into inexplicable passions, and “sings” like a man in love. The hope of female favors pushes the stag to deeds of martial prowess, and during the rut he will fight to the death against not only his fellow deer but also against dogs and human hunters. Even if a stag is temporarily successful in love, he will eventually be killed by his rivals; if he is unsuccessful in love, he will leave the contest nearly dead with hunger and exhaustion. Commerce with females, as Gaston himself could attest, is always draining. Nor does a stag ever learn from his mistakes: each year that he survives

(and, our authors report, he can live for a hundred years and more), he becomes both more handsome and more lecherous (LC 1: 81; MG 3: 593-595), ever more prone to error.

The wolf in love suffers no less. The she-wolf forces the males to follow her for days, and, like textbook lovers, her suitors are too besotted to eat or sleep. She finally selects the male whom she loves the most, the one who has shown her the most devotion – that is, the one who has been the most exhausted by his labors.

Et pour ce dit on quant aucune femme fet aucun mal que elle semble a la louve, pour ce que elle se prent au plus let et au plus mescheant. Pour ce qu'il a plus travaillé et plus jeuné que n'ont les autres, est il plus povre, plus maigre et plus mescheant, et c'est la cause pour quoy on le dit. (LC 10: 7-8)

[And for this reason they say, when any woman does any evil, that she resembles a she-wolf, because she takes to herself the foulest and most wretched one. For the one who has worked and fasted more than the others, he is poorer, thinner, and more wretched [than the others]; and this is the reason why they say it.]

The danger of courtly love is obvious: it puts too much power over sexual relations into the female's hands, and she cannot be trusted not to abuse that power. If the other wolves find the couple while they are mating, they will kill the lucky winner; if he manages to survive, he will have to endure a contentious marriage with his new wife.

For the manuals' view of wedded matrimony in the animal kingdom is no better than its views on courtship. Although biology dictates that most animals do not "marry," a few do, and these "marriages" seem to be shot through with violence and deceit. The roe deer is a monogamous species, "And hosoeuer parteth hem or hunteth hem osundir þe on fro þat oþer, þei shul come agein as sone as þei may, and shul seche either oþer into þe tyme þat on of hem haþ founde þat oþer" (MG 5: 694-697). However, the charming picture of the roe deer family is marred by the fact that the

female deer must hide from the male in order to give birth, so that he does not kill his own children.

Wolves also marry for life and will not leave each other except to go hunting; even then, they will not stay apart longer than three days. Yet lupine marital relations are nothing short of squalid. Both parents nominally care for the pups, but the male, if he is hungry, will steal food from the children. In order to get around her greedy husband, the she-wolf will sometimes hide the food she has brought until he leaves, and even bathes herself in order to wash off the scent of the meat. It is a trick that sometimes works, but if he smells that she has been carrying food,

he takeþ hur with his teeth and beteth hur, so þat she most shew him whare she hath left hur fedying. And whan þe bicche perceyueth þat þe wolf doth so, whan she turneþ to hur whelpes, she cometh al in þe couerte, and sheweth hur nat into þe tyme þat she perceyue 3if þe wolf is with hem. (LC 10: 23-24; MG 7: 932-938).

It might also be noted that parent-child relationships in the animal kingdom are usually at least as dysfunctional as those between spouses. Although animal parents, particularly fathers, seem to take little notice of their children, some parents are actively malicious. Roe deer fathers will kill their young, as will hare (LC 6: 57-58), rabbit (LC 7: 3-4) and bear (LC 8: 12-15) mothers; the sow will chase her older piglets away when a new litter is born (LC 9: 48); and, as we have seen, the wolf father will deprive his own pups of food if he happens to be hungry. Apparently, only wild cat fathers take equal responsibility for caring for their young (LC 13: 14).

It would be a mistake to attribute too much meaning to these descriptions of animal mating practices; after all, Gaston and his translator Edward could not influence mammalian biology. However, it would perhaps not be going too far to suggest that Gaston's observations regarding animal relations might have been colored

to some extent by his own perceptions of marriage and parent-child interactions. Gaston had a number of favorite mistresses and bastards whom he treated reasonably well, but he also had an increasingly contentious relationship with his own wife, Agnès. Frightened by his violence and irrationality, she finally fled to the house of her brother, Charles le Mauvais of Navarre, who later tried to assassinate him. We have no proof that Gaston did not love his many children, but there is no doubt that his son and heir Gaston IV became a pawn in the contentious relationship between Gaston and his wife and brother-in-law, and that the boy was eventually murdered by his own father, who suspected him of treason. It seems quite possible that Gaston saw his personal experiences of betrayal by women and children mirrored in the lives of the animals he hunted.

