Mediating Medieval Medicine: Ecclesiastic Commentary through Visual Parodies of Pisse-Prophecy

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Overtime, the discourse on the relationship between science and religion has filled lecture halls, books, and academic journals. In late medieval Europe this debate found its way into the practice of medicine with the implementation of a theological analysis of what medical practices were deemed morally acceptable. Christian religious leaders were generally concerned with the treatment of medical patients and the services physicians provided. Of all these medieval procedures examined, none held as pivotal a role in the dialog between church and doctor as the practice of uroscopy, or the analysis of urine.

The theoretical basis of uroscopy can be traced back to Greek theologians and physicians Hippocrates and Galen, the fathers of classical medicine. In the foundational text on the subject, written around 350 BCE, Hippocrates recognized urine as a significant component in the analysis of the bodily systems.1 This was later expanded in the work of Galen’s second-century writings on urine’s visual characteristics. In the fifth century CE, Cassiodorus, a Roman statesman and writer, introduced a rudimentary uroscopy chart that compiled and highlighted the diagnostic value of urine sedimentation and foam.2 He also classified eleven categories of urine color. This early scholarship reached a pinnacle with the seventh-century work of Theophilos Protospatharios. Theophilos expanded the notion of uroscopy with his treatise, De Urinis, in

which he distinguished twenty urine colors and six different variations of sediment. The contribution of De Urinis was paramount to early urological studies in that it provided specific guidelines to insure the medical unification of uroscopy through the use of diagrams, called uroscopy charts or wheels, for standardized clinical comparisons. This emphasis on consistency demonstrates the importance of a physician’s understanding of the uniformed procedure.

The increase in popularity of these procedures eventually led to the same papal scrutiny that previously had been applied to other medical practices such as bloodletting and surgery. This ultimately led to the demise of the practice. Part of the problem was that self-trained uroscopists were meeting the demands of an obsessed public fascinated with the ever-expanding diagnostic abilities of the craft. The analysis of urine was no longer just a tool for identifying a person’s ailments, but now facilitated the extravagant claims of predicting future illnesses.

While uroscopy was employed to identify a patient’s current sickness, the physician could also claim to use the diagnostic procedure to foresee other maladies that would befall the patient, thus suggesting that the person could take steps to avoid said illness. This divination made the practice a particular favorite among women, not only because it could verify pregnancy, but also

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4 Kouba, “Uroscopy by Hippocrates and Theophilus,” 50-52. These uroscopy charts were often incorporated into a physician’s vade mecum, or “carry along” book, which he would have been able to use readily when observing a patient’s urine sample. Such texts were easily accessible, usually tied to a physician’s belt making an immediate diagnosis when compared to the alternative of carrying around a full bound manuscript. Medical belt books were typically made of roughly half a dozen strips of parchment that were then folded and sewn together and contain more than just uroscopy charts. They also included other reference material such as a calendar of dates, a zodiac man, bloodletting instructions, and a “Sphere of Apuleius.” Though it was not uncommon for a scriptorium customer to be invested in a work’s creation, few go as far as medieval doctors, who took the manufacturing process into their own hands rather than delegating it to a scribe or illuminator. The physician’s need for this degree of participation is clear, considering the Theophilus-laden training they received at the university, which stressed the importance of accurate urine analysis. An example of a medieval uroscopy chart can be seen in B. L. Harley MS 5311, fol. 2v, Section J, London, England, c. 1406, from the British Library Digitised Manuscripts Online Catalog, accessed on March 7, 2011, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=0&ref=Harley_MS_5311.

5 James J. Walsh, The Popes and Science: The History of the Papal Relations to Science during the Middle Ages and down to our own Time (New York: Fordham University Press, 1913), 28.

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for its ability to foretell both the sex and delivery date of the unborn child.\textsuperscript{6} These mystic deviations from the original straightforward practice of uroscopy explain the practice’s alternative name: “pisse-prophecy.”

With the rising demand for urine readings by patients and the increasing number of physicians willing to provide them, criticism from the religious community over the prophetic use of and exuberant monetary gain from the craft became pervasive. This disapproval was not only expressed through voices of religious leaders, but from trained physicians, many of whom were organized within guilds, often appealing to the church over treatments given by doctors lacking standard training. Ultimately, the accused unlicensed practitioners “would be tried by a church court, which would either excommunicate the defendant or threaten excommunication for a second offence.”\textsuperscript{7}

Despite these controversies, the practice of medicine became the wealthiest and most esteemed profession by the fourteenth-century. Interestingly, the availability of medical manuscripts had sharply increased by 1375, while the number of practitioners with medical degrees remained relatively small.\textsuperscript{8} With the increase of publically available medical literature, combined with the profession’s connection to wealth, it is of little surprise that some people during the medieval period took the opportunity to “cash in” on this new profitable and easily accessible business of “pisse-prophecy.” This is particularly interesting because a majority of


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academically trained physicians were actually clergymen, both common monks and wealthy
elite, while the self-trained practitioners were more likely to be laymen.\(^9\)

With a lack of training provided by universities, the practices of the self-taught, lay
physicians were significantly different from those of the formally educated practitioners of
uroscopy. Formally educated doctors would have been familiar with not only Theophilos’ *De
Urinis*, but also the regulatory implementations of the practice. It is plausible that the scholastic
guidelines for the practice of uroscopy and that the little or no physical hazard for the patient
both served to make uroscopy acceptable to the church early on. In comparison to other
medieval medical practices, such as bloodletting or surgical proceedings, uroscopy was deemed a
useful, less invasive, medium connecting religious and scientific ideologies.

Within the visual culture of the day, the acceptability of uroscopy can be seen not only in
the depictions of physicians performing it, but also in the illustrations of SS. Cosmas and
Damian, the twin brother saints of medicine.\(^10\) Both depict legitimate practitioners of medicine
identified by what had become the tool of the uroscopy trade, the jordan.\(^11\) There are, however,
other images of a more satirical nature that seem to convey a critique of the practice. These have
dominated the modern scholastic debate. The visual evidence implicit in the comparison of the
legitimate and the satirical imagery allows us to question the ecclesiastical sanctioning of the
medical diagnostic practice of uroscopy. Were satirical depictions of physicians holding jordans
a denouncement of medical urine analysis, as suggested by earlier scholars? Or were they used

\(^9\) Roger French, *Medicine before Science: The Rational and Learned Doctor from the Middle Ages to the

\(^10\) See *St. Cosmas and St. Damian*, Germany, print, 1484, from National Library of France, Gallica Digital Library,
accessed on April 2, 2011, http://www2.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/img/?refphot=00777&mod=s. In this print, one of
the twin saints raises a filled jordan in his left hand while gesturing with his right hand finger toward the flask. The
other saint holds a cylinder container with a rounded top in his left hand and his open right hand gesturing
downward. St. Cosmas and Damian are slightly turned toward one another and both appear to be focusing on the
jordan with their eyes. The jordan is situated nearly central of the gap between the saints and it is lifted higher than
the container held by the other twin.


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in specific locations to stress the religious disproval of the fortune-telling practice of pisse-prophhecy?

With the examination of satirical uroscopy images, an alternative reading is possible; rather than a straightforward parody, they represent a more popular form of theological critique of medieval urology practices. The particular placement of images, such as zoomorphic physicians near depictions of death or pregnancy in reference to the Virgin Mary, suggests a desire to influence the relationship between physicians and patients. In doing so, the artisans responsible for these images were making a distinction between “pisse-prophecy” and the legitimate medical practice of uroscopy.

