

***Le Cycle de Renart: from the Enfances to the Jugement in a cyclical Roman de Renart manuscript***

Manuscripts of the body of material known as the *Roman de Renart* have been traditionally divided into three families: alpha, beta and gamma. Early *Renart* scholarship valued the alpha family above all, and indeed the ‘classic’ *Renart* text is Ernst Martin’s alpha family edition, which was later popularized by Jean Dufournet and Andrée Méline in their *Garnier-Flammarion* edition and translation.<sup>1</sup> Despite Mario Roques’s noteworthy edition of a beta family manuscript, *Renart* scholarship has remained almost completely dominated by studies based on Martin’s text. This means that *Renart* criticism is, by and large, aware of only one part of the *Renart*’s textual tradition, favouring the alpha version which (like beta) lacks chronology over the ‘cyclical’ gamma family, which has a biographical framework. However, the recent publication in the *Lettres Gothiques* series of Gabriel Bianciotto’s edition and translation of the *Roman de Renart* could be the start of a sea change in *Renart* scholarship. It should widen access to the text established in the 1980s by the Japanese scholars Fukumoto, Harano and Suzuki, which was the first faithful edition of a gamma family *Renart* manuscript.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for the long-standing neglect of the gamma family on the part of both editors and critics is, oddly, the very division of *Renart* manuscripts into three families. Based on Herman Büttner’s classic *stemma*, this system of classification meant the relative valorization of the alpha and beta families, which were thought to derive more or less directly from the posited lost original, whereas gamma manuscripts were thought inferior because they were based on a combination of the other two families and thus were deemed further from the original.<sup>3</sup> Continued support for this division remained strong until recently, largely because each family

has a common order of *Renart* stories, or branches. Thus alpha, the biggest group, made up by manuscripts A, D, E, F, G and N, represents the most popular way of ordering the branches.<sup>4</sup> The beta family is a smaller group, made up of manuscripts B, L and K. Finally, C and M make up the gamma group. However, more careful manuscript study has revealed that a manuscript can belong to one family for its order and another for its text. Thus the existence of H, I and O confuses this picture as they are sometimes included in the alpha family, but sometimes considered ‘independent’ or ‘composite’ manuscripts. H, for example, has the structure of the alpha family and the common errors of the beta family. The separation of the alpha and beta families can therefore no longer be considered clean cut, throwing the classification of the material into three families into confusion.<sup>5</sup> The heterogeneity of the material means that the gamma family can no longer be safely dismissed as deviant. Moreover, the respective dating of the manuscripts does not support the argument that alpha is the most authentic state of the material. All the surviving manuscripts are from the late thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries, and thus post-date the writing of the last branch around 1250, making them all reworkings. Of these, only A can be said with any certainty to be earlier than C, and C itself is roughly contemporary with B and K. M, on the other hand, dates from approximately the same period as G, L and N.<sup>6</sup> Thus the assumption that the alpha family is closer to the work’s initial design rests on shaky ground. And the gamma family, though its cyclical framework marks it as different from the other manuscripts, therefore has equal literary merit with any other version.

I wish, then, to start from the assumption that the gamma family can be considered a different, but equally valid, version of the *Renart*. Indeed there has, since Fukumoto, Harano and Suzuki’s edition of C first appeared, been some interest in the gamma family as a separate part of the tradition. Both James R. Simpson and Jean R.

Scheidegger quote from the gamma family in their studies of the *Renart*, although they do not engage in any depth with the question of how the material is affected by its different arrangement in the gamma family manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> Roger Bellon's work focuses closely on gamma family organisation, but without saying what effect it has on our reading of the material.<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Varty, on the other hand, credits the gamma family's novelty, noting in particular the introduction of the *Enfances* text and the use of interlace, whereas Keith Busby highlights the respect for unity, citing a 'clear tendency to group episodes concerning particular victims'.<sup>9</sup> Each of these critics is concerned with the order of the material as the main distinctive feature of the gamma family, and indeed, it is instructive at this point to examine the organization of the different traditions. The table below shows a typical order for each family:<sup>10</sup>

