

SODOMY AND THE SICK BODY OF WOMEN

RAFAEL M. MÉRIDA
UNIVERSITAT DE LLEIDA
SPAIN

Date of receipt: 26th of October, 2010

Final date of acceptance: 12th of December, 2012

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyse the literary, religious and medical discourses that converge in one of the leading works in medieval Catalan: the *Espill* (Mirror) (1460), by Jaume Roig. Firstly, it should be remembered that the author was one of the most prestigious doctors in 15th century Valencia, so it should be judged in the scientific context that nurtured it. Nor should we forget, in second place, the misogynist tradition behind this long narrative poem. On the other hand, I would like to emphasise a cultural crossroads that was quite unusual in its time, and is as yet little studied, which is linked to sodomy as a female “creation”; I will assess the significance of this construction, compared with leprosy in the same text.

KEY WORDS

Jaume Roig, *Espill*, Sodomy, Lesbianism, Medieval Romanesque Literatures.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Jaume Roig, *Espill*, Contra naturalem ordinem concubitus, Lesbiacus amor, Litterae Vulgares Mediaevales.

1. Literary misogynies

The *Espill* (1460) (also called *Libre de consells* (Book of Advice) or *Libre de les dones* (Book of the Women) by its old publishers)¹ seems to me to be one of the most singular works in 15th-century Valencian art as a consequence of the *summa* of a series of elements that its author, Jaume Roig (*circa* 1400-1478), mixes with unusual skill. Thus, its format (a narrative poem that consists of over sixteen thousand tetrasyllabic couplets), its subject matter (a misogynist satire with didactic and moralising contents), its external (a preface and four books divided into four sections) and internal (resort to fictitious autobiography in three of the four books) structures, the medieval traditions that channel the discourse (*artes praedicandi, exempla, jokes...*), the linguistic and rhetorical registers used (combining colloquial and vulgar language with learned terms), etc. However, Roig's singularity must be understood equally in the literary context of 15th century Valencia, as interesting interrelations can be established between its creation and some of the most important works and authors of that time, ranging from Joanot Martorell to Joan Roís de Corella, passing through Isabel de Villena. On the other hand, it is also worth highlighting its wider context, for example in relation with its dialogue with the classical and biblical traditions or with the European (and Hispanic) "pro-" and "anti-feminist" debates of the 13th century, as Cantavella has analysed,² within which it consolidates scientific and religious references, which are what are of most interest here.³

The bibliography on Jaume Roig has grown considerably over recent years, as shown by the repertoire commented by Carré,⁴ or consulting the annual bulletin of the Hispanic Association of Medieval Literature. Nowadays, we can enjoy a good number of studies that offer excellent critical approaches. There are also two recent editions of our narrative poem by Carré. One is electronic, of the single manuscript with textual notes,⁵ and the other printed one, with a version in modern prose compared with the original, accompanied by extensive commentaries and a glossary.⁶ Both improve our knowledge of the work, as, despite being indispensable,

1. Cantavella, Rosanna. *Els cards i el lliur: una lectura de l'“Espill” de Jaume Roig*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1992: 157-162.

2. Cantavella, Rosanna. *Els cards i el lliur...*: 13-41.

3. References that have been evaluated by: Carré, Antònia. “La medicina com a rerefons cultural a l'Espill de Jaume Roig”, *Jaume Roig i Cristòfor Despuig. Dos assaigs sobre cultura i literatura dels segles XV i XVI*. Barcelona-Vic: Universitat de Barcelona-Eumo, 1996: 9-71; Solomon, Michael. *The Literature of Misogyny in Medieval Spain. The “Arcipreste de Talavera” and the “Spill”*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Peirats, Anna Isabel. *Una aproximació a l'“Espill” de Jaume Roig*. Alzira: Bromera, 2004.

4. Carré, Antònia. “L'Espill de Jaume Roig: bibliografia comentada”. *Boletín Bibliográfico de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*, 15 (2001): 383-414.

5. Carré, Antònia. “Edició de l'Espill de Jaume Roig”. *Repertorio informatizzato dell'antica letteratura catalana (2000)*. 1 November 2010. Università di Napoli Federico II. 25 October 2013 <<http://www.riale.unina.it/152.1.htm>>.

6. Roig, Jaume. *Espill*, ed. and trans. Antònia Carré. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2006. I have been unable to consult the doctoral thesis by Anna Isabel Peirats that is, in fact, an edition and study of our work.



earlier editions⁷ did not give as accurate a text or such rich interpretative tools to evaluate what would be, in Martí de Riquer's words, *una de les obres més al·lucinants de la literatura catalana, que produeix en el lector modern una forta impressió i aconsegueix d'enlairar a categoria artística el fàstic i la misèria humana*.⁸ A spiritual poverty, in first place, but also physical, being heavily medicalised.

The aim of these pages is to assess some of the cultural dimensions of, to my mind, one of the least explored passages of the *Espill* about the female nature of the third book, the longest of the four (v. 6369-15295). As we know, the old protagonist falls asleep after having decided to remarry, despite the three very negative marital experiences that he has narrated over the two previous books. Then he begins "Solomon's lesson", which, with exacerbated and devout humour, functions as a vision in dreams in which the wise man builds up a strong discourse about the female wickedness. The switch in narrator in the poem serves to lend authority to the misogynist contents and to indoctrinate the protagonist (and also the readers) who opts for a chaste life, far from women, and who chooses a contemplative and charitable Christian model where the Virgin Mary fills the most venerable place and contempt is transformed into worship of Mary. To sum up, even if it seems paradoxical from our point of view, Solomon (who presents himself as a knight, *rei / d'antiga llei, / gran sabidor, / rei e señor / molt ric, potent* (v. 7035-7039), but, especially as a man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred lovers (v. 7040-7046) would be preaching a sermon (that the faithful narrator will follow exactly when he awakens, as the fourth book shows) with a clearly medical content, to combat the *aegritudo amoris* or "lovesickness" that he describes: *El metge protagonista de l' "Espill" és, en bona part, el savi Salamó, qui des de l'experiència viscuda es converteix en una mena de "metge scient", capaç de conscienciar l'aprenent —i, paradoxicalment, vell!—, protagonista de l'estat patològic a què l'ha emmenat "l'amor hereos"*.⁹

It is in this didactic context that the immortal Jewish king, while following a process of ideological and verbal intensification that strengthened the virulent oracular message, can come to utter (v. 9583-9593) without further contemplations:

*Perquè pensaren
e començaren
la indícible,
pudent, horrible,
fort llebrosia*

7. For example: Roig, Jaume. *Spill o Libre de les dones per Mestre Jacme Roig, poema satíric del segle XV*, ed. Roque Chabàs. Barcelona: L'Avenç, 1905; Roig, Jaume. *Spill o Llibre de consells de Jaume Roig, poema satíric del segle XV*, ed. Ramon Miquel i Planas. Barcelona: Biblioteca Catalana, 1929-1950.