As visual commentary on medical practice physicians, these images were an extension of the religious edicts outlining not only the characteristic qualities of a doctor, but also what actions were acceptable or not acceptable when treating their clients. And while official papal guidelines provide insight into the pious annotation on medieval medicine, limited scholarship has been given to the employment of the visual arts to further the theological regulation of physicians and their practice. The analysis of how and where satirical depictions of creatures performing uroscopy, as well as the use of images of the collection and analysis of urine, will illustrate a clearer picture of the Church’s stance on the misuse of this procedure.

The late medieval inclusion of uroscopy-based satire, appearing in images meant for public consumption such as in Arthurian romances, Books of Hours, or stained glass windows, was meant not as a statement of outright prohibition of the medical procedure, but rather as an ecclesiastical commentary on the misuse of the diagnostic practice. Using select imagery from the *Arthurian Romance* Beinecke MS. 229, the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* MS. M. 1004, and the stained glass from York Minster as examples to represent a much broader corpus, it is
arguable that the broad employment of these types of images acknowledges a documented precedent calling for theological intervention. Moreover, it is through these visual representations, that it is possible to trace the church’s stance on the importance of spiritual healing in conjunction with legitimate medical practices over the prophecy-based misuse of medical science.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the popularity of uroscopy grew in Europe, so much so that the vial of urine became the emblem of not only the diagnostic process, but became the symbol of medicinal practice in its entirety. This image of the jordan, the glass apparatus used to collect urine had been commonly used at universities, was thus solidified as an outward public icon of the medical profession. It was employed not only as an advertisement on “signboards at the doors of practicing physicians,” but also as the subject of the illuminations and historiated capitals within medical writings, where figures holding these flasks were meant to identify the subject matter being discussed within the body of the text.

While the depiction of a figure raising a jordan certainly does pertain to the initial recognition of the practice of uroscopy, further examination of how these messages were being delivered and to whom provides an understanding that satirical illustrations were instead meant

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to be read as commentary on the act of pisse-prophecy. These images are particularly relevant in their relation to women and are found quite prevalently in women’s Book of Hours.

One of the most prolific settings for jordan-wielding creatures was along the margins of late medieval Books of Hours. These books served as the personal devotion books of the elite class and were particularly favored by the female reader. In “Pregnant Pages: Marginalia in a Book of Hours,” Judith Steinhoff discusses the relationship between the creation of a book of hours and the comical marginalia, suggesting that there was a profound connection with the intended readers, specifically women. Steinhoff highlights the significance of marginal images and their relationship with both the words and the larger central imagery on religious manuscript pages, stating that the collective whole was to be understood rather than analyzed as separate elements. She discusses the patron’s role by including the often nonsensical images in themed sets, reoccurring throughout certain sections of the personal devotion book, thus suggesting that they were a way of stressing the collaboration between the text’s meaning and its underlining relationship with the satirical drawings. Steinhoff employs this “word and image” theory to the analysis of MS. M. 754 in order to connect the continual representation of hybrid creatures within ovens and men holding exaggerated swords within certain Book of Hours chapters as a way of stressing the importance of fertility to the likely female reader.

Using Steinoff’s analytical method to examine specific medieval representations of uroscopy, we see that very rarely are these images within the central visual frame of an artwork. Instead they are often placed on the edge of manuscript pages or situated within church

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15 Judith Steinhoff, “Pregnant Pages: Marginalia in a Book of Hours (Pierpont Morgan Library Ms. M.754/British Library, Ms. Add.36684),” in Between the Picture and the Word: Manuscript Studies from the Index of Christian Art, ed. Column Hourihane (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2005), 181. Steinhoff’s argument of a clear connection between the intended viewer and marginalia is supported by her analysis of MS. M. 754 in which a very clear message has been created within the manuscripts marginalia. Throughout the entire work, pregnant figures, pregnancy icons and fertility symbols fill the margins, illustrating a consistent and deep concern over either a current or future pregnancy.


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architecture. This, however, does not diminish the illustrations’ value. In fact, scholar Michael Camille emphasizes the significance of marginalia in his book, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, illustrating that border art was often employed as a form of visual gloss, used to comment on the central space, image, and or adjacent text. Camille argues against the long held art historical standard that marginal imagery was to be read solely as the autonomous cartoons of medieval artists. This perspective is particularly beneficial when examining the deliberate placement of the pisse-prophecy imagery in proximity to themes within the text and/or central imagery.

The understanding that medieval audiences would have processed the multitude of imagery, both within the central and marginalized spaces and into a single gestalt comprehension, highlights the significance of the satirical uroscopy depictions within the selected corpus. This appreciation of the observer’s experience while viewing marginalia is essential to the examination of uroscopy parodies as representations of pisse-prophecy due to not only the illustration’s placement on the image plane in relation to other imagery and text, but also the setting within or on a specific object, thus giving precedence to the overarching message being conveyed.

Looking to the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*, the first appearance of uroscopy in the manuscript occurs within the border of fol. 106r, which also includes an intricately foliated motif consisting of leaves, vines, budding flowers and strawberries (fig. 1).

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18 The Online Catalog of The Pierpont Morgan Library, The Morgan Library and Museum, accessed on September 2, 2011, http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76924. The Morgan Library Corsair Online Collection offers a vast amount of background information on the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*. MS M. 1004. Created in Paris, France from c. 1420-1425, this manuscript was composed in both Latin and Middle French. According to the Morgan Library and Museum catalog, the manuscript’s earliest known provenance is attributed to Louis XI and Charlotte of Savoy, whose arms were a later addition to the borders of the large miniatures. It is this clear ownership marking that provides the book with its current title, the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*. Although the king’s consort, Charlotte of Savoy (Nov. 11, 1441- Dec. 1, 1483), was significantly linked to this Book of Hours it is © 2014 The Middle Ground Journal Number 9, Fall 2014 http://TheMiddleGroundJournal.org See Submission Guidelines page for the journal's not-for-profit educational open-access policy
not plausible that the manuscript was actually commissioned for or by her since she was not born when MS M. 1004 was created. While the original patron or user is not known there is still a vast amount of understanding that can be gained by examining the general viewship of late medieval Book of Hours. The *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* includes a calendar, Gospel sequences, *Obsecro te, O intemerata*, Hours of the Virgin, Psalter of Jerome, Penitential Psalms, Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Spirit, Office of the Dead, Suggrages, Fifteen Joys of the Virgin, Seven Requests of Our Lord, and Masses for Major Feasts from Easter to Christmas.

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Along the lower margin is a hybrid figure with a human body and the head of an owl garbed in a blue tunic and white collar. He is raising a jordan by its neck, while gazing at the yellow contents, presumably urine. The creator has taken great strides to draw the viewer’s attention to the animalistic physician by enclosing him within a ring of leafed black scroll, which acts as a visual target on the cream-colored parchment. Decorative vines are also used as a directional line pointing to the doctor-hybrid by way of the foliated tail coming off the largest illuminated capital within the text. Exponentially affective, the placement of this vegetal arrow between the texted columns leads the observer to the illustrated physician who is also centered underneath the text. Such efforts demonstrate that the marginal figure held some meaningful significance rather than operating simply as a comical embellishment.