Alpha (D)	Beta (B)	Gamma (C)	Unité in C
Jugement (I)	Jugement (I)	Prologue (IIa)	1
Siège (Ia)	Siège (Ia)	Enfances (XXIV)	
Teinturier/jongleur (Ib)	Teinturier/jongleur (Ib)	Viol d'Hersant (IIc)	
Prologue (IIa)	Puits (IV)	Escondit (Va) (start)	
Chantecler (IIb)	Prologue (IIa)	Les poissons (IIIa)	2
Mésange (IIc)	Enfances (XXIV)	Moniage Isengrin (IIIb)	3
Tibert (IId)	Chantecler (IIb)	Pêche à la queue (IIId)	4
L'andouille (XVa)	Mésange (IIc)	Chantecler (IIb)	5
Les deux prêtres (XVb)	Tibert (IId)	Tibert (IId)	
Tiécelin (IIe)	L'andouille (XVa)	L'andouille (XVa)	
Viol d'Hersant (IIc)	Les deux prêtres (XVb)	Cellier du vilain (XIVa)	6
Les poissons (IIIa)	Isengrin/beliers (XX)	Primaud (XIVb)	7, 8
Moniage Isengrin (IIIb)	La monstrance (XXI)	Escondit (Va) (end)	9
Pêche à la queue (IIId)	Tiécelin (IIe)	Jugement (I)	10
Duel judiciaire (VI)	Viol d'Hersant (IIc)	Siège (Ia)	
Puits (IV)	Escondit (Va)	Teinturier/jongleur (Ib)	11, 12, 13
Le grillon (V)	Duel judiciaire (VI)	Bertaut (XVIa)	14
Escondit (Va)	Pèlerinage (VIII)	Partage des proies (XVIb)	
Vêpres de Tibert (XII)	Liétart (IX)	Les deux prêtres (XVb)	15
Confession Renart (VII)	Vêpres de Tibert (XII)	Isengrin/beliers (XX)	16
Pèlerinage (VIII)	Les poissons (IIIa)	La monstrance (XXI)	17
Liétart (IX)	Moniage Isengrin (IIIb)	Tiécelin (IIe)	18
Cellier du vilain (XIVa)	Pêche à la queue (IIId)	Isengrin/Martin (XVIII)	19
Primaud (XIVb)	Labourage/Connin (XXII)	Isengrin/jument (XIX)	20
Renart le noir (XIII)	Confession Renart (VII)	Mésange (IIc)	21
Renart médecin (X)	Isengrin/Martin (XVIII)	Le grillon (V)	22
Renart empereur (XI)	Isengrin/jument (XIX)	Puits (IV)	23
Bertaut (XVIa)	Le grillon (V)	Confession Renart (VII)	24
Partage des proies (XVIb)	Bertaut (XVIa)	Pèlerinage (VIII)	25
Mort Renart (XVII)	Partage des proies (XVIb)	Duel judiciaire (VI)	26
	Renart médecin (X)	Labourage/Connin (XXII)	27
	Renart empereur (XI)	Liétart (IX)	28
		Renart médecin (X)	29
		Renart empereur (XI)	30
		Mort Renart (XVII)	31

Bellon and Varty correctly state that the alpha and beta manuscripts give a chain of branches, whereas the gamma manuscripts integrate the material into a cycle, with a movement from birth through to death.<sup>11</sup> Thus the idea of the gamma family providing a *Cycle de Renart* is not new. However, in my opinion, no critic has fully

engaged with the gamma family as a reglossing of the entire *corpus*, that is to say, with the effect of the rearrangement on our understanding of the content as well as the form of the narrative.