8. "one of the most stunning works of Catalan literature, that generates a strong impression in the modern reader and manages to raise disgust and human misery to an artistic category." (de Riquer, Martí. *Literatura catalana medieval*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1972: 119).

9. "The doctor in the *Espill* is, in good part, the wise Solomon, who, from his experience, becomes a kind of *metge scient*, able to make the (paradoxically, old!) learner aware of the pathological state that he has called *l'amor hereos*". (Peirats, Anna Isabel. *Una aproximació a l'"Espill"...*: 84).



—la sodomia—,
 peccat no poc,
 digne de foc,
 del mundanal
 e infernal
 a l'arma i cos.¹⁰

This multiple association is of enormous interest, to my taste, as in these verses, the clever Solomon firstly uses medical (*llebrosia*) and religious (*peccat*) concepts to condemn all women. A disease that is physical (*cos*) and spiritual (*arma*), the same as it is *mundanal* and *infernal*, for which it deserves not only disapproval but also an explicit legal response (*digne de foc*) and that is qualified by four adjectives that emit a moral and material judgement (*indicible* / *pudent*, *horrible* / *fort*), the first of which refers quite clearly to the Latin *nefandum* with a clear biblical echo. Evidently, the association has a sexual root, which should not surprise us if we bear in mind that, as Carré highlights,¹¹ leprosy was considered a sexually-transmitted disease in the medical treatises of the time. Moreover, “the popular imaginary linked [leprosy] to an unquenchable sexual ardour”. It is not improbable that the brutal misogyny of Solomon/Roig ended up being blamed on women so as to transform all men into innocent victims of female voracity. Thus, it must be highlighted that the “Roig’s gynophobia comes from moral and religious works, but also from medical works: in the *Espill* doctor Jaume Roig, in questions of love, sexuality and women, expresses himself like most doctors throughout the Middle Ages”.¹²

The Old Testament story of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis*, 18-19) appears, explicitly and implicitly, in various moments throughout the poem. In the third book (v. 7118-7138), Solomon explains that Sodom, like other great cities of Antiquity —such as Babylon, Troy and Carthage—, was destroyed because of the vanity of its women, while citing a geographic catalogue with a long misogynist tradition that Roig did not invent.¹³

10. *Perquè és evident que les dones van imaginar i començar la indicible, la pudent, l'horrible, la lepra forta de la sodomia, un peccat no poc digne del foc infernal i mundanal, tant per l'ànima com per al cos.* (“Because it is clear that the women imagined and began the unspeakable, the corrupt, the horrible, the strong leprosy of sodomy, a sin more than worthy of worldly and hell fire, for both the soul and the body.”) Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 383-385. You can consult: Cantavella, Rosanna. *Els cards i el llir...*: 177-179 to evaluate the sense of these verses as a part of the repertoire of misogynist motifs that Roig develops during his work.

11. Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 709.

12. Carré, Antònia. “La medicina com a rerefons cultural...”: 31.

13. *Quantes ciutats / són derruïdes / e subvertides / per ses ufanes, / pomposes, vanes! / Terç d'Isaïes / llegint, veuries / Déu què promet, / on se permet / elles collegen / e senyoregen; / ses xaperies, / quinquilliries, / qui les consent, / sa part ne sent. / Gran Ninivé / per ço caigué; Colac, Sidònia, / Tir, Babilònia, / Troia, Sodoma, / Cartaina, Roma.* (“So many cities are destroyed and demolished because of their lush, pompous and vain women! Reading the third chapter of Isaiah you would see what God promises that where they are allowed to rule and have the lordship and whoever who consents to them wearing ornaments and trinkets must feel his part of the pain. That is why the great Nineveh, Colac, Sidon, Tyre, Babylon, Troy, Sodom, Carthage and Rome fell.”) Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 304-305. In line with: Carré, Antònia. “Aportacions a la lectura literal de l'*Espill* de Jaume Roig”. *Llengua & Literatura*, 18 (2007): 376-377, Francesc Eiximenis, who is an



In this same third Book, Solomon relates two episodes that refer to situations narrated in the passages immediately after the destruction. The first mention (v. 8628-8633) reminds us how Lot's two daughters got their father drunk and became pregnant by him.¹⁴ Therefore, this attack on incest, that is strong in v. 11106-11115,¹⁵ serves to remember those girls who trick their own fathers. The second episode (v. 12337-12343) again launches against the ruthless daughters and also against Lot's wife, who, through her curiosity (unhealthy for being female, obviously), and against divine instruction, looked back on leaving Sodom and was turned into a pillar of salt -or marble, if we pay attention to Roig's comic hyperbole.¹⁶ There is no need to emphasise that the figure of Lot is associated with that of the masculine victim of female perversities and the model to follow, for his hospitality and loyalty to the word of Yahweh... In the fourth book (v. 15720-15727), the narrator again lambasts women, who he wishes the most awful deaths on, including being turned to salt, like Lot's wife.¹⁷ We could clearly apply here the reading proposed by Michael Solomon:

*Arnau de Vilanova explained that heroic love is called dominialis because it tends to master the soul and make the lover treat his beloved as his master. The intention behind Roig's spectacles of torture and excruciating pain was to reverse this pathological inversion, empowering the male patient through his witnessing of acts that neutralized the agent of his diseases.*¹⁸

inexhaustible mine, clarifies the passage for us. In *Lo libre de les dones* (Eiximenis, Francesc. *Lo libre de les dones*, eds. Frank Naccarato, Joan Colomines, Curt J. Wittlin, Antoni Comas. Barcelona: Curial Edicions Catalanes, 1981: 89-90); the Franciscan laments that female vanity is the cause of the destruction of the cities with the same reference to the third chapter of Isaiah, and with an identical list of names, except Rome, that appears in the *Espill* because it rhymes with Sodom [in Catalan -Roma- Sodoma].

14. *Per fills haver / tot frau farien, / enganarien / lo pare llur. / Ab vi fort pur / donat ab art, / Lot ja vellart / lo deceberen, / d'ell conceberen / ses filles drudes.* ("To have children, they would commit any fraud, they would trick their own father. With a very pure wine, given with art, an aging Lot was tricked and from this his daughters conceived lovers"). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 352-353.

15. *Josep, content, / mai enganat / en lo cuinat / fon, com Isac; / mai embriac / fon, com Noé, / ni cometé, / de vi torbat / e crapulat, / com Lot incest.* ("Josep, happy, was never tricked in the cooked, as was Isaac, was never drunk like Noah, nor committed incest like Lot, disturbed and debased by wine"). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 432-433.

16. *Per dret llaurar / e fer guaret / e bon esplet, / ta ànima i cos / juny-los abdós / jus jou sencer, / tots d'un voler / e d'un consell / fent bon parell. / Pren per pilot / aquell prom Lot, / hoste tan bo: / ses filles no, / ni sa muller / -mirà darrer / e tornà's marbre.* ("To plow straight, to get a good fallow and a bumper harvest, bring them together, your soul and your body, with a single yoke so both are of one will and one advice, making a good couple. Take as a guide that forefather of Lot, the host so good, but not his daughters, nor his wife, who looked back and was turned into marble"). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 472-473.