Although at first glance the feathered physician might appear as a play on the general practice of uroscopy, due to the presence of a urine-filled jordan, it can instead be read as commentary on the practice of pisse-prophecy because of the significant animal symbolism used throughout medieval literature and bestiaries. The specific selection of a creature to personify the physician cannot be overlooked. Here, the owl as the particular fowl used to represent the physician, holds importance for the medieval viewer because while the owl was regarded in antiquity as a representation of the wise and educated, its medieval representation took on a darker meaning. In “From Jew to Puritan: The Emblematic Owl in Early English Culture,” Brett Hirsch discusses how this bird acted as a derogatory icon of Jews.19 The inclusion of a visual

19 Brett D. Hirsch, “From Jew to Puritan: The Emblematic Owl in Early English Culture,” in ‘This Earthly Stage’: World and Stage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England, eds. Brett D. Hirsch and Christopher Wortham (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 132. Hirsch provides not only a detailed account of the iconographic significance of the owl in the medieval culture, but also how the Catholic Church utilized the representation of this animal to negatively personify Jews and then later employed the same derogatory techniques in illustrations of Protestants during the Reformation.
reference to both a Jewish individual and the practice of medicine would have suggested the involvement of the Church in regulating the relationship between the patient and their selection of a medical practitioner. Evidence of such mediation comes from late medieval legal proceedings, such as the 1314 lawsuit in Valencia in which a Jewish physician, Ismel Abencrespi, demanded payment from a Christian patient, Pere Gilabert, for curing his epilepsy.20 Documentation of this trial references a religious edict from 1245 that forbade Christians from seeking medical aid from Jewish physicians. The act of the Church governing from whom patients could obtain services alludes to ecclesiastic involvement in the doctor-client relationship and indicates what the Church considered a less than ideal physician.21

While the owl-physician of fol. 106r might seem a general denouncement of Jewish medical practitioners, examination of Jewish medical texts provides little reference to the actual practice of uroscopy, much less pisse-prophecy. Recognizing this, Hirsch’s discussion of the owl’s additional medieval association with grief and death, a distinction that ultimately led to the bird being a symbol of both prophecy and foolishness, brings about further understanding.22 The

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20 Michael R. McVaugh, *Medicine Before the Plague: Practitioners and their Patients in the Crown of Aragon, 1285-1345* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 64. This book focuses on a very specific area of southern Europe during a very specific time period which is helpful in understanding the effects of religious edicts on a particular region. In examining the lawsuit of Jewish physician Ismel Abencrespi against Pere Gilabert, author Michael McVaugh discusses how the defendant references the ecclesiastical prohibition as “the church had declared that no Jew should treat any Christian for any illness” and includes the direct testimonial translation “No seria tengut de pagar salari al dit Ismel per so con verdat es per lesleglya que nengun juheu no gos curar nengu Xrestia de nenguna malaltia” after: ARV, Just. Val. 15, 8 id. Feb. 1313/1314. McVaugh notes that this was a direct reversal of the original religious regulation that prohibited Christian patients from seeking Jewish services rather than prohibiting Jewish physicians from treating Christian patients. The author continues throughout his book to reference instances where the degree of involvement of Christian and Jewish doctors and patients could interact with one another and waxes and wanes toward the end of the Middle Ages. The actual dates and/or titles of the religious edicts being referenced in McVaugh’s book are not always noted, suggesting that such information is not known or is limited to secondary sources much like in the referred legal proceedings.

21 This folio’s marginalia is recumbent of the Church’s edict against the exchange of medical services from a Jewish practitioner to Christian patients by pairing the owl-physician with a secondary figure, and intended patient, wearing Christian associated garb.

22 Hirsch, “From Jew to Puritan,” 140-141. By examining the interest of the medieval audiences in both etymology and bestiaries, Hirsch highlights the significance of four very specific owls. These include the Horned Owl (*Bubo*) which is generally recognized by its exuberant tuffs of feathers protruding from its head, the brown streaked and white browed Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), the polymorphic Screech Owl (*Ulula/Strix*) that can be seen with varying
linking of nonsensical and divinational concepts with the image of the jordan-examining physician points more specifically to the artist’s representation of pisse-prophecy rather than the general doctoring profession. Not only is the owl-physician acting as a warning against Jewish medical practitioners, but it also signals the foretelling deviations associated with uroscopy.

Additional elements on fol. 106r of the same text serve to solidify this argument. In a second image accompanying the owl figure, a hybrid creature, seen in the upper right hand border section, is a figure with beastly legs and a human head, torso, and arms. Though the majority of the being is zoomorphic, it is recognizably female due to the donning of a veil and wimple familiar to medieval nun attire. Depicting the woman resting her head upon her hand, while her other hand supports her form by clutching a cane, the artist alludes to her advanced age or ailing health. The relationship between the owl-physician and the aged, beastly nun is particularly instrumental in indicating the relationship between a doctor and his patient. The infirm nun, being the patient, gazes downward to the bird-physician, perhaps expectantly waiting for the uroscopist’s pisse-prophecy reading of a recent deposit. This pose would have suggested both the foolishness of the woman’s high expectations of her urine analysis and her reliance on the interpretations of the bird-doctor. These faults are visually personified in the patient’s animalistic physique, reminding the viewer that the client in search of the foretelling practices was as irrational as the doctor claiming the ability to predict the seemingly unknown.

It is important to note that within the Hours of Charlotte of Savoy, the patient and physician-animal hybrids of fol. 106r are set within a section of the manuscript known as the mixtures of white, gray, red and brown feathers and Night Raven (Nycticorax), a white-grey heron with black feathers on the crown and running down its back. Upon examining images of each of these birds, none can be clearly recognized as the owl being used in the physician parody in MS M. 1004 fol. 106r. While it is important to note plausible variations of species in the visual illustrations of owls of the Middle Ages, either through evolution or artistic licensing, and modern owls, the jordan-wielding physician bird resembles more closely the brown rimmed-white faced Barn Owl (Tyto alba). Though this specific owl may not be one of the four species discussed by Hirsch, further research might be gained from examining other medieval owl depictions and noting any similarities or qualities seen with the bestiary outlines of the Horned Owl, Screech Owl, Little Owl and Night Raven.
“Office of the Dead.” While each illuminated medieval Book of Hours was unique, most contained similar components that might vary textually from book to book, but as a whole they address the same subject matter. Even by focusing on the basic meaning of the “Office of the Dead” rather than direct translation of the text on fol. 106r, the significance of the section’s meaning can be seen as pertinent to the analysis of death and pisse-prophecy. Eamon Duffy explains in his book *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240-1570*, that the “Office of the Dead” contained not only “the full text of the Church’s official prayers for the dead,” but also a calendar with reminders for the reader to recite particular prayers on specific death anniversaries.\(^{23}\) Considering that the Book of Hours was intended for personal devotion, the “Office of the Dead” could have functioned as a continual reminder of why one’s spiritual salvation was a serious matter. Duffy discusses the popularity of the “Office of the Dead” and how it varied from the other sections within the Book of Hours by being neither abbreviated nor simplified. This indicates that there is no solid evidence stating specifically why these prayers were to be maintained in their original format as provided by the Church. The connection between the subject of death and the unvarying text can be said to operate as a specific reminder to the reader of their own impending death. Moreover, this tightly scripted form would have said to its reader—regardless of which Book of Hours they were reading—that ultimately all will meet their final day despite any attempts to prolong their life. In other words, people would be wise to be spiritually prepared for Judgment Day rather than seeking the services of prophecy-based medical treatment.