The lust and treachery of the natural world serve as a foil to the happy, chaste figure of the hunter. Because they are early risers and never idle, hunters cannot be plagued by the evil imaginings that are an inevitable result of lying in bed, or the sinning that is a necessary result of those imaginings. Although our authors claim that hunting is an effective prophylactic against all seven deadly sins, they are nevertheless primarily concerned with what might be thought of as “feminine,” or passive, sins: namely gluttony, lust, and, above all, sloth, all of which are, they explain, the result of idleness.²⁴

Even if hunters were not too busy to fall prey to error, the hermetically sealed homosocial world of hunting would act as a natural barrier against feminine temptations or influences. Inside of it, men live and work side by side with each other and their animals, seeking no other reward except for the knowledge of a job well

²⁴ Although Gaston does not specifically equate these sins with femininity, Andreas Capellanus does so in his Eighth Dialogue: “... if you were to assume that those who are idle are the greatest gluttons, you would by all living reason have to assume it of all women, for they all live in a state of continual bodily rest” (*The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. Parry 128).

done, the blessing of God, and perhaps the approval of their peers and superiors. When the hunter comes back at night, he sleeps alone, and his love is given solely to his duty (LC Prologue: 32-33) and his dogs, for “Touz esbatemenz sont en chien” [“All pleasures are in the dog”] (LC 15: 46). The only sexual functions and impulses that concern him are those of the forest animals and of his otherwise sensible and infinitely wise canine companions – and those of the latter, our writers assure us, can be controlled using judicious measures and common household items.

The forest, filled with lustful animal life, continually emanates a low level of erotic energy to which the good hunter is cheerfully immune. He goes out in the morning into an environment that seems custom-made for erotic encounters:

... quant le veneur se lieve au matin, il voit la tres douce et belle matinee et le temps cler et seri et le chant de ces oyselez, qui chantent doucement, melodieusement et amouusement, chascun en son langage, du mieulz qu’il peut, selon ce que nature li aprent. Et, quant le solleill sera levé, il verra celle douce rousee sur les raincelez et herbetes, et le soleill par sa vertu les fera reluire; c’est grant plaisance et joye au cuer du veneur. (Prologue: 35-37)

[... when the hunter rises in the morning, he sees the very sweet and beautiful morning and the clear and serene weather, and [he hears] the singing of small birds, which sing sweetly, melodiously, and amorously, each in its language, as best as it can, according to that which nature teaches it. And when the sun has risen, he will see this sweet dew on the branches and on the grass, and the sun, by its virtue, will make them glisten: this is great pleasure and joy to the heart of the hunter.]

This could be the *locus amoenus* of any romance or dream vision, though the emphasis on the forest’s countless singing birds particularly recalls the Jardin de Deduit of Guillaume de Lorris. The forest offers endless *deduiz*, but they are of a fundamentally different kind than those enjoyed by lovers. Guillaume’s Amant has to be admitted

into the walled garden (*hortus conclusus*) by Oiseuse, the allegorical figure of Idleness; the hunter, on the other hand, asks no one's permission to step directly into the forest, and he banishes idleness with his own industry at every step. After everything he does, Gaston painstakingly explains, the hunter's heart is full of "grant plaisance et joye," or some variation on that formula; that pleasure, he emphasizes, comes from masculine activity, not passive idleness.

The *assemblee* before the hunt proper is held in a location that even more closely imitates the *plaisance* of romance: "un beau pré bien vert ou il ait biaux arbres tout au tour, l'un loing de l'autre, et une fontaine clere ou ruissel delez" ["a beautiful and very green meadow, where there are fine trees all around, spaced far from each other, and a clear fountain or a stream very near"] (38: 6-7). Here, there is plentiful food and drink, companionship, "et, brief, touz esbatemenz et leesces" ["and, in brief, all pleasures and joys"] (38: 10). These are safe diversions, however: there are apparently no women present and despite the display of fine food, Gaston assures us that no transgression is possible, for they "boivent et menjuent moins que gens du monde, quar au matin, a l'assemblee, il ne mengeront que un pou" ["drink and eat less than any folk in the world, for in the morning, at the assembly, they will only eat a little"] (Prologue: 48-49).

Gaston is, in fact, eager to promote the idea that the hunter's life is full of pleasure – but pleasure that is innocent and even salubrious, a far better alternative to the soul- and health-damaging pleasures of hunting women. In connection with the chase, he uses words connoting pleasure or ease (*deduit; joye; liesce, leesce; plaisance; plaisir*) twenty-three times in the Prologue, giving special weight to the word *deduit*:

Et, pour ce je loe et conseille a toute maniere de gent, de quel que estat que il soyent, qu'il aiment les chiens et les chasce et deduiz ou d'une

beste ou d'autre ou d'oysiaus, quar d'estre oyseus, sans amer deduiz de chiens ou d'oysiax, onques, se m'aït Diex, n'en vi prodomme, pour quant qu'il fust riches, quar ce part de treslache cuer quant on ne veult travailler. Et, s'il avoit besoign ou guerres, il ne saroit que ce seroit, quar il n'a pas acoustumé le travail, et couvenroit que autre feïst ce qu'il deüst fere, quar on dit touz jours: tant vaut seigneur, tant vaut sa gent et sa terre. Et aussi di je que onques ne vi homme qui amast travaill et deduit de chiens ou d'oisiaus qui n'eüst moult de bonnes coustumes en luy, quar celi vient de droite noblesce et gentillesce de cuer, de quel que estat que l'omme soit, ou grant seigneur ou petit, ou povre ou riche. (Prologue: 55-58, emphasis mine)