17. *De fred o glaç, / de set o fam / -tant les desam!- / si es vol morissen, / llamps les ferissen / e les cremassen, / sal se tornassen / com la de Lot!* ("I hate them both so much that I would wish them to die of ice or of cold, of hunger or of thirst, that they be injured and burned by lightning and that they be turned to salt like Lot's wife!"). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 582-583.

18. Solomon, Michael. *The Literature of Misogyny in Medieval Spain...*: 130.



In these five mentions of the episode from *Genesis*, we find no references to sodomitic sexual practices, as Solomon's tale (and, with him, that of the narrator) appears more involved with reinforcing the discourse about female vices by narrating events after the flight from Sodom than the reasons behind this. The only exceptions would be the cited verses that focus our interest and a curious verbal invention. Roig puts a hapax in Solomon's mouth that, like so many others, would produce "notable comic effects" among his readers,¹⁹ by creating the verb "sodomitar", that would mean, "to commit sodomitic acts".²⁰

It is worth noting that the appearance of this verb, in the third part of the third book, is aimed at criticising the old Jewish laws and praise the figure of Jesus and by extension, Christianity. In the narration of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, that signals the advent of God's reign,²¹ Solomon explains that Jesus will end up entering the city on a donkey and not on the ass that his disciples had brought him. This ass would be an allegory of Jewish religion, which would be replaced by the new law embodied in the donkey. The most brutal, and at the same time entertaining in its time, so politically incorrect, is that Roig used this allegory to paint a scene of bestiality—or allegorical zoophilia. In this, in v. 13021-13045, the ass would end up *lligada al peu d'un pi petit, prop del Castell ple d'almogàvers i de moltes esquadres de gent valenta (...), com a bagassa sodomitava i fornicava amb els seus brètols, molts déus estranys, pseudodivins, ases i rossins: tots els que hi anaven la cavalcaven com a una prostituta*.²²

19. Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 761.

20. Carré, Antònia. "Aportacions a la lectura literal...": 399.

21. Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 759-761.

22. "tied to the foot of a small pine, near the Castle full of Almogàvers and many squads of brave people (...), like a harlot sodomising and fornicating with their villains, many strange gods, pseudodivine, donkeys and hacks: all who went there rode it like a prostitute". Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 495. The full fragment would be: *l'asna aquella / que fon trovada / al peu lligada / a un pinell, / prop lo castell / ple d'almogàvers / e de gens braves / moltes esquadres, / collerats, lladres, / saltejadors / e robadors / -inics contraris / als comissaris / e tots ells massa-, / com a bagassa / sodomitava / e fornicava / ab sos tacanys, / molts déus stranys, / pseudodivins, / àsens, rossins: / quants hi anaven / la cavalcaven / com a publica*. (Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 494). As Carré illustrates, this allegorical interpretation of the ass also appears in a text so little misogynist, and profoundly Christian, as the *Vita Christi* by sor Isabel de Villena, specifically chapter 134; in his mind *Els despropòsits de Roig referits a la pobre somera, que li serveixen per blasmar amb contundència la Sinagoga, són del tot esperables en una obra que milita en les files antifeministes* ("The nonsense by Roig about the poor ass, that he uses to speak out forcefully against in the Sinagogue, is no surprise in a work from the antifeminist ranks"). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 761. About the relations between medieval antifeminism and the attacks on the Jews, see: Goldberg, Harriet. "Two Parallel Medieval Commonplaces: Antifeminism and Antisemitism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition", *Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middle Ages*, Paul E. Szarmach, ed. Albany: State University of New York, 1979: 85-119. Bear in mind that "all too often the scientific fight against germs and viruses becomes a social attack against those who are perceived to threaten the social and political order. Thus the ontological concept of disease has variously fixated on the bodies of blacks, Jews, homosexuals, madmen, Moors, Gypsies, and women." (Solomon, Michael. *The Literature of Misogyny in Medieval Spain...*: 93).



2. Sodomies and homoerotisms

Given that verbal creativity and the extent of the unceremonious reproach of all women, it is worth reflecting on a little studied question: beyond its misogynist and hyperbolic contents, what exactly was Solomon/Roig thinking about when he stated that women invented “sodomy”? A possible response would be to understand that Roig was suggesting that women invented “all” evils and, by extension, “all” the possible modalities of sodomy, as, after all, they were condemnable and it would reinforce the omnipresent vituperation that structures his work. However, if we wanted to split hairs, and in line with the theological, scientific and legislative thought of the Late Middle Ages and with the descriptive brutality of the *Espill*, I believe that the possibilities could be reduced to three: zoophilia or bestiality, man-woman anal penetration and sexuality between women. These three sexual activities were considered by many medieval civil and canonical legal codes and were often englobed in the same category (precisely, “sodomy”) linked to sexual crimes and the sin of lust. In accordance with the leading scholars of European laws on sexuality,

The most serious sexual crime, however, according to most authorities, was sodomy, by which they meant both sexual relations between persons of the same gender and also any type of sexual relations between a man and a woman other than vaginal intercourse. Thus heterosexual fellatio, cunnilingus, or anal intercourse, for example, might be classed as sodomy and, if complained about, could subject participants to severe penalties. Many authorities were inclined to class sexual contacts between humans and other animals as another type of sodomy, although some writers distinguished between these offences and treated bestiality as a separate class of sex crime, only marginally less serious than homosexual sodomy.²³

As I see it, in such a devastating architecture as that developed in the *Espill*, the option of “sodomy” less attributable to the author’s ideological message would be the one between man and woman, as it was the most susceptible of the three to invalidate the role of permanent victim that Jaume Roig gave men, actively and passively. Thus, to the extreme of considering that effeminate men are those over whom women have exerted a greater influence, obviously negative,²⁴ like that narrated in the first part of the first book. It is interesting to note that in v. 1007-1017, for example, the process of feminisation of a boy is explained and justified not on the basis of physiological traits, but rather as a result of the mother’s actions.²⁵

23. Brundage, James A. “Sex and Canon Law”, *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, Vern L. Bullough, James A. Brundage, eds. New York: Garland, 1996: 43; Brundage, James A. *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987: 398-401, has also analysed the relations between bestiality and sodomy in theological thought from the early 13th century.

24. Solomon, Michael. *The Literature of Misogyny in Medieval Spain...*: 86-87.

25. *Ella tenia / un sols fill car: / de cavalcar / e homenia / gens no tenia. / Tant lo guardava / i l'apartava / de tot perill, / que féu son fill / hom femení, / fet d'alfaní / e d'orelletes, / sucre, casquetes, / e viciat, / tot mal criat, / fet a son lloure.* (“She only had one loved child, who had little idea of riding or virile affairs no. and it was that she protected him so and guided him away from all danger that turned him into an effeminate man, made



Thus, if we rule out this modality —or at least move it to a lower level, as the attack should be excluded and against women by definition, we are left with bestiality and sexual practices between women as paths to explore.