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\(^{23}\) Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 60. Duffy does not expand the possible reasoning why the text within the “Office of the Dead” was typically not altered while the other religious texts were subject to manipulation. Even so, by maintaining the text’s originality, there is a clear emphasis on the message being delivered.

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The primacy placed on one’s eventual demise is reiterated by the continual recanting of the prayers for the dead that commemorated deceased family or favored saints, particularly since they were the same prayers that would eventually be said over one’s own body upon death. With these prayers, the reader would again and again be reminded of the temperance of life. With the inclusion of the marginalia, such as that on MS. M. 1004, fol. 106r, depicting the hybrid female patient seeking the divination services from a pisse-prophecy performing owl, we can see the symbolic linking of a being opposing the Church with a representation of death. With this linkage, the reader could only be reminded that seeking such services would be foolish, for death was unavoidable.

This satirization of the pisse-prophecy physician in the Hours of Charlotte of Savoy was not a singular occurrence; it continues on fol. 169r in the form of a hybrid creature with the head and torso of a man and the lower extremities of a furred beast with a slightly curved tail and paws (fig. 2).
Figure 2. *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 1004, fol. 169r, from ‘Mass of the Virgin Mary’, Latin and Middle French, France, c. 1420-1425. (http://utu.morganlibrary.org/medren/single_image2.cfm?imagename=m1004.169r.jpg&page=ICA000133043).
While it is clear that the physician on MS. M. 1004, fol. 169r is a hybrid of man and beast, it is difficult to delineate the specific animal with which the human doctor is fused. Though the presence of fur, paws, and tail suggest that the lower extremities are from a dog or lion, depicting the individual performing an action referencing a distinct profession in itself leads the viewer to see a form of commentary on some element of the medical practice.24 This hybrid physician has received a similar placement as the jordan-holding, owl figure on fol. 106r, in that he is aligned with the divisional space between the textual columns and is also set in a border that is anointed with foliated embellishments of flowers, strawberries and vines. However, unlike the fol. 106r bird-doctor, who was placed at the bottom of the image, the physician on fol. 169r is set within the top margin of the page. Missing are the foliated scrolls framing the figure and the extravagant vegetal pointers from illuminated capitals. Instead, the artist has used other techniques to draw the viewer to the hybrid physician. For instance, by placing the figure directly above the top portion of text, the creator has ensured that the hybrid physician will be the first form to be observed by the viewer. To guarantee that the viewer continues to focus on the figure, the illustrator has allowed the figure to break the decorated marginal barrier and ascend into the cream-colored edge of the page. The artist further exaggerated the creature’s profession by extending the jordan beyond the margin. This is paired visually with the extension of the physician’s headdress.

Much like the owl-physician of fol. 106r, an iconographic symbol of a Jew has been linked with the illustration of the physician. The beast-doctor of fol. 169r is capped with a soft rimmed pointed hat that was often used in medieval art to identify members of the Jewish community. Non-parody depictions of physicians were generally illustrated wearing an

24 This method of making a visual statement by blending animalistic qualities with a recognizable person or profession, either through iconic clothing, materials, or actions, is not singular to the medical community but used on the religious, courtly, and lay sector as well.
elongated cap that flopped to one side and often included an exaggerated tassel at the end or no headgear at all. While Sarah Lipon, author of *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée*, notes that there were numerous types of “Jew hats” depicted in the Middle Ages, she stresses that such symbols were not themselves specifically derogatory. Instead, they were simply a badge marking the person, much like the jordan identifies a physician.\(^2^5\) This does not mean, however, that the identification of a physician as Jewish is by any means a positive element. Rather, it signals that the medically practicing Jew is to be avoided. The parody physician is recognized as performing some aspect of uroscopy due to his action of raising the jordan to examine its contents, but it is the labeling of the doctor as Jewish that relates to the negative medical practice, thus indicating that it is pisse-prophecy that is being performed rather than uroscopy. Additionally, the fact that the jordan is a solid color, and thus its contents were not visible, serves to further stress that this individual is an ill-equipped physician. His attempt to use pisse-prophecy to predict the future is as futile as a non-glass jordan is to the proper medical reading of uroscopy.

Importantly, however, the beastly physician on fol. 169r should be read in relation to its proximity to other marginalia on the page, including the trumpeting jester with the torso of a man and the lower portion of an animal and a female figure seated within a pot.\(^2^6\) As discussed earlier, the artist has implemented numerous techniques to draw the viewer’s eye to the furry doctor raising a jordan. By using a single strip of foliage down the center of the two columns of

\(^2^5\) Sara Lipon, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible Moralisée* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 16. The author supports this by highlighting the utilization of hats even within works by Jewish artists. Though this argument does align that the hats themselves might not specifically have been used as a derogatory mark it does not, however, mean that the relationship between the medieval Christian and Jewish community was placid. Nor does it delineate that the usage of other Jew identifying symbols, such as the owl, were possibly used in a pejorative manner and not employed in Jewish art. She also focuses predominately on the oil-can hat which was tall with a distinctly pointed top and the softer slightly pointed hat, both of which were identifying markers worn by Jews throughout numerous medieval communities and utilized by artists.

\(^2^6\) As her lower half is concealed by the pot, it is not clear if she is a monastic hybrid like the nun figure on fol. 106r.
text, the illuminator creates a directional line from the uroscopist to the woman situated within
the marginal space directly beneath the text. The question of whether the woman is the patient
can only be assumed, but a relationship between the two figures is encouraged by the
compositional elements visually linking the characters. Additionally the doctor and woman are
reminiscent of the uroscopist and nun hybrid used earlier on fol. 106r. This pairing between a
satirical doctor and female patient was again aligned to the erred, pisse-prophecy performing
physician, who is not even able to provide a reading from his colored jordan, and the foolish
woman seeking such services.

Further insuring that the focus remained on the faulty medical procedure, the creator’s
third marginal figure on the right-hand margin of fol. 169r emphasized the foolishness of
divinational uroscopy as he gestures to the doctor and patient. The lower portion on the creature
is illustrated with grey hindquarters and a thin sleek tail. The top section depicts a human
dressed in a red-orange long sleeve shirt and green head and shoulder coverings that identify him
as a courtly jester. He comically tugs at his cap and with puffed checks blows a trumpet or horn
instrument. The nature of the clown-like character, who was often the center of idiotic behavior
and generally depicted as “worse for wear” due to his own foolish escapades, holds great
significance when considering the actions of accompanying marginal figures. The jordan-
holding beast physician and female patient are just as irrational as the comical jester and will
likely meet similar unfortunate results.

The illuminator further guided the reader’s focus back to the doctor and client by using
extensions of the clown as directional lines. Placed within the side margin, directly centered
between the other two figures, the jester points his blasting instrument to the physician, while
gesturing his tail toward the nun. The noise-producing tool being blown toward the hybrid-
physician stresses the source of the marginal mayhem. Clear intention was taken to guarantee that the foolishness of the fortune-telling practice of pisse-prophecy was recognized. Even if the viewer desired to let their eye wonder the page, ultimately they would be redirected to the doctor and patient.