This is a major oversight. As the table shows, the alpha and beta family manuscripts do differ to a certain extent in their ordering of the branches, but both are similar in that they open with the famous trial material. In these manuscripts, then, we first hear of the crime (Renart's rape of his rival's wife, Hersant) in the context of the trial: the branch where the crime takes place (*Viol d'Hersant*, IIf) actually comes after the trial (*Jugement*, I). Narration of the event itself is deferred, and the past is thus put into the future. The trial is thus a framework for interpreting the other branches, including the crime. The gamma family, on the other hand, is significantly different. It places the account of Renart's childhood, the *Enfances*, at the start (after the short *Prologue*). As the *Enfances* was written after the trial material, there is instead here an attempt to account for Renart's creation by bringing the future into the past, that is to say, the past is being rewritten *après-coup* (with knowledge of the future) in order to impose unity retrospectively. As the trial comes later, the reader uses other branches to understand this material rather than the other way around. Thus, in the gamma family, we are presented with a completely different way of interpreting the branches concerned with justice. I wish to suggest, through analysis of the account of Renart's creation and of the trial material as it is found in manuscript C, that the gamma family reglosses the entire *corpus*. I shall therefore start by analysing the account of the fox's *Enfances*, before proceeding to read the trial material in the light of that which precedes it. The *Enfances*, by giving an account of Renart's creation as a radically evil being, will provide us with new terms to think about his entire story.<sup>12</sup>

*Les Enfances Renart*

It is conventionally thought that the first branch of the *Renart* to be written was branch II.<sup>13</sup> This branch gives a prologue which situates the text within the context of contemporary literature by referring to Tristan, Yvain, the *fabliaux* and the *chansons de geste*. In a tactical manoeuvre designed to usurp the place of the alpha and beta accounts, C redeploys this prologue, quoting it for its first twenty-two lines. It thus becomes an introduction to the *Enfances* rather than the other petty crimes of branch II. This kind of recasting of material into a cyclical form that includes a character's *Enfances* is a typically thirteenth-century phenomenon, found, for example, in the *Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange*, the Prose *Lancelot* and the Prose *Tristan*. The *Cycle de Renart* should be read as part of this tradition: like other cyclical introductions, the *Enfances* help to fulfil the goal of completeness by narrating the hero's early days, but also to provide a framework for reading the entire narrative. This account of the character's life thus sets out to render other versions of the story redundant.

Indeed, the prologue in C ends with the lines 'Or orrez le commencement / Par qoi et par quel mesetance / Fu entre eus .ii. la desfiance.' (1, 20-22).<sup>14</sup> The next section, the *Enfances* proper, starts with the lines 'Or oez, si ne vos anuit. / Je vos conteré par deduit / Comment il vindrent en avant' (1, 23-5).<sup>15</sup> The *Enfances* is therefore an introduction that interrupts another introduction to press its own case. The text has its own view of Renart. Rather than a fox who tricks to eat, Renart is shown to be an evil creation from the very beginning, emerging from the improper combination of animal and human worlds. We are told that God has thrown Adam and Eve out of heaven because of their sin, but that out of pity for them he has given them a stick with the power to create animals. Adam creates useful animals but all Eve's creations are wild:

Entre les autres en issi  
 Le gorpil, si asauvagi.  
 Rous ot le poil conme Renart,  
 Mout par fu cointes et gaingnart:  
 Par son sens totes decevoit  
 Les bestes qantqu'il en trovoit.  
 Icil gorpil nos senefie  
 Renart qui tant sot de mestrie.  
 Touz ceus qui sont d'engin et d'art  
 Sont mes tuit apelé Renart.  
 Por Renart et por le gorpil  
 Mout par sorent et cil et cil.  
 Se Renart set genz conchier,  
 Li gorpil bestes engingnier.  
 Mout par furent bien d'un lignage  
 Et d'unes meurs et d'un corage.

(1, 99-114)<sup>16</sup>

Thus it is Eve, the first sinner, who creates all the wicked creatures, and therefore Renart is only indirectly one of God's creatures. Dominique Boutet sees this as the culmination of God's absence from the other branches.<sup>17</sup> And Scheidegger correctly highlights the fact that creation is taken away from the holy here and placed instead in the context of a lack: Eve's creatures are created out of a specular, perverse need to make more beautiful animals.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Emmanuèle Baumgartner argues that Eve's creative gesture is a surplus, which then sustains itself as an excess.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Simpson argues in similar terms, calling Renart an 'unfixed element' that troubles the boundaries between male and female, and wild and tame. He thus introduces the issue of gender, terming the *Enfances* an attempt to link *renardie* to the feminine: woman is to blame for Renart's creation.<sup>20</sup>