Referring back to the last passage mentioned from the work, I would also like to highlight that the allegoric bestiality described did not envisage explicit female participation, unless we make a parallelism between the ass as a female and the “public” or prostitute in v. 13045. I have no doubt that a misogynist imagination like Jaume Roig’s could contemplate it, nor that during his long medical experience he could have had the opportunity to see its physical effects. The only literary piece that I know from this epoch where an allusion to female bestiality is found in a similar context is the first “auto” in *Celestina*, where Sempronio reminds Callisto of some of the women who, in ancient times, practiced bestiality. This should not surprise us as, in the end, the servant encourages his lord to read the historians, study the philosophers and look at the poets, until (like Roig’s narrator) coming to listen to the same Jewish king deriding women:

Sempronio.- Dixe que tú, que tienes más corazón que Nembrot ni Alexandre, desesperas de alcançar una muger, muchas de las quales, en grandes estados constituidas, se sometieron a los pechos y resollos de viles azemileros, y otras a brutos animales. ¿No has leýdo de Pasife con el toro, de Minerva con el can?

Calisto.- No lo creo; hablillas son.

Sempronio.- Lo de tu abuela con el ximio, ¿fablilla fue? Testigo es el cuchillo de tu abuelo.

Calisto.- ¡Maldito sea este necio, y qué porradas dize!

Sempronio.- ¿Escozióte? Lee los ystoriales, estudia los libros de sus viles y malos exemplos y de las caydas que levaron los que en algo como tú las reputaron. Oye a Salomón, do dize que las mugeres y el vino hazen a los hombres renegar...²⁶

With its dialogical structure and less indebted to the sermons, the first “auto” in *Celestina* resembles a brief *lliçó de Salamó* from Castile at the end of the 15th century.²⁷

weaklings and of sweet things, of sugar, of biscuits and tainted, totally spoiled, always getting his own way”). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 104-107.

26. “Sempronio.- I said that you, who have more heart than Nembrot or Alexandre, are desperate to find a wife, while many of them, even outstanding ones, bare their breasts to the panting of vile animal keepers, and even with the animals. Have you read of Pasiphae with the bull, of Minerva with the hound?

Calisto.- I don’t believe; gossip it is all.

Sempronio.- That about your grandmother with the ape, that was gossip? Your grandfather’s knife was witness to that.

Calisto.- Damn this fool and the nonsense he says!

Sempronio.- Does that make you feel bad? Read the history books, study the books of the vile and bad examples and the falls that became those like you who had them high on pedestals. Listen to Solomon, when he explains that women and wine make men go off the path...”.

(de Rojas, Fernando. *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Peter E. Russell. Madrid: Castalia, 1991: 223-225).

27. Blecua, Alberto. “Minerva con el can o los falsos problemas filológicos”. *Revista de Literatura Medieval*, 14/1 (2002): 37-46, values the difficulties of interpreting the first speech and presents the abundant



Like an experienced and observant doctor, both Sempronio and Solomon have detected the lovesickness that afflicts the young Callisto and the old protagonist of the *Espill*, so that both, knowingly, prescribe an identical remedy for the patients with this *bestial fúria / de gran luxúria*,²⁸ that requires the “deformation” of the object of desire. It is, however, invaluable, that a few lines above, Sempronio had made mention of our concept *que no pensava que havia peor invención de pecado que en Sodoma*²⁹ and that provokes the laughter of his young lord...

Nor should we be very shocked by this hypothesis of reading, as sexual bestiality would be the other side of the coin in the process of animalisation of women that Jaume Roig develops in v. 9594-9619, just after the attribution of the invention of “sodomy” (and another modality of satire):

*Dins lo llur clos
no ben tancat,
per tal pecat [la sodomia],
o com Déu vol,
formar-se sol
del que és possible
lo menys noïble,
millor vivent
ocultament,
obrant natura
de podridura,
d'humors corruptes:
sovint —no hi dubtes—
sargantanetes,
serps, granotetes,
rates penades,
feres alades
e baboïnes,
per draps, cortines
volen e van;
crancs, polps s'hi fan
dits companyons,*

phological arguments. In any case, as Russell noted, this *alusión de Sempronio, aun interpretada como chiste, continúa siendo un insulto insoportable dirigido por un criado a viva voz contra el linaje de Calisto. Seguramente el autor, al atribuir a Calisto tan lánguida reacción ante las palabras tan ofensivas de un criado insolente, quería mostrar cuán enajenado de la realidad estaba el mancebo a causa de su loca pasión* (“allusion by Sempronio, even if taken as a joke, is still an unbearable insult uttered by a servant against Callisto’s lineage. By attributing such a languid response from Callisto to such offensive language from an insolent servant, the author surely wanted to show how far the boy was from reality because of his mad passion”). de Rojas, Fernando. *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto...*: 224.

28. “bestial fury / great lust”. Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 460 (v. 11993-11994).

29. “I did not think there were a worse invention of sin than in Sodom”. de Rojas, Fernando. *Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto...*: 222.



*semblants ronyons,
moles diformes
de lleges formes
e monstruoses.*³⁰

This description of female physiology has been linked to medieval medical and religious discourses about menstruation that, as Carré and Peirats analysed, may refer to folkloric motifs.³¹ Despite this, we cannot avoid thinking that the fact that this extensive zoological enumeration, that culminates in the monsters, accompanies the definition and goes behind the concept of “sodomy”, cannot implicitly imply an ironic reference to the sexual practices that Sempronio, with all the misogyny at the end of the 15th century, mentions to Callisto. This is despite remembering that, in an earlier passage, Solomon had attributed the birth of “children without arms”, “hermaphrodites” or children “similar to animals” to the lack of female seed.³² All in all, Solomon “presents a whole doctrine of demystification of women, in the style of the medieval medical textbooks; if the cause of the seeking of the woman is the contemplation of her external beauty and that later mental idealisation, then she must be seen of feet and clay”.³³ We should be aware finally that, in accordance with Jacquart and Thomasset, “the horror that bestiality produces, a sin against nature, dominates the desire to warn and to cure” in the Christian medical treatises from the Middle Ages.³⁴

For Cantavella, accusing women of inventing sodomy would be “strange to the debate” on medieval misogyny, as “the Church tended to consider sodomy as a male homosexual practice, and was thus far from attributing it to women in particular”.³⁵ I am especially interested in the first judgement, both for the fact that it fully agrees

30. “Because of such sin, or God so wishes it, in their inside, which is not well enough closed, what takes shape is what is less harmful, that which lives hidden, because nature makes them rot and corrupts their humours: have no doubts, within their body often there are lizards, snakes, frogs, bats, monkeys and winged creatures and that come and go tghrough the clothes and the curtains; crabs and octopi call themselves colleagues, that resemble kidneys, and mishapen, monstrous teeth and in ugly shapes.” (Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 384-385).