The final representation of physicians in the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* is on fol. 171r within the lower right-hand margin (fig. 3).
This image depicts a half-man/half-fish “merman” gazing toward the jordan that is raised in his right hand, while cupping his left hand to the side of his cloaked head near the ear. Like the beast-physician of fol. 169r, the merman is unable to perform any type of urological reading due to his jordan being solid-colored rather than clear. The figure is missing many of the attention-grabbing devices used by the manuscript artists to draw the viewer’s eye in the previous examples such as central text alignment, directional scrolls or marginal setting. Though this is the case, the illustration does play a significant role in the folio’s pictorial strategy. The merman is positioned within the space directly preceding the final word of the page, thus acting as a visual punctuation mark. The animalistic qualities of this physician are optically exaggerated by extending the lower torso of this figure towards the last word of the page, thereby emphasizing the juncture between man to beast. The location of this parody doctor at the very end of the text leaves the reader with the lingering vision of a faulty uroscopist and the ultimate error of the craft pisse-prophecy.

In the image of the merman, the altering of the man’s physique with a fish treads on the otherworldly realm, much like the mystical divination of the medical practice. Moreover, the act of aligning the jordan with the merman would have served as an additional negative connotation to the reader. Arthur Waugh suggests in his article, “The Folklore of the Merfolk,” that while the figure of the mermaid was an increasingly popular focus within bestiaries, the merman retained

27 It is fairly common to see exaggerated gestures from the hand not holding the jordan in satirical and non-parody physician illustrations. The opposing hand often points toward the apparatus being held in the other hand or to the supplementing patient. The reasoning for the merman physician on fol. 171r to have a hand cupped by his ear is not fully clear.

28 MS M. 1004, fol. 171r has a similar floral marginal motif as fol.169r and fol.106r but varies in that it is missing the strawberry embellishments.© 2014 The Middle Ground Journal Number 9, Fall 2014 http://TheMiddleGroundJournal.org See Submission Guidelines page for the journal's not-for-profit educational open-access policy
his own siren-like sinister qualities in medieval literature, such as in the Danish German fable of *Agnes and the Merman* in which the princess is kidnapped by a disguised merman and is made to bare seven sons. With similar characteristics being linked to an uroscopist, the artist’s attempts to link the merman with pisse-prophecy prevails. As the merman within fol. 171r is garbed in human attire, so, too, is the pisse-prophecy physician that hides under the mask of an uroscopist. Equally significant is the idea that it is the merman who preys upon unsuspecting elite women much like the fortune-telling doctor.

The representation of the faulty medical practices in fol. 171r is further illustrated with the inclusion of additional marginalia figures. Accompanying the merman physician, in the right hand margin, is an ape grinding unknown contents with a pestle and mortar, and a hybrid creature possessing reptilian-like lower extremities and a furred torso. The ape, situated as the first figure on the side border, works effortlessly at his task. While it is not clear what material is being broken down within the mortar, the tools would have been seen as linked to medieval apothecaries. The presence of this equipment alongside a figure associated with the medical profession, indicated by the jordan on the same margin, suggests that the ape was supplying pharmaceutical products, rather than anything associated with cooking. Since the artist has depicted both figures with zoomorphic attributes as performing medical activities, the image serves to link the process of diagnosing and providing treatment with the faulted practice of pisse-prophecy. Moreover, the creature situated between the merman physician and the ape

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29 Arthur Waugh, “The Folklore of the Merfolk,” *Folklore* 71 (1960): 73-84. Waugh takes his translations of *Agnes and the Merman* from Isaac Preston Cory, *Ancient Fragments of the Phoenician, Chaldean, Egyptian, Tyrian, Carthaginian, Indian, Persian, and other writers: with an Introduction Disseeration and An Inquiery into the Philosophy and Trinity of Ancients* (London: W. Pickering, 1832). He does not, however, provide a direct page number from which he is gaining his source. Additionally, Waugh states that while the tale is a Danish ballad it was adapted from an undated medieval German source.

30 Although the merman on fol. 171r is cloaked as if to disguise that he is human much like the man-fish hybrid of *Agnes and the Merman*, this does not mean that the illustration is a direct reflection or illustration of the tale. Instead I am interpreting these similar elements of deviousness and costuming as human with visual representation of the medieval merman.

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apothecary offers an expression of extreme distress. This overzealous gesture of dislike further denotes the negative action being carried out by the pisse-prophecy physician. The merman diagnoses an array of future maladies, while the ape is all too willing to provide treatment to the unsuspecting patient. The outrage of these actions is coupled with text that seems to offer an alternative reading, as this accompanying text is designated as being from the “Mass for Virgin Mary.” There are various levels of interpreting references of the Holy Mother and pisse-prophecy. When analyzed in the context of the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*, the target of female patients stands out.

Anne Clark Bartlett elaborates in her book, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature*, that devotional texts for women were certainly intended for spiritual improvement, but were additionally meant to “perpetuate ideologies already in circulation…codes of gender, conduct, and class.”31 Such commentary would not have been missed by the reader of *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*, because it was originally composed in both Latin and French. The inclusion of vernacular text within the late medieval text distinctly points toward female readers, due to their limitations in Latin. This was an element not overlooked by manuscript creators who worked to meet the increasing literary demands of women.32 The ability of the Church to use religious texts to encourage

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31 Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 19. Bartlett stresses that in the later Middle Ages there was a true explosion of book ownership by women through the examination of the female elites’ wills which increasingly included more manuscripts. The author also suggests that during this period of history throughout Europe, there was an increase in the number of programs that allowed for the education of women, including the Statute of Artificers passed by Parliament in 1401, which allowed for free school education of both boys and girls regardless of their parent’s class standing. While this certainly does not mean that there was suddenly an overall literate population, it does, however, point to an increasingly educated society particularly within an elite family that could afford to send their daughters to school.

32 D. H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36. While it might seem peculiar that the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy* would contain Latin which might be a literary opposition to the need to include French text, Green discusses the Church’s concerns regarding entirely vernacular translations of the Bible due to the possibility of lay interpretations without assistance from a clergy. By including text that would allow for additional interaction with the clergy further insinuates the continued role of the Church with the
particular behaviors, extending outside of spiritual devotion, suggests that the illustrations were meant to perform similar actions; the hybrid physicians worked as visual commentary on the practice of pisse-prophecy.

The combination of text relating to the Virgin Mary, icon of the ideal devout mother, with the imagery of hybrid physicians performing pisse-prophecies illustrated the contrast between what should and should not be the mindset of an expectant mother. From the Church’s point of view, the conception and gender of a woman’s child was to be viewed as being destined through divine action. It was not something that should be acted upon by the prophetic physician.

Besides in Books of Hours, another common location for the incorporation of satirical illustrations of uroscopy physicians was within the borders of Arthurian romance novels. These manuscripts also held a profound interest for women of the elite society, but were equally enjoyed by male readers. Such secular texts full of heroic deeds, court romance, and knightly chivalry might seem a peculiar setting for religious commentary on contemporary medical practices. Authors Norris J. Lacy, Geoffrey Ashe and Debra N. Mancoff discuss in their book, *The Arthurian Handbook*, that in the latter half of the twelfth century many ecclesiastic elements were introduced into these narratives, including the rescuing of a lion, a symbol of faithfulness, and the search for the Holy Grail. Even the setting of the Round Table became a Biblical link personal devotion text. Additionally, Green discusses the labeling of a person as being illiterate as one who was unable to read Latin, rather than the modern usage of the term referring to someone who is unable to read as a whole.