It is true that this creation story is the antithesis of the holy, good creation story, whether we see this as due to the lack (of God) or the excess (of woman's 'unnecessary' creation). But it is, most importantly, the account of the creation of the main character and of his mischief. Renart's mischief is thus made into his supreme value and even into his reason for being. It pertains to his eternal character as a fox, and is part of his 'meurs' and 'corage'. When he tricks, he only does what he was

created to do; indeed, he must, as ‘Ne ja le fel liez ne sera / Le jor qu’autrui n’engingnera’ (1, 137-8).<sup>21</sup>

The text is therefore offering us an account of the meaning of foxes, who are described with an accumulation of vocabulary linked to intelligence and trickery. The juxtaposition of these two elements has the effect of linking intellectual capabilities to evil. Indeed, ‘cointes’, a word with largely positive connotations, such as prudence and elegance, is glossed as negative by its position in a pair with ‘gaignart’, which denotes violence and cruelty. The same goes for ‘sens’ which is harnessed here to its use in deception: ‘decevoit’. Likewise, ‘engin’, ‘art’ and ‘mestrie’ can all be positive, but these qualities too are linked to an evil purpose: ‘genz conchier’ and ‘bestes engingnier’.

Moreover, Renart’s intelligence also gives him autonomy. The route to freedom is thus shown to lead through evil. His power as a character is shown to come through his mischief, which leads him to break social norms of behaviour. Indeed, he challenges the secure ethical boundaries that rest on a division between animal and human by being both intelligent and wild: he has ‘engin’ as well as being ‘asauvagi’. To sum up, there are many reasons for his appearance as an excess, or ‘unfixed element’, but the important fact that the *Enfances* communicates is that Renart’s mischief makes him into a powerful figure of inassimilable alterity: he is other to all the known categories that society uses to define beings. It is also interesting to note that this, the first fox, has red fur ‘conme Renart’, and also ‘nos senefie’ Renart, as if Renart pre-exists the first fox created, as a model to be copied. Thus for Scheidegger, we cannot tell whether Renart means ‘le goupil’, or vice versa.<sup>22</sup> But Renart has also given his name to the whole species, and so is in a special relationship with the first ‘goupil’. Eve does not make ‘un goupil’, but rather ‘le goupil’, and yet Renart seems

to precede even this first fox.<sup>23</sup> He thus appears as a kind of eternal fox-figure, an exemplary version of a fox.

The *Enfances* end with a fairly unremarkable tale of Renart sneaking into his rival the wolf Isengrin's home to steal three hams from him, a crime for which Renart goes unpunished. Unlike the non-cyclical versions where we open with the trial for the rape of Isengrin's wife, here, hostility is thus first posited in relation to food and not sex. The text then suggests that what follows will be more of the same:

Ce fu des enfances Renart.  
 Tant aprist puis d'engin et d'art  
 Que il en fist maint anui  
 Et a son oncle et a autrui. (1, 293-6)<sup>24</sup>

The *Enfances*, a copy, thus masquerade as an original to give us an account of Renart's creation and of his first crime against his uncle. Moreover, the relationship between Renart and Isengrin is made into a necessity here. Rather than originating in the *viol* incident, as it does in alpha and beta manuscripts, in C their hostility structures the text as a given from the outset. Here, their enmity is not contingent upon one event but is rather pre-ordained: the *sine qua non* of the *Renart*. And C already suggests that worse is to come, not just for Isengrin but for 'autrui' too.

### *The Trial Material*

As I outlined above, the positioning of the trial material is one of the major differences between the different *Renart* manuscripts. The *Jugement* opens the alpha and beta manuscripts and, for Simpson, it is a much better way of linking the crisis in the *Renart* with the feminine than the *Enfances*. He suggests that the entire text 'is predicated on judicial control of the feminine', because the control of sexuality represented by the attempt to prosecute Renart for his illegal sexual act with Hersant is 'a rehearsal for a variety of other forms of ordering and hierarchy'.<sup>25</sup> For

Baumgartner, on the other hand, placing the *Jugement* at the start of manuscripts marks Renart material as always already incomplete, because the impossibility of determining the truth about Renart's actions in the trial means that we read the other branches as deceptive too.<sup>26</sup>