31. Carré, Antònia. “La medicina com a rerefons cultural...”: 44-58; Peirats, Anna Isabel. *Una aproximació a l’“Espill”...*: 65-67 and 104-109. We must bear in mind that in the third book, *la menstruació és, a més, l’origen de tot un seguit a malalties (motiu A1337.0.4 en Stith Thompson) i principi de destrucció de les collites (motiu C141.1 de Thompson)* (“menstruation is, moreover, the root of a whole series of diseases (motif A1337.0.4 in Stith Thompson) and the beginning of the destruction of the crops (motif C141.1 in Thompson)”, according to: Peirats, Anna Isabel. *Una aproximació a l’“Espill”...*: 66.

32. *Per falliment / de llur sement / tan indigest, / i xen de sest: / fan-ne sens braç, / u gran cabàs, / d’ells cap dins pits, / hermofrodits, / altres sens ses, / altres sens res, / sens peus e mans, / e dos germans / abdós pegats, / d’ells encegats, / nats sords e muts, / d’ells paren bruts.* (“For their lack of semen, that is so indigestible, they lose their sanity: they have children without arms, another with a large head, some of them with the head stuck to the chest, otehrs hermaphrodites, others without anus, others without anything, others without hands or feet, two brothers stuck to each other, others born blind, deaf and dumb, others like animals”). Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 360-361 (v. 8873-8888).

33. Peirats, Anna Isabel. *Una aproximació a l’“Espill”...*: 20.

34. Jacquart, Danielle; Thomasset, Claude. *Sexualidad y saber médico en la Edad Media*. Barcelona: Labor, 1989: 170.

35. Cantavella, Rosanna. *Els cards i el llir...*: 112.



my reflections that as Cantavella knows the European misogynist traditions very well and that this would confirm the originality of the vituperation. Regarding the second valuation, it should be born in mind that although a good part of medieval theologians, canonists and preachers tended to relate sodomy with masculine homoerotic practices, it is no less true that this concept could be very wide, as Brundage confirmed. In line with Carré, we see that in the section of "*Llibre de les dones*" *que tracta dels tipus de luxúria —fornicació, adulteri, incest, sacrilegi, sodomia i mol·lície— Eiximenis explica que la sodomia es pot donar entre dos homes, entre dues dones o entre un home i una dona que jeuen desordenadament, fora dels usos de la natura.*³⁶ The fragment referred to is the following:

*La quinta espècia s'apella sodomia, e és quant mascle comet crim aytal ab mascle, o fembra ab fembra. Hoc encara, mascle pot aytal crim cometre ab fembra, e açò jaent ab ella desordonadament, fora los térmens e usos de natura. Aquests són per la ley de Déu sentenciats a cremar, hoc encara per les leys imperials. Car aquest peccat porta ab si corrupció de natura humana, e és tan leig que no-s deu nomanar. Car dien los sants que corromp l'ayre e és un dels quatre peccats qui criden a Déu, en tant que per aquest dien los sants que tramet Déu là hon regna grans e terribles tribulacions, e-ls cinch regnes on antiguament regnava cremà foch del cel e se n'entraren en abis; e ara tota aquella terra és estany d'aygua morta en què no viu peys, ne auell no-n passa dessus qui vischa puy.*³⁷

Solomon's argumentation, well condensed, is very close to the one formulated here by Eiximenis (and earlier by Thomas Aquinas), as if it was a source very close to Roig: from the corruption of the nature to the condemnation to the fire, passing through the consideration that this is a sin "so horrible that it cannot even be named". Metaphorically speaking, he could defend himself that this is highly logical, as among the references to the Old Testament we find in the *Llibre de les dones* (some 265, according to Curt Wittlin's calculations),³⁸ the friar from Girona cited David and Solomon on dozens of occasions, even attributing the latter with some ideas from the *Ecclesiastes* and the *Ecclesiastics*. Beyond this intersection, in any case, we can accept that Roig did not invent the association of women with many "sodomitic" practices in the context of the Crown of Aragon.

36. "*Llibre de les dones* that deals with all types of lust (fornication, adultery, incest, sacrilege, sodomy and effeminate) Eiximenis explains that sodomy can occur between men, between two women or a man and a woman why lie together outside the norm, outside the uses of nature". (Roig, Jaume. *Espill...*: 716-717).

37. "The fifth species is called sodomy, and it occurs when a male commits this crime with another male, or female with female. A male can also commit sodomy lying with a woman if they have sexual relations outside the natural use and terms. In these cases, by God's law, and also the imperial laws, they are sentenced to be burned on the pyre. This is because this sin carries with it the corruption of human nature, and is so horrible that it cannot even be named. Because the saints say that this sin corrupts the air and is one of four that call God, so where this sin is committed God sends great and terrible tribulations, and in the five kingdoms where this sin predominated before, god had sent fire from the sky and flung them into the abyss, and now, where they were, is a dead-water lake, where no fish live, nor any bird that flown over has survived." (Eiximenis, Francesc. *Lo libre de les dones...*: 339).

38. Eiximenis, Francesc. *Lo libre de les dones...*: 32.



Erotic relations between women in medieval times form part of a field of study that until relatively recently had hardly been explored. As I have explained on other occasions,³⁹ the reasons behind this fact are tied to the small number of surviving texts that illuminate female desire in first or third person, especially if we compare these with the ones written by men, as ideological factors—frequently of strict moral. In fact, the most serious research into male homoeroticism has taken place over the last three decades, especially since the success of the indispensable study by John Boswell.⁴⁰ Despite having generated all kinds of criticisms, this became a central pillar of the birth of “gay and lesbian studies” consecrated to the Middle Ages and that implicitly criticised the lack of available archive material. That is why some scholars have steered their research towards the possibilities of adapting such concepts as Adrienne Rich’s “lesbian *continuum*”, as Matter or Rivera Garretas posit.⁴¹ Others have begun to apply the “queer” theories to pieces written by men and women over these centuries, such as Dinshaw and Freccero,⁴² or, more abundantly, have explored little studied paths through the most innovative feminist historiography.⁴³ In any case, it is worth mentioning that no study about female medieval homoeroticism has yet been published comparable with Boswell’s or complementary to Brooten’s on the debates in early Christianity about the less orthodox sexuality of women in the classical Greek and Roman contexts.⁴⁴

This goes beyond the discussion about the “entity” of male and female homoerotic relations, during Antiquity or in the high and late medieval epochs, and, evidently, about the individual and collective “identities” that could have been generated then, that have raised so much dust. Thus, as Kuefler carefully analyses,⁴⁵ beginning with Halperin’s works,⁴⁶ academia in the United States corrects or delimits the proposals by Michel Foucault and John Boswell. These works aim to reorientate the studies into pre-modern sexualities. What now seems most timely would firstly

39. Mérida, Rafael M. “Teorías presentes, amores medievales. En torno al estudio del homoeroticismo en las culturas del Medioevo occidental”. *Revista de Poesía Medieval*, 4 (2000): 51-98; Mérida, Rafael M. *Damas, santas y pecadoras. Hijas medievales de Eva*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2008: 45-66.

40. Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality. Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

41. Matter, E. Ann. “My Sister, My Spouse: Woman-Identified Women in Medieval Christianity”. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 2 (1986): 81-93; Matter, E. Ann. “Discourses of Desire: Sexuality and Christian Women’s Visionary Literature”. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 18 (1989-1990): 119-131; Rivera, María-Milagros. “La política sexual”, *Las relaciones en la historia de la Europa medieval*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2006: 180-196.

42. Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval. Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999; Freccero, Carla. *Queer / Early / Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

43. Lacarra, Eukene. “Homoeroticismo femenino en los discursos normativos medievales”, *“Siempre soy quien ser solía”: Estudios de literatura española medieval en homenaje a Carmen Parrilla*. A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2009: 205-228.

44. Brooten, Bernadette J. *Love between Women. Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

45. Kuefler, Mathew. “The Boswell Thesis”, *Essays on “Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006: 1-31.

46. Halperin, David M. *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.



be to note how the literary hyperbole of vituperation allows Jaume Roig to award a less *essentialist* than “pre-constructionist” dimension to sodomy, four centuries before the 19th-century medical classification advocated by Foucault in the first volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976). As I see it, if we substitute the “19th-century homosexual” syntagma from his influential definition and we put “woman reviled by Roig”, I think that we would not be so far from the perception of the wise Solomon—or the Valencian doctor:

*L'homosexuel du XIXe siècle est devenu un personnage: un passé, une histoire et une enfance, un caractère, une forme de vie; une morphologie aussi, avec une anatomie indiscreète et peut-être une physiologie misterieuse. Rien de ce qu'il est au total n'échappe à sa sexualité. Partout en lui, elle est présente: sousjacent à toutes ses conduites parce qu'elle en est le principe insidieux et indéfiniment actif; inscrite sans pudeur sur son visage et sur son corps parce qu'elle est un secret qui se trahit toujours. Elle lui est consubstantielle, moins comme un péché d'habitude que comme une nature singulière.*⁴⁷

In second place, and much more relevantly, I am interested in recovering the unusual medicalised link between woman and sodomy in the misogynist context in 12th to 15th-century Europe mentioned above, with the aim of evaluating the originality of the *Espill* from another perspective. I would like to do so by referring to another narrative work in verse and with partially misogynist contents, but in French, this being *Le Livre des manières* by Étienne de Fougères.

3. Verses and other readings

Bishop of Rennes and chaplain to Henry II Plantagenet, Étienne de Fougères died in 1178, exactly three hundred years before Jaume Roig. The author of profane poetry that has not survived and hagiographic pieces in Latin, he is known mainly as the creator of this poem, the first French work on the *états du monde*. It was written in octosyllabic monorhyme couplets towards the end of his life, probably between 1174 and 1178. In line with the data offered by his editor, R. Anthony Lodge, the abundant biographic information available would confirm his notable literary reputation in his own times, parallel to the profile of his ecclesiastic and political positions. His doctrinal text appeared in a context very close to one of the most prominent courts in the 12th century, to the extent that it can be stated that his feudal ideology would show *une connaissance profonde*

47. “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage: a past, a history and a childhood, a character, a form of life, also a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing he is a total escapes his sexuality. Wherever he is, it is there: underlying all his lines because the principle is insidiously and indefinitely active; registered shamelessly on his face and on his body because it is a secret that is always betrayed. It is consubstantial, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature.” (Foucault, Michel. *La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976: 56-58).



*des réalités pratiques de la politique, et doivent refléter assez fidèlement le climat intellectuel et social des milieux dirigeants du temps.*⁴⁸

Le Livre des manières describes the function of the *sis estats del món* (six states of the world) in six sections grouped into two symmetrical parts. The first (v. 1-672) is dedicated to the kings (stanzas 1-47), the clergy (48-134) and the knight (135-168); the second (v. 677-1344), dedicated to the peasants (170-200), the bourgeoisie (201-243) and women (244-281). The fact that the last section of the final part, about the subaltern states, is the part that most interests us, is as logical as its twin contents: stanzas 244-281 are the ones that describe “bad” women, while the virtuous ones are then defined, while exalting the Virgin Mary (282-313). A brief summary of the contents of these stanzas, that occupy verses 973-1124, would be as follows:

*L'auteur s'adresse surtout aux aristocrates dont le penchant pour l'amour adultère comporte des conséquences néfastes pour la société entière et pour leurs maris en particulier. Pour mieux parvenir à leurs fins illicites, elles se couvrent de fards et s'occupent de sorcellerie. Elles détruisent le fruit de leurs unions illégitimes par l'avortement. Si, malgré tous leurs efforts elles se trouvent privées de leurs amants, elles s'avalissent avec leurs serviteurs, se rendant ainsi responsables de la dégénération de la noblesse actuelle. Certaines vont même jusqu'à commettre des actes contre nature*⁴⁹

Let me state here that my aim is not to suggest that this poem was a source for the episode in the *Espill* that I am commenting on, as there are no data to support this. It seems that the circulation of *Le Livre des manières* was rather modest, as indirectly shown by the survival of a single miscellaneous manuscript in the French monastic world; neither does the elapsed time between the two poems favour this link nor their respective authorship and reception. It is also evident that the target that Roig proposes by deriding all women seems far from Fougères' explicit enumeration of the “six estates”, mainly masculine, that finish with a depiction of Death and the Final Judgement, where all men and women would be present—even if the ideal of a chaste life is shared. It is relevant that the natural audience for Étienne de Fougères were the members of the French nobility. It is with this moral purpose that he sharpens some verses to attack a very specific courtly *fin'amors*, well known thanks to the songs of the troubadours in Occitan and the first *romans* in Oil, that the vituperated perfumed

48. “a deep knowledge of the practical realities of politics, and should also accurately reflect the intellectual and social climate of the ruling circles of the time.” (de Fougères, Étienne. *Le Livre des Manières*, ed. R. Anthony Lodge. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1979: 22).

49. “The author mainly addresses those aristocrats whose penchant for adulterous love has harmful consequences for society and for their husbands in particular. To better achieve their illicit purposes, they are covered with makeup and deal in witchcraft. They destroy the fruit of their illegitimate unions by abortion. If, despite all their efforts, they are deprived of their lovers, they debase themselves with their servants, thus making them responsible for the degeneration of the present nobility. Some even commit anti-natural acts.” (de Fougères, Étienne. *Le Livre des Manières*...: 26-27).



ladies knew.⁵⁰ It also seems obvious to mention that these stanzas contain the misogynist tradition in Latin and anticipate part of the 13th-century debate in French about the wickedness of women. The homiletic technique and the topics used (adultery, witchcraft, abortion, etc.) spread all over Europe until reaching Jaume Roig's Valencia.