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33 Norris J. Lacy, Geoffrey Ashe, and Debra N. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Handbook* (New York: Garland Pub, 1997), 69-70. Stemming from oral traditions, the development of Arthurian literature is attributed to French poet Chrétien de Troyes in the late twelfth century. Stories such as Sir Yvain’s rescue of a lion during a battle against a serpent is reflective of medieval bestiaries and loaded with spiritual meaning. The lion, an icon of righteousness, and the serpent, often an emblem of evil, act out a celestial war between God and Satan. By assisting the lion, Sir Yvain not only made his stand as a defender of good but was also rewarded with the continued companionship of the holy beast. By being a warrior of God, Yvain was to remain not only in God’s zoomorphic presence but also moral favorability.
to the Last Supper with Christ and his disciples. The moral failings of both King Arthur and his followers were also introduced or further stressed with the increasingly religious romance novels.

Such trends continue in the *Arthurian Romance*, Beinecke MS. 229, which was created in Northern France roughly around 1275-1300 and composed entirely of French text (fig. 4).  

![Figure 4. Arthurian Romance, Beinecke, MS 229, fol. 110v, circa 1275-1300, French (Origin and Language). General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. (http://prezi.com/z5xtc1ca3ogx/life-on-the-edge-marginal-illustrations-at-the-beinecke/).](image)

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34 General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, last updated 2010, http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/dl_crosscoll/ex/brbldl/oneITEM.asp?pid=2004282&iid=1020149&srchtype=ITEM. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library provides additional information regarding the provenance of *Arthurian Romance*, Beinecke MS 229, including that the manuscript contains marginal decoration that incorporates “several true coats of arms which may have some bearing on the original ownership, as all are those of important Flemish nobility. These include the arms of Guillaume de Termonde (1248-1312), the second son of Gui de Dampierre, count of Flanders from 1278-1305.”

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While the exact patronage of this work is not specifically ascribed, the inclusion of various contemporary noble Flemish coat of arms and the exquisite illumination within the manuscript point to an elite commissioner. Included in the text are numerous large column miniatures that illustrate key scenes, while marginalia accompany the page borders.

Similar to the images from the Book of Hours, in the Arthuriad Romance, Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v, a parody of the uroscopist appears on the lower column of the text. Here, the physician is depicted as an ape wearing red clothing and a white cap sitting on a raised chair, while lifting a jordan to inspect its contents. With his other hand, the ape touches the head of his patient, a long-legged white and black bird that resembles a crane or stork. The representation of the ape and bird together as physician and patient respectively was a common portrayal within uroscopy parodies. As the focus of Apes and Ape Lore: In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, author H. W. Janson elaborates on how this pairing was repeated within many medieval manuscripts and acted as “a kind of visual epigram summarizing the peculiar relationship of the ape with both ‘good’ and ‘evil’ birds.” Janson explains that fowls associated with water, often possessing long necks and legs, such as the zoomorphic bird patient of Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v, were generally regarded as being oblivious to both spiritual values and thus associated with sinfulness.

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35 While the ape-physician of Beinecke MS 229, fol. 110v is wearing what appears to be a hat, it is difficult to denote whether the illuminator intended to reference a Jewish physician as seen worn by the beast-physician in the Hours of Charlotte of Savoy, MS M. 1004, fol. 169r. The latter physician’s soft hat has a more predominate point in comparison to the hat worn by the ape-physician in the Arthuriad romance. 
37 Janson, Apes and Ape Lore, 184. The author further elaborates that while the water fowl was generally regarded as a sinful creature, it was often unaware of the sin while other birds, particularly the owl, like the one personified within the margins of The Book of Hours of Charlotte of Savoy, MS M. 1004, fol. 169r were in a “conscious denial of the spiritual values.” Additionally Janson suggests that while some water fowl are linked to holy ideals and traits such as the pelican, it still could possess a negative quality, especially when paired with the ape.
This interpretation aids our understanding of the patient characteristics gaining the divinational interpretations of a physician who performs pisse-prophecy. While seeking the services of an uroscopist, a patient might be unwittingly lured into the prospects of the medical forecaster. With the lines dividing the condemned practice of pisse-prophecy and the more accepted diagnostic act of uroscopy are somewhat blurred. The client may not be aware of the crossing from one to the other, leaving them much like the water fowl, unconscious of spiritual merit. Patients purposefully searching for answers to the unknown, like the sex or due date of a child, were seen as delving into the realm of sin.

Equally pointing to the doctor’s sinfulness, the artist illustrates the physician as an ape. Scholar Patricia Gathercole discusses how the monkey and ape were used in the Middle Ages to personify the devious qualities of man.\(^{38}\) The act of depicting an uroscopist with these negative characteristics points to a blatant representation of pisse-prophecy and the physicians who were willing to stoop to the foretelling arts for financial gain. Additionally, by pairing the unsuspecting water fowl and doctoring ape in Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v, the illuminator attempted to parody the foolish transaction between the patient and physician. In so doing, the illustrators provide a warning against pursuing such a relationship.

David Sprunger expands upon the selection of animals portrayed as commentary on the physician-patient relationship in his essay, “Parodic Animal Physicians from the Margins of Medieval Manuscripts.”\(^{39}\) He suggests that “the physician as the natural enemy of the patient” is the underlining element illustrated through the artist’s decision to use opposing predator and prey


animals in the zoomorphic figures. While this argument is sound when examining uroscopy parodies that depict the doctor as a carnivore and the patient as an herbivore, it is more telling in those cases of zoomorphic satire of uroscopy where these roles are reversed. For example, in the Book of Hours, MS. M 358, fol. 20v, it includes marginalia of a rabbit physician and crippled hound patients.\footnote{The Book of Hours, MS M.358, fol. 20v, Barthélemy d’Eyck and Enguerrand Quarton, c. 1440-1450, France. This Book of Hours is a French manuscript currently located at the Pierpont Morgan Library, The Online Catalog of The Pierpont Morgan Library, accessed on August 30, 2011, http://blog.themorgan.org/dr-rabbit-will-see-you-now.aspx. Upon examining the leaves of this book, it quickly becomes apparent that it is incomplete and was produced through several campaigns, or phases of work in the creation of the manuscript. Fol. 20v, however, appears to have been completed and includes a central image of Mary with infant Jesus, equally linking the element of mother and child with the practice of pisse-prophecy.}

Sprunger, however, fails to take into account corollary imagery or text adjacent to the uroscopy parodies. In the case of Arthurian Romance, Beinecke MS. 229, the creator has strategically placed the ape-physician and bird-patient on a page that relates to the foolishness of man, but also addresses man’s impending death. The left-hand column miniature is divided into two portions. The upper section depicts the knight Lancelot departing on a journey and the lower section illustrates him greeting prisoners upon his arrival.\footnote{General Collection of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, last updated 2010, http://brbl-net.library.yale.edu/pre1600ms/docs/pre1600.ms229.htm. The online catalog provides not only images but also information regarding miniature descriptions and text thus helping identify which portion of the Lancelot tale that is being discussed on fol. 110v.} The right-hand miniature is also divided into upper and lower sections, but is more visually complex in comparison to the left miniature due to the incorporation of continuous narratives within both divisions. In the top portion, Lancelot can be seen meeting with a dwarf who warns the knight against the dangers in the forest. This is followed by a scene of Lancelot battling a pair of male lions that guard the entrance to a tomb. The bottom panel depicts Lancelot lifting a head out of the boiling water. This is followed by an image of the knight presenting the severed head to a hermit who touches the head’s mouth with one hand while gesturing to the next scene. The last narrative element in
the miniature is the most profound in the tale since it is the moment when the knight removes the lid from a tomb. The Lancelot tale is paramount, even though the illustration depicts merely a coffin filled with a white form, supposedly of a headless body.