However, something different happens in the C manuscript. The first *unité* ends with the first part of the *Escondit*: Isengrin's vow to bring Renart to justice to make him pay for his crime. Thus in C the problem is presented not as judicial control of the feminine nor even as incompleteness, but as the very possibility of bringing Renart to justice. Furthermore, because of its positioning directly after the *Enfances*, the *Viol* is presented as the inevitable crime that finally provokes the predicted open war between Isengrin and Renart. It is followed by the *Escondit* which is now split, with its start in *unité* one and its ending in *unité* nine (see table above). Thus the *Viol* is followed by a series of crimes leading up to the second part of the *Escondit* and the *Jugement* (*unité* ten). And when these other crimes have been told, the audience must be completely convinced that Renart is guilty, and yet the hiatus concerning Renart's prosecution is continued as the possibility of trying him is discussed in his absence. It thus already appears that prosecuting Renart is going to be impossible. In the alpha and beta manuscripts, this is due to uncertainty about the past. The crime has not yet been recounted, and so even the audience is unsure about whether it really happened. Here, on the other hand, the crime has already been told, so we see the problem differently: as about bringing justice to bear on the obviously guilty Renart rather than about discovering the truth about previous events. The past is now clear, but we can be no more confident than the readers of the alpha and beta manuscripts about what this will mean for the future, or even for the present.

Moreover, in C, the *Jugement* is not even the first trial to be presented. Rather, it is a re-trial for the *Escondit*. The need for a retrial implies that justice was not done in the first place, but what happens if justice is not done the second time either? Placing the trial material in this order means that there is a linear storyline, with amplification between the first failure of justice and the second, more disastrous, failure. The justice system is thus shown to be completely incapable of regulating a field of socially accepted rights and wrongs. Repetition therefore has a different role in this version of the narrative. Rather than presenting a problem and then returning to investigate its origins, a problem is shown and then blown up out of all proportion. As we shall see in this section, the result of this is that the *Escondit* and *Jugement* stories now reinforce the points made by each other. Thus the second failure of justice is not a replay of the first but rather its compounding. This means that repetition can no longer be considered as mere gratuitous textual ‘play’, as the trial material has been characterized,<sup>27</sup> but rather should be thought of as the text repeatedly marking the site of a trauma which is impossible fully to confront.

This trauma is Renart, who appears as he was presented in the *Enfances*, that is as both an agent of radical evil and figure of absolute alterity. He represents the community’s unknown and blocks the proper functioning of the justice system. Conversely, the text seems to be on Renart’s side, perhaps because he alone is aware that, in the *Renart*, justice is subject to the rules of fiction. Renart can therefore be said to be on the side of fiction, whereas the other animals look for certainty, and are frustrated that there is something that always escapes their constructions. What knowledge there is in the text seems to work for Renart, and no other character can bring it to bear against Renart as he can against them. For example, Renart is aware that justice is subject to his manipulation, whereas Isengrin laments: ‘Rois, justice va

enpirant / Veritez est torne a fable, / Nule parole n'est estable.' (9, 54-6).<sup>28</sup> Isengrin's plea contains the very impossibility of resolving it: 'veritez' (the *viol*) is now 'fable'. The event has become text, part of the *Renart*. Whereas the reader knows that it did happen, within the diegetic frame it is impossible to prove.

The terms provided for us by the *Enfances* therefore lead us to a new understanding of Renart's ability to escape justice. Just as he challenged the categories of wild/tame, male/female and animal/human in the *Enfances*, here too he avoids capture within the categories used by the justice system. For example, Brun says that the animals should trust Isengrin, as he is honourable. However, Baucent replies that Renart is not 'mains loiax ne pire' and that 'Chascun si se tient a preudome' (9, 298-9).<sup>29</sup> Renart thus challenges the system the animals are trying to use to decide his character: he is a criminal and yet still 'preudome'. Even when Renart seems to be classified under one category, it turns out that he also fits into another, opposing, category, meaning he cannot really belong to either. Therefore Baucent and Brun's ideas cancel each other out and this avenue to knowledge is exhausted. There are a number of competing ways to fix knowledge, each of which has a flaw, and when all the animals have spoken, they are back where they started. All they can do is mark the site of an intractable problem by circling around it.