[This is why I advise and counsel all manner of men, of whatever estate they might be, to love dogs and the hunt and deduiz of one beast or another, or of birds [i. e. falconry]; for, being idle, without loving deduiz of dogs or birds – never, so help me God, have I seen this in a worthy man, no matter how rich, for this comes from a very cowardly heart when one does not want to work. And if there were necessity or war, he would not know what it was, for he was not accustomed to work, and it would be necessary for another to do what he should do, for as they always say: “As much as the lord is worth, so much are worth his people and his land.” And I say also that I have never seen a man who loved the work and deduit of dogs or birds who did not have many good qualities in him; for this comes of true nobleness and gentleness of heart, no matter what estate the man should be, whether a great lord or a small one, poor or rich.]

Gaston makes snide allusion to the *deduiz* of the lover in his description of the far superior *deduiz* of the hunter. A man's love for, and proficiency in, the *deduit* of hunting makes a nobleman out of a poor man and keeps a man potent – that is, it provides all of the benefits of carnal love, without any of its spiritually damaging effects.

In chivalric romance, a man's desire for the initiation or continuation of love's *deduiz* often impels him to deeds of martial prowess, including those on the hunting field; even when he has no ulterior motive, his prowess as a hunter or a warrior tends to attract women to him anyway. In the hunting manuals, however, men always perform brave deeds for their own sake; and they are rewarded with the peace of mind

and health of body that come from avoiding women entirely. Under certain circumstances, hunters in the manuals may allow women to watch them at work, but they never do so in the hopes of gaining feminine solaces.

De levriers se puet on aidier, pour ce que le cerf, comme j'ay dit, fuit aux grosses rivieres, et, quant on veult essayer levriers et veoir courre et en afetaisons pour donner de la char aux chienz et afaitier et aussi pour faire veoir *biau deduit* ou a dames ou a seigneurs estrangiers qui seront venuz et ne voudroient gueres corre, et einsi auront *plus court deduit*, ou en mal païs ou l'en ne puet forsoier ne bien chevauchier après ses chienz. (LC 45: 36-39, emphasis mine)

One can make use of greyhounds because the stag, as I have said, flees into large rivers; and, when one wishes to put the greyhounds to the test and see them run and see training exercises for giving flesh to the dogs and training them; and also in order to offer a fine *deduit* to ladies or foreign lords who have come and do not much want to hunt. And thus the *deduit* will be shorter in poor country where one cannot penetrate, nor ride well after his dogs.

Gaston inserts these rather perplexing statements in the middle of an explanation of the stag hunt *a force*, a hunt in which the stag is chased past pre-stationed greyhounds. It is admittedly difficult to determine how he differentiates between the ordinary use of greyhounds in the *chasse a force* with the uses he mentions here, which seem to include training the dogs and perhaps displaying their talents for an audience. Although his precise meaning remains obscure, what is clear is that the chase itself is pleasurable and, more importantly, that the *deduit* in question are offered to the ladies, not extracted from them. Furthermore, Gaston's use of the word *einsi* ("thus," "so") seems to suggest that the presence of women (or incompetent men) degrades the quality of the pleasure provided by the chase, transforming a *biau deduit* to a *plus court deduit*.

Gaston's book of hunting openly defies the traditional associations between hunting and the erotic chase: it positions itself not an *ars amatoria* or even a *remedia amoris* but an *impeditio amoris*. Through intense application to the activities described within (and, we might extrapolate, a commitment to the act of reading about those activities), the reader can avoid the pitfalls of heterosexual love. In theory, at least, he will be so enthralled by the *deduiz* provided by his own profession that he will not need to seek out those found in the garden of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. However, Gaston's plan ultimately backfires, and the erotic energy that he tries to exclude ends up permeating the entire text in an unexpected fashion: the hunter himself is eroticized and offered to the reader as an object of sexual desire.

The manual authors show the hunter acting not only in public arenas like the kennel and the forest, but in intensely private ones as well. We see the hunter in his bed several times, and our gaze is so intent that we can identify the condition of his bedclothes and recognize how much he enjoys being under them: "he schal ... go lie in his bed in faire fresshe clothes, and schal slepe wel and stidefastlich al þe ni3t" (MG 1: 234-235). On one occasion, we watch him drying his body (MG 1: 177-178); on another, he undresses and bathes in front of us: "And whine he is come hom, he schal don of his clothes and he schal don of his scheue and his hosen, and he schal wasshe his thies and his legges and peradventure al his body" (MG 1: 227-229). The manuals slice away walls so that we can see directly into bedrooms and inner chambers, and our generic *bon veneur* is forced to perform in front of us, in ever more intimate and suggestive ways. The sexual energy that the manuals try to exclude is not obliterated, merely transformed.