Author Elizabeth Moore Hunt discusses in her book, *Illuminating the Borders of Northern French and Flemish Manuscripts, 1270-1310*, how the two miniature illustrations on fol.110v were designed to narrate visually the accompanying text of Lancelot’s tomb adventure. Here, the knight uncovers his own name inscribed on his grandfather’s resting place. That the episode of the popular Arthurian knight searching for his family’s identity is filled with death imagery and is bordered with pisse-prophecy imagery is not coincidental. Much like the medical parody placed within the “Office of the Dead” in the *Hours of Charlotte of Savoy*, elements of foolishness and death have been tied with the divinational uroscopy practices seen at the bottom margin of Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v.

The character of Lancelot is certainly a paramount issue within medieval Arthurian literature. The knight is irrevocable linked with moral failings due to his adulterous love affair with Guinevere, Arthur’s wife. This sinful action ultimately leads to the couple’s undoing. Although Guinevere and Lancelot flee the kingdom after her scheduled execution, she spends her remaining days in a nunnery, while he eventually meets a tragic lonely death. The religious implication that the sinful shall be divinely punished does not escape this tragic romance. This also serves as an equal reminder to those who might seek the services of a pisse-prophecy performing uroscopist.

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42 Elizabeth Moore Hunt, *Illuminating the Borders of Northern French and Flemish Manuscripts, 1270-1310* (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 89. The author equally stresses the significance of medieval romance literature in conveying societal morals and values parodied with manuscript marginalia. In reference to Lancelot, Hunt explains the element of identity is of great importance in both the literature and illustrations of Beinecke MS 229. Earlier illuminated miniatures in this manuscript emphasize this, especially a scene in which the Lady of the Lake presents the knight with a blank shield lacking the inscription of his family name.


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References to foolishness and death continue in the second illustrated miniature where the visual narrative is set up with Lancelot conversing with a dwarf on a donkey. Dwarves were routinely used in both medieval literature and art to reference the lesser qualities of man. When associated with death, the miniature figure of fol. 110v takes on an additional meaning, considering his relationship with the marginalia.\(^{44}\) The dwarf, epitome of the comical fool, acts as a warning to the knight of the perils ahead. This mirrors the humorous parody of uroscopy, and warns readers of the dangers in proceeding with such a reckless procedure. Lancelot disregards the dwarf’s warning and proceeds on his journey that ends with the knight uncovering his grandfather’s tomb inscribed with Lancelot’s name. The connection between the knight’s deceased relative and his own name marked on a grave draws attention to his own inevitable death.

While the examination of the usage of marginal medical parodies with death related elements in late medieval romances does allude to the creator’s commentary on the faulty ability of pisse-prophecy to prevent a patient’s illnesses, it is not the only aspect used to disclaim the prophetic qualities of the medical craft. Numerous romance border illustrations satirize the medical practice of predicting the sex and due date of unborn children by incorporating references to pregnancy. Such marginalia like the one seen on the \textit{Romance of Alexander}, MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 168r, where a sow with hanging teats seeks services from a jordan-examining ape-physician, further emphasizes the role of these illustrations in discrediting pisse-prophecy, rather than the medical practice of uroscopy as a whole.\(^{45}\) Books of Hours and Romances provided ideal venues for informing the elite audience that while they might be able to afford


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such extravagant medical services, such services were deemed morally unacceptable by the Church.

Not only was the Church’s disapproval of the inappropriate usage of uroscopy voiced through the religious edicts but was voiced through the creations of scribes and illuminators. Medieval book creation from the 8th century to the 13th century was “strongly, if not nearly exclusively, associated with monastic environments.”⁴⁶ There is no question that the Church and its biblical teachings and commentary on contemporary issues, were of interest to the scriptorium monks that committed their lives to the religious devotion. Even with the late medieval decline of monastic scriptoriums, authors Walter Horn and Ernest Born explain that extensively illuminated manuscripts, that required a more skilled hand, were generally reserved for the financial secured monk scribes.⁴⁷ Scribes outside of this religious environment had to be more concerned with strain of maintaining economic stability and generally did not have the higher level of skill in order to copy and illustrate more elaborate texts.

Even in the creation of non-religious texts, such as the Arthurian novels, religious concerns can seep through. In Scribe Authorship and Writing of History in Medieval England, Matthew Fisher emphasizes that even in the process of copying manuscripts, a scribe is still situated “within specific historical moments, and as such is shaped by and shapes the particularities of those circumstances.”⁴⁸ Such an example of this is reflective in the Arthurian Romance, Beinecke MS. 229, which although copied from an earlier Arthurian novel, contains


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unique marginalia reflective of the contemporary debate on pisse-prophecy. Even without solid link to a monastic scriptorium, the highly illuminated Beinecke MS. 229 would have been certainly created by individuals well trained and likely equally educated on the religious stance of modern medical practices. This same ecclesiastic community would have been able to further exaggerate its position on corrupt practitioners with the incorporation of the same zoomorphic uroscopy imagery in religious spaces.

The presence of satirical uroscopy depictions within a church setting is commonly found carved on misericord seats. These have been largely discussed by scholar Paul Hardwick in his article, “Through a Glass, Darkly: Interpreting Animal Physicians.” His analysis links the medical representations in ecclesiastical spaces with illustrations of popular medieval literature such as Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales or The Simonie. While his interpretations address viewership, they fail to recognize the actual users of the misericords: the infirm and or elderly monastic community, and, most interestingly, the clientele of physicians. Looking instead to the medieval public as a general whole, Hardwick sees the familiarity with the text and the visibility of medically themed misericord seats as clues to the underlying meaning of these parody animal-doctors as being observed with laughter. This levity would have encouraged a focus on spiritual health and recognition of Christ as the ultimate caregiver. While this explanation of the Church’s theological investment in the well-being of the clergy and congregation member’s soul is understandably founded, it does not, however, take into account

49 For further information on the manuscripts that influenced Arthurian Romance novels, including Beinecke MS. 229, please see: Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman, Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250-1500 (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 111-114.
51 See Ape Physician, misericord seat, St. Mary Church, Beverley, England, 14th c., accessed on October 5, 2011, http://www.flickr.com/photos/22274117@N08/216345732/.
52 Hardwick, “Through a Glass, Darkly,” 63-70. © 2014 The Middle Ground Journal Number 9, Fall 2014 http://TheMiddleGroundJournal.org See Submission Guidelines page for the journal's not-for-profit educational open-access policy
the role of the Church and the medieval medical community. I would argue that, like the manuscript images already discussed, these sculpted images did not represent a complete denouncement of the healing craft and its practitioners, but rather that ecclesiasts aimed in their production to sanction the regulation of doctors with the enforcement of canon law, such as the one limiting clerical physicians from profiting from medicine.53

Equally ignored by scholars is the presence of non-parody imagery of physicians performing uroscopy in religious spaces such as the Cathedral of Florence’s marble relief carving *Uroscopist and his Clients, Allegorical Depiction of Seven Liberal Arts* from 1334-1336.54 Such imagery, by contrast, distinguishes further the satirical medical depictions set near elements of death or pregnancy as an ecclesiastic disproval of pisse-prophecy.

More telling, because of their placement within the public sphere, are the hybrid physicians with jordans found incorporated within the marginal panels of stained glass windows. Even more than the imagery on the choir misericords, the settings of these parodies suggests that the general public was being targeted. The visual accessibility of most stained glass windows guaranteed the message would be conveyed to a lay audience. This is particularly the case with the jordan-wielding ape physicians decorating the north aisle, “Pilgrimage Window” at the York Minster Church in York, England (fig. 5).