Moreover, Renart causes a wider crisis of knowledge: there is now little agreement on what is 'right'. He thus forces the animals to reconsider all their ethical constructions, with at least two conceptions of the 'good' at work. First is the 'good' as seen by Isengrin, Brun and Platel: the community should be protected against the harmful actions of any wayward individual. Brun, for example, laments the failures of justice: 'Il si sovent est repris, / Que nos i avons grant pechié / Qui tant li avons alechié.' (9, 502-4).<sup>30</sup> The second conception of the 'good' is that of Baucent and

Brichemer: respecting the individual's right to proper trial rather than hasty preventive action in the name of the common good. These animals do not accept even repeated previous crimes as evidence of present guilt. Baucent, for example, argues that correct procedure is only dealing with one affair in one trial (9, 511-8). And Brichemer is also prepared to wait for the affair to be judged properly, and wants to avoid excessive haste (9, 608). Thus two notions of the 'good', or two types of knowledge about what is 'right' cancel each other out and lead to deadlock. Renart shows us that the 'good' is in practice arbitrary, and always subject to refiguring. Any attempt to serve the 'good' in fact ends up blocking effective action against Renart.

Similarly, other aspects of the trial scenes relate Renart to an excess of knowledge that also prevents the proper functioning of the legal system. For example, true witnessing is now impossible, as the event (the *viol*) is too well known. Bruyant protests: 'Conment Ysengrin doit plaidier / De chose qui si est aperte / Et conneüe et descoverte?' (10, 88-90).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Hersant claims that her truth will not be believed: 'Mes mon escondire que vaut, / Lasse, chaitive, malostrue / Quant je ja n'en seré creüe?' (10, 144-6).<sup>32</sup> Thus even the victim is not a useful witness. And furthermore, Noble too declares that there is no point in trying Renart, as his deeds are too well known: 'Tele est cele ovre a escient / Que li parlers n'i vaut noient' (10, 53-4).<sup>33</sup> Noble goes on to suggest that the damage to Isengrin's reputation is already done, and that it would be better for everyone, including the unfortunate wolf, if the matter were left alone. Whether due to lack of knowledge or its excess, the animals never have what they require, whereas Renart has exactly the tools he needs to escape justice.

The only character knowledge works for, then, is Renart. We can see this in the way he is able to exploit his knowledge about other characters' desire, whereas they

are unable to fathom his, and they therefore fall into his traps. For example, he knows Brun's weakness is honey and so is able to trick him to avoid being taken to court. As soon as Renart mentions honey, Brun is under his spell: 'Ja est ce la chose du monde / Que je miex aim et plus dessire' (10, 540-1).<sup>34</sup> Once Brun is trapped, Renart is able to claim an ironic knowledge: 'je savoie bien / Que queriez art et engien' (10, 613-4), echoing his earlier semblance of fear of 'traïson' and 'felonnie' from Brun (10, 563).<sup>35</sup> Renart knew the hidden truth all along. By accusing Brun of the trick, he denies knowledge of his own trick, and thus conjures it out of existence. He uses a similar ploy against Tibert, whose weakness is his love of mice and rats. Renart is ethical in embarrassing these characters by making them true to their hidden desire, which they deny to themselves. In this, Renart is similar to the Sadean hero, who gives everyone the chance to fulfil his/her desire. Even Sade's victims are victims because, on some level, they desire to be so. As Lacan puts it, Sade 'ouvre toutes grandes les vannes [...] à l'horizon du désir'.<sup>36</sup> We could also say that Renart is in the position of the analyst, because, through his prompting, other characters discover the truth about their desire.

### *Conclusion*

The format of the C manuscript forces us to read the trial material in light of the introduction given in the *Enfances*, which leads us to a new understanding of one of the central planks of the *Renart* corpus. The *Enfances* present Renart as an element of inassimilable alterity, and when we read the trial material using these terms, we see the problems of the justice system differently. Renart's crimes are inevitable; he is radically evil and therefore troubles all the categories that define beings and support ethical and legal constructions. Thus this material is seen less as about the policing of sexuality and gender, and more about how society should deal with an unknown

element that defies all its values. Renart's comedy moreover exposes the other characters to the uncomfortable truth about their desire and about their spurious constructions of the 'good'. The truth therefore lies with Renart: 'veritez' has indeed become a comic 'fable'. In the cyclical manuscript, Renart also infiltrates the form of the cycle, which is meant to give a complete account of the character's life, and pollutes it with infinitude and unknowability. This represents his ultimate triumph over epistemic systems; Renart thus thwarts the ideological closure of both justice and narrative.

Within the scope of this article, I have been able to consider only a small sample of the manuscript in question. I hope that this will nonetheless contribute to a wider understanding of *Renart* material, an understanding that will be furthered if we follow Jean R. Scheidegger's exhortation to consider each surviving version of the text as of equal merit for literary analysis.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by Martin, 3 vols (Strasbourg, Trübner, 1882-7); *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Dufournet and Méline, 2 vols (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1985); *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. by Roques, 6 vols (Paris, Champion, 1948-63).

<sup>2</sup> *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. and trans. by Bianciotto (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 2005); *Le Roman de Renart édité d'après les manuscrits C et M*, ed. by Naoyuki Fukumoto, Noboru Harano and Satoru Suzuki, 2 vols (Tokyo, France Tosho, 1983-5). A gamma family manuscript was in fact previously edited by Dominique-Martin Méon: *Le Roman de Renart publié d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi des XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles*, 4 vols (Paris, Treuttel et Würtz, 1826), but Méon supplemented C's text in an arbitrary way, and changed the order of the branches. Thus I term Fukumoto, *et al.*'s version of C the first 'faithful' edition. I take all quotations here from this text.

Translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Hermann Büttner, *Studien zu den 'Roman de Renart' und den Reinhart Fuchs*, 2 vols (Strasbourg, Trübner, 1891), cited in Jean R. Scheidegger, '*Le Roman de Renart*' ou le texte de la dérision (Geneva, Droz, 1989), pp. 24-26.

<sup>4</sup> For a full survey of editions and manuscripts, see Kenneth Varty, *The 'Roman de Renart': A Guide to Scholarly Work* (Lanham, Scarecrow, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> See the introduction to Bianciotto's edition, especially pp. 50-52. It is also worth noting at this point that Fukumoto, Harano and Suzuki do not use the word 'branch' to describe the subdivisions of C, but rather *unité*. I use both terms in this article: 'branch' when referring to the material as it appears in alpha and beta, *unité* when referring to the gamma family.

<sup>6</sup> See Scheidegger '*Le Roman de Renart*', p. 37 and *The Earliest Branches of the 'Roman de Renart'*, ed. by R. Anthony Lodge and Kenneth Varty (Leuven, Peeters, 2001), pp. xix-xx.

<sup>7</sup> Scheidegger, '*Le Roman de Renart*'; Simpson, *Animal Body, Literary Corpus: The Old French 'Roman de Renart'* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> 'De la chaîne au cycle? La réorganisation de la matière renardienne dans les manuscrits C et M', *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 90 (1986), 27-44.

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<sup>9</sup> ‘De l’économie des *Romans de Renart*’ in *A la recherche du ‘Roman de Renart’*, ed. by Varty, 2 vols (New Alyth, Lochee Publications, 1988-91), vol 1, pp. 13-49 (pp. 38-43); *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002), vol 1, p. 229.

<sup>10</sup> The Roman numerals given are the branch numbers established by Martin and modified by Varty (‘De l’appellation des branches et des contes du *Roman de Renart*’ in his *A la recherche*, vol 1, pp. 7-12). I also give the standard branch titles adapted from Varty for the benefit of those familiar with the *Roman de Renart* from other editions. The *unités* of C are numbered in Arabic numerals in the right-hand column. As the table shows, several branches of the alpha and beta traditions sometimes form one *unité* of C (for example, IIa, XXIV, IIf and part of Va make up *unité* 1); elsewhere, one branch becomes several *unités* (Ib becomes *unités* 11, 12 and 13).