However, Fougères also proposes the not very widely spread connection, mainly because it was nefarious, between women and sodomy. That is why, as I see it, it would be of greater interest to reflect about the reasons behind the appearance of this anti-natural crime and sin. Before continuing, seven stanzas (275-281), corresponding to verses 1097-1124 should be read:

*De bel pechié n'est pas merveille,
des que Nature le conseille,
mes qui de lei pechié s'esveille
encontre Nature teseille.*

*Celui deit l'en a chiens hüer,
pieres et bastons estruër;
torchons li devreit [l'en] rüer
et con autres gueignons tüer.*

*Ces dames ont trové I jeu:
o dos trutennes funt un eu,
sarqueu hurtent contre sarqueu,
sanz focil escoent lor feu.*

*Ne joent pas a piquenpance,
a pleins escuz joignent sanz lance.
N'ont soign de langue en lor balance,
ne en lor mole point de mance.*

*Hors d'aigue peschent au torbout
et n'i quierent point de ribot.
N'ont sain de pilete en lor pot
në en lor branle de pivot.*

*Dus et dus jostent lor tripout
et se meinent plus que le trot;
a l'escremie del jambot
s'entrepaiet vilment l'escot.*

50. Gouttebroze, Jean Guy. "Parfum de femme et misogynie dans le *Livre des manières* d'Étienne de Fougères", *Les soins de beauté. Actes du IIIe Colloque International*. Nice: Université de Nice, 1987: 311-317.



*Il ne sunt pas totes d'un molle:
 l'un[e] s'esteit et l'autre crosle.
 l'un[e] fet coc et l'autre polle
 et chascune meïne son rossle.⁵¹*

Humour and rudeness are almost completely absent in *Le Livre des manières*, quite the opposite of what happens in the *Espill*. This is one of those rare exceptions that confirm the seriousness and orthodoxy of the work. It is so surprising that certain scholars, such as Langlois, suspected this could be due to later interpolations, far from the original spirit.⁵² What is true is that Fougères allows himself a curious sexual scene that seems to resemble the *fabliaux* more than the lives of contemporary saints and that, like Roig, using a hapax like *trutennes* (v. 1106) or dialectal words,⁵³ dresses the female sodomitic practices in humour, here as unexpected as showy, and infinitely more explicit than the Valencian poem.

It seems clear that the use of a very specific lexis, for example, about the game of spears or of fishes, strengthens a sexual semantic field that would be fully intelligible in its time. And so understandable for the members of the lay court of the Plantagenet and the clergy who could read the punishments for that sin that they had to administer to the women of their parishes and convents in their penitentials.⁵⁴ Thus, we could reflect whether Fougères, a man of the court and also a man of the church, may have been thinking about situations, circumstances and documents that arose in the French and German courts and convents in that century, like those studied by Ruiz-Doménec and Holsinger,⁵⁵ or from the previous century, like those mentioned by Wiethaus.⁵⁶

51. de Fougères, Étienne. *Le Livre des Manières...*: 97-98. I know of no translation of this poem into Catalan nor any complete version in modern French. So here I copy the English translation by Robert L. A. Clark: "There's nothing surprising about the 'beautiful sin' / when nature prompts it, / but whosoever is awakened by the 'vile sin' / is striving against nature. // Him (sic) must one pursue with dogs, / throw(ing) stones and sticks; / one should give him blows / and kill him like any cut. // These ladies have made up a game: / With two *trutennes* they nake an *eu*, / they bang coffin against coffin, / without a poker to stir up their fire. // They don't play at jousting / but join shield to shield without a lance. / They don't need a pointer in their scales, / nor a handle in their mold. // Out of water they fish for turbot / and they have no need for a rod. / They don't bother with a pestle in their mortar / nor a fulcrum for their see-saw. // The do their jousting act in couples / and go at it at full tilt; / at the game of thigh-fencing / they lewdly share their expenses. // They're not all from the same mold: / one lies still and the other makes busy, / one plays the cock and the other the hen / and each one plays her role". This English version was published, as an "Appendix I", in: Murray, Jacqueline. "Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible: Lesbians in the Middle Ages", *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, Vern L. Bullough, James A. Brundage, eds. New York: Garland, 1996: 210.

52. de Fougères, Étienne. *Le Livre des Manières...*: 34.

53. de Fougères, Étienne. *Le Livre des Manières...*: 54 and 131-132.

54. Green, Monica H. "Female Sexuality in the Medieval West". *Trends in History*, 4 (1990): 155-158.

55. Ruiz-Doménec, José E. *Mujeres ante la identidad (siglo XII)*. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1986; Holsinger, Bruce W. "The Flesh of the Voice: Embodiment and the Homoerotics of Devotion in the Music of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)". *Signs*, 19 (1993): 92-125.

56. Wiethaus, Ulrike. "Female Homoerotic Discourse and Religion in Medieval Germanic Culture", *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*, Sharon Farmer, Carol B. Pasternack, eds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003: 288-321.



These are the only two poems in all medieval Europe that present “sodomitic” female relations in such an extraordinary way. Given this unusual coincidence, we could ask where Jaume Roig obtained his information. In this sense, we should bear in mind that he knew the inside workings of the Valencian royal court well (at least between 1446 and 1469), as well as some convents, especially that of the Trinity of which he was a benefactor and whose abbess was Sister Isabel of Villena.⁵⁷ This experience could have given him at least suspicions or even certainty about the more heterodox female sexuality. It was precisely in those years, when Joanot Martorell made similar allusions about the court of Constantinople through the handmaidens of princess Carmesina.⁵⁸

Possibly this exercise of imagination is completely unnecessary, and the target that we should be aiming for could be something else, which is important for us now. The most recent research into *Le Livre des manières* by Étienne de Fougères has highlighted how the author’s perspective, inevitably masculine, and the language used, as imprecise as it is metaphoric, leave the possibility open that the sexual contacts between women could be just as condemnable for some as satisfactory for the others.⁵⁹ This conclusion is more than slightly suspicious at the end of the 12th century. Or perhaps not, if we think about specific aspects of the cultural environment the bishop of Rennes lived in,

*Etienne de Fougères’s dedication of his Livre des manières to the countess of Hereford (vv. 1205-24) is further evidence that his work is connected to the matter of Araby. The Cathedral of Hereford is indeed recognized to have been a major center for the translation and transmission of Arabic scientific (and literary) learning in the twelfth century. (...) Etienne was therefore living in a milieu that had repeated contact with Arabic scientific, cultural, and literary traditions either through scholars and translators, or at least merchants and returning crusaders. The association he establishes with the cathedral of Hereford is an indication that he was familiar with Arabic scientific and literary writings, including undoubtedly their important homoerotic elements.*⁶⁰

Sahar Amer’s proposal for contextualising and interpreting the *Le Livre des manières* is very attractive for our purposes, as it opens the doors to a cultural knowledge that would seem even closer to Jaume Roig than to Étienne de Fougères.⁶¹ In fact, for

57. Roig, Jaume. *Espill...: 27-28. El segon [fill de Jaume Roig], Jaume Honorat, serà canonge i vicari perpetu de Terol, i després canonge i vicari general de València. Les dues filles petites es faran monges: la penúltima, Joana, monja agustina, i la darrera, Violant, clarissa al convent que regí sor Isabel de Villena* (“The second [son of Jaume Roig], Jaume Honorat, would be a canon and vicar in perpetuity in Teruel, and later canon and vicar general of Valencia. His two younger daughters became nuns: the second youngest penúltima, Joana, an Augustinian, and the youngest, Violant, a Poor Clare in the convent run by Sister Isabel de Villena”). Carré, Antònia. “La medicina com a rerefons cultural...”: 14.