Figure 5. *Monkey’s Funeral, (Detail)*, *Pilgrimage Window*, York Minster, interior, north aisle, nXXV, England, c.1215-1465 CE. (Image in the Public Domain)

Created between 1215 and 1465, the *Pilgrimage Window* at York was a profound contribution to late medieval stained glass art and is instrumental in the examination of the relationship between patients and their physicians, as well as the Church’s involvement in mediating that exchange in the public sector. The placement of the *Pilgrimage Window*, set along a path that was open to visitors, allows for viewer mobility and for a close examination of the panes. The depictions of hybrid physicians appears in panel nXXV, which is along the lowest border of the left-hand column in the *Pilgrimage Window* and thus more visible than imagery at the top of the window. Panel nXXV dates to 1325 CE, which coincides with the height of pisse-prophecy popularity and the other artistic parodies of creatures carrying jordans found in late medieval manuscripts and architecture.\(^55\)

\(^{55}\) Common with a majority of stained glass windows constructed in the Middle Ages, portions have been either damaged and replaced or altered by later generations. While such modifications do occur within portions of the Pilgrimage Window, panel nXXV is the original work created by late medieval artists. For additional information © 2014 The Middle Ground Journal Number 9, Fall 2014 http://TheMiddleGroundJournal.org See Submission Guidelines page for the journal's not-for-profit educational open-access policy
The stained glass master would have designed such windows under the close supervision of the patron. While these sponsors could be visually represented through portraiture and/or coats of arms, the Church remained the final authority when it came to composition and content. In this sense, there is no way of actually separating the religious theology behind the stained glass imagery and the understanding of the medieval viewers at York Minster. Sarah Crewe discusses the Church’s ability to deliver messages through the imagery used in medieval churches in her book, *Stained Glass in England c. 1180-1540*. Analyzing parody images of female figures, often nude and disfigured, and in compromising positions, Crewe specifically links the role of stained glass windows to deliver the Church’s message against the vainness of women.

With Crewe’s analysis in mind, we can see that York Minster similarly utilized stained glass windows to deliver messages specifically relating to the theological concept of the prevention and healing of ailments. During the late Middle Ages, pilgrims visiting this church were known to have purchased ampullae containing sacred healing and protective oil derived from a clear fluid that leaked from the tomb of St. William Fitzenbert, a local saint. While there is no doubt there were monetary factors that would have contributed to the Church’s encouragement of pilgrims to buy the oil, one has to acknowledge the underlying message stressing the divine path was the true path to interceding upon one’s health. The sanctioning of

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57 Ibid., 52-54.
the practice of taking oil from the church to be used to treat later physical maladies demonstrates the Church’s opposition to the role of the pisse-prophecy performing physician and their believed ability to foretell future illnesses. Equipped with the protective oil of St. William, which could be used to create healing lotions or medicines, pilgrims would have had no need for the ailment-divination properties of pisse-prophecy. In being visually accessible to visiting audiences, York Minster’s pisse-prophecy parody imagery thus served to remind audiences of the futility of pisse-prophecy as a path to prevent illness or foresee the status of children.

The most easily observed representation of this foretelling craft is in the scene depicted in panel nXXV, which consists of three apes in the act of administering and receiving care. As seen with other medieval satirical representations of uroscopy, like the marginal physician in Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v, apes have been used to personify the deceitful traits of the pisse-prophecy performing doctor. In this work, an ape can be seen raising a jordan with his left hand and gesturing to the glass apparatus with his right. In addition to the flask-wielding physician, another ape places his hands upon the head and torso of a reclining ape patient. This hand-to-head or hand-to-arm gesture is reminiscent of a caregiver checking the ill for fever or pulse strength. Similar gestures can be viewed in combination with the jordan-holding zoomorphic physician in Beinecke MS. 229, fol. 110v. Unlike the Arthurian Romance, however, this patient is the same creature as the physician, thus establishing them as equally devious in their acknowledged pursuit of treatment. The decision to depict both the doctor and client as having similarly viewed faults becomes clear when the link to the specific audience that observed the work is acknowledged. For pilgrims who might have actively sought spiritual and possibly physical healing, panel nXXV served as a reminder of the faulty answers the divination of pisse-
prophecy would bring. Moreover, it suggested that in seeking these services, the visitors of the church would be of equal fault as the physician willing to provide such services.

This scene is infused with further meaning when examined in relation to surrounding images. Within the York Minster Pilgrimage Window, and situated directly left of the image with the ape-physicians, is an image composed of more apes, a cock, and a fox. This image functions as a continuation of the satirical animal narrative. According to Peter Gibson, author of The Stained and Painted Glass of York Minster, these figures represent a “re-enactment of the funeral procession of Our Lady,” with the rooster leading the way, the fox reading from a lectern, and the monkey attending.\(^59\) Due to its location on the marginal panel, it can be argued that this was to be read visually from left to right placing the funerary scene of the Virgin Mary before the image of the ape physicians and patient. Like in the Book of Hours, the proximity of these two narratives within the same border seems more than coincidental. With the pisse-prophecy uroscopist targeting pregnant women and patients seeking to prevent further health maladies, the nearness of the Holy Mother to these images of deviant animals suggests, yet again, a theological opposition to the mystical divination. The inclusion of the Virgin Mary acts much like the Mass of the Virgin in the Hours of Charlotte of Savoy, that is, as a reminder to pregnant women to model the standard of motherhood according to the church. This image stands in contrast to Mary’s story, where her own confirmation of conception was delivered by

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\(^{59}\) Gibson, The Stained and Painted Glass, 17. As mentioned earlier, Gibson provides a very detailed account of the stained glass within York Minster, paying special attention to panel location and pointing out sections of glass that have been altered, renovated and or replaced over the years. He also highlights patronage, various documentations of clergy involvement and review of the art historical formalist observations and interpretations of various pieces of stained glass from York Minster.

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God through the Angel Gabriel. Irreverently, the devious practice of fortunetelling here is performed by pisse-prophecy and faulty medical practitioners.⁶⁰

Influencing those patients that might be searching for ways to avoid their fate through the perceived preventive qualities of pisse-prophecy, the Holy Mother also acts as a reminder of her own glorious end; according to the Church, she ascended to heaven, thus relating her role as the mother of Jesus with her devout piety. Presenting this holy figure, coming from humble earthly origins as a figure of admiration and persuasion against heretical activities would have been an especially powerful signal to someone facing a near end and judgment.

By taking an active role in art production, whether through monastic scriptoriums or regulating church architects and artisans, the Church was able to mediate an ecclesiastical commentary on the misuse of uroscopy through satirical depictions of the medieval physician. The specified placement of zoomorphic uroscopists, both in media and in relation to other imagery and text, had a profound effect on the viewer’s interpretation of this clerically influenced imagery. Understanding the significance of setting and the targeted observer, the Church was able to illustrate, through the arts, its stance on pisse-prophecy.

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⁶⁰ While the appearance of an angel to announce an immaculate conception might seem to some as an event of supernatural quality and skirting the mystical there has been vast scholarship on the distinction of the medieval community and what was deemed as divine miracles and events that cross into the realm of witchcraft and heresy. © 2014 The Middle Ground Journal Number 9, Fall 2014 http://TheMiddleGroundJournal.org
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