<sup>11</sup> Bellon, ‘De la chaîne’; Varty, ‘De l’économie’.

<sup>12</sup> Before proceeding, a word about the identification of branches is necessary. The long-standing influence of Martin’s edition means that his system of numbering has prevailed, although Varty later offered some small modifications, pertaining to the subdivision of some of the branches (see his ‘De l’appellation’). As I quote solely from C, I will give line references in the format (*unité* number, line number) in parentheses in the body of the text.

<sup>13</sup> As far as we can determine the order of composition using internal references in the surviving versions, branch II is the earliest. It is the only branch which has a prologue but no references to other branches (Scheidegger, ‘*Le Roman de Renart*’, p. 41).

<sup>14</sup> [Now you will hear the beginning: why and for which misdeed they quarrelled with each other.]

When quoting from the text, I follow the punctuation of Fukumoto, Harano and Suzuki’s edition.

However, when translating, I have sometimes altered their punctuation in order to produce a smooth English version.

<sup>15</sup> [Now, if you do not object, listen and I will tell you with pleasure, about their creation.]

<sup>16</sup> [From amongst the other animals there emerged the fox, such a savage creature. He had red fur like Renart. He was clever and cruel, and through his intelligence he deceived all the animals he encountered. For us, this fox represents Renart (*or* Renart represents this fox) who has such great mastery. All those who are given to trickery and ruses are now all called Renart because of Renart and the fox. Both the one and the other know a great deal about both. Just as Renart can trick people, so the

fox can outwit animals. They are indeed from the same family line, and have the same customs and the same spirit.]

<sup>17</sup> ‘Renart, le plaisir, le rire et le mal: réflexions autour de deux branches du *Roman de Renart*’ in *Et c’est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble: hommage à Jean Dufournet*, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly and others, 3 vols (Paris, Champion, 1993), vol 1, pp. 257-68 (p. 266).

<sup>18</sup> ‘*Le Roman de Renart*’, p. 186.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Les Prologues du *Roman de Renart*’ in *Le Goupil et le Paysan (Roman de Renart, branche X)* ed. by Dufournet (Paris, Champion, 1990), pp. 201-16 (p. 216).

<sup>20</sup> *Animal Body*, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> [The wicked fellow will never be happy on the day he does not trick anyone]

<sup>22</sup> ‘*Le Roman de Renart*’, p. 192.

<sup>23</sup> This is very similar to Judith Butler’s characterization of a gender as ‘a kind of imitation for which there is no original...a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself’: ‘Imitation and Gender Insubordination’ in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diana Foss (London, Routledge, 1991), pp. 13-31 (p. 21), emphasis in original.

<sup>24</sup> [That was about Renart’s childhood, since then he has learned so much about trickery and ruses that he has caused many problems, both for his uncle and for others]. It is also worth noting the use of the common rhyme ‘art/Renart’, which again highlights the innate link between the fox and trickery.

<sup>25</sup> *Animal Body*, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Les Prologues’, p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> M.-N. Lefay-Toury calls the text ‘un jeu verbal parfaitement gratuit’: ‘Ambiguïté de l’idéologie et gratuité de l’écriture dans la branche I du *Roman de Renart*’, *Le Moyen Âge*, 80 (1974), 89-100 (p. 100).

<sup>28</sup> [My king, justice is going from bad to worse. Truth has become a fable, and no man’s word can be trusted]

<sup>29</sup> [No less loyal or good... everyone truly considers him an honourable fellow]

<sup>30</sup> [He has re-offended so often that we have made a grave mistake in letting him off so many times]

<sup>31</sup> [How is Isengrin to plead about something so public, so well-known and such common knowledge?]

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<sup>32</sup> [What use will my version of the story be? I am miserable, pathetic and disgraced since I will never be believed.]

<sup>33</sup> [This deed is so widely known, that talking about it is useless]. This comment also highlights the verbal nature of justice. As Renart is the master of the spoken word and its use in deception, any procedure based on oath is ineffective against him.

<sup>34</sup> [Of all the things in the world, this is indeed the one I most love and most desire]

<sup>35</sup> [I knew all along that you were plotting