58. Martorell, Joanot. *Tirant lo Blanch*, ed. Albert Hauf. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2005: 903-909 and 1047-1051.

59. Murray, Jacqueline. “Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible...”: 204-205.

60. Amer, Sahar. *Crossing Borders. Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008: 30-31.

61. Amer, Sahar. *Crossing Borders...: 29-49*.



geographical and human reasons, in a multicultural and multi-religious kingdom like 15th-century Valencia, where Muslims, Jews and Christians lived, the traditions that Amer referred to had to be very much alive. If this were not enough, we only need to reiterate that given his university education and professional stature, the author of the *Espill* must have known the scientific and literary baggage in which sexual relations between women (and men) were not unknown. If we read Jaume Roig's will and the inventory of his possessions,⁶² we find that his personal library, *ens permet de veure quina devia ser la seva cultura mèdica. Posseïa llibres de Galè i d'Hipòcrates, d'autors salernitans, de professors de la Universitat de Montpeller i 11 obres de metges àrabs*.⁶³

The problem is that, as a result of the way Roig's library was catalogued, we do not know, nor can we guess, the exact contents of all the manuscripts that he had collected during his life, despite the efforts of the researchers. On the other hand, it is evident that Roig would have read or consulted many more medical treatises and scientific encyclopaedias than the ones he had at home. Medical treatises whose authorship could be falsely attributed to Galen, like a *Secrets de les dones*, which offered recipes for fighting "lesbian desire".⁶⁴ Treatises and doctors like those who al-Tifasi (1184-1253) consulted to write his *Nuzhat al-albab fi ma la yuyad fi kitab* (translated years ago into Spanish as *Esparcimiento de corazones por donde libros nos dan razones*), one of whose chapters is dedicated to the *sihaq*:

*En los libros antiguos he leído que el lesbianismo se origina durante la época de la lactancia, si la madre consume grandes cantidades de apio, oruga y trébol, ya que las materias nocivas que contienen estas plantas se concentran en los labios de la vagina de la lactante y dan lugar a un picor constante en el interior de la vulva, algo similar al "bagá" o picor que desazona el ano masculino. (...) Toda tendencia sáfica derivada de un hábito adquirido puede desaparecer con el transcurso del tiempo, pero no así la ingénita, difícil de sanar e incluso tratar médicamente.*⁶⁵

When an erotological treatise like this, so close to the Andalusian culture and with clear medicalising aims, can fall into the trap of stating that one of the traits that best defines women who prefer sexual relations with other women would be *el abuso de perfumes y afeites así como la extrema pulcritud en el vestir y la procura de los*

62. Carré, Antònia. "La biblioteca del metge Jaume Roig". *Anuari de Filologia*, 16 (1993): 23-36; Chiner, Jaime J. "Del testamento e inventario de bienes de Jaume Roig al autor del manuscrito del *Spill*. Documentos y nuevas hipótesis". *Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona*, 44 (1995): 173-230.

63. "allows us to see what his medical culture must have been. He owned books by Galen and Hippocrates, Salernitanum writers, professors at the University of Montpellier and 11 works by Arab doctors." (Carré, Antònia. "La medicina com a rerefons cultural...": 19).

64. Levey, Martin; Souryal, Safwat S. "Galen's on the Secrets of Women and on the Secrets of Men. A Contribution to the History of Arabic Phramacology". *Janus*, 55 (1968): 208-219.

65. "In old books, I have read that lesbianism originates during the period of lactation, if the mother eats large amounts of celery, rocket and clover, as the harmful substances contained in these plants are concentrated in the labia of the infant, and give rise to a constant itching inside the vulva, somewhat similar to the *bagá* or itching that upsets the male anus. (...) Any Sapphic tendency derived from an acquired habit can fade over time, but not the innate, hard to heal and even to treat medically." (al-Tifasi. *Esparcimiento de corazones*, trans. Ignacio Gutiérrez. Madrid: Gredos, 2003: 210).



mejores tejidos, instrumentos y viandas que los lugares y los tiempos depararles puedan,⁶⁶ can we not affirm that there would be no great misogynist abyss separating that work (and so many others of Muslim origin) and the *Espill*?

It would perhaps then be worth thinking to what extent the originality of Jaume Roig in the European context, when he attributes women the merit of being the true creators of sodomy, would not be the exclusive fruit of his most hyperbolic satire or a perfect metaphor of the confluence of religious and “homotextual” identities. It could also rather be a Christian appropriation, always in gynophobic terms, of certain Muslim scientific literature that our eminent doctor must have known, directly or indirectly, and which would have entertained him greatly, knowing his sense of humour and the significance of this humour in his times.⁶⁷

66. “the abuse of perfumes and oils as well as extreme pulchritude in their dress and of procuring the finest fabrics, instruments and meats that the places and times can supply them with.” (al-Tifasi. *Esparcimiento de corazones...*: 211).

67. From this viewpoint, it would also worth recovering the following proposal, *Com ha explicat encertadament Michela Pereira, totes les reflexions filosòfiques que a l’Edat Mitjana s’elaboraven sobre les dones es basaven en una reducció conceptual que feia coincidir la definició de “dona” amb la del seu cos, o millor dit, amb la del seu sexe. Si partim d’aquesta premissa, no podem defugir d’estudiar la concepció que tenien els homes medievals del sexe femení. I, per tant, caldrà contemplar els textos literaris que participaren en el debat profeminista i antifeminista tenint en compte les teories difoses sobre el cos de les dones, o sigui, sobre la condició femenina. Teories que es divulgaven a través d’obres de caràcter científic o enciclopèdic i, evidentment, dels tractats de medicina. Estudiar les actituds, les creences, les doctrines que es difonien en els textos de caràcter mèdic és essencialment important, perquè ens revela les assumpcions culturals existents a l’Edat Mitjana respecte, per exemple, al cos humà i a les relacions que s’establien entre els dos sexes. En el cas de Jaume Roig, aquest rerefons cultural encara és més significatiu, donada la seva condició de metge* (“As Michela Pereira has accurately explained, all the philosophical reflections that were drawn up about women in the Middle Ages were based on conceptual reduction that made the definition of “woman” coincide with that of her body, or better said, with that of her sex. If we start from this premise, we cannot avoid studying the conception of the female sex held by medieval men. And thus, the literary texts that enter in the pro-feminist and anti-feminist debate must be considered as the theories spread about women’s bodies, in other words, about the female condition. Theories that were spread through scientific or encyclopaedic works and, evidently, the medical treatises. It is essentially important to study the attitudes, beliefs, doctrines that were spread in the medical texts, because it reveals the cultural assumptions of the Middle Ages regarding, for example, the human body and the relations that were established between both sexes. In the case of Jaume Roig, this cultural background is more significant, given his condition as a doctor”). Carré, Antònia. “La medicina com a rerefons cultural...”: 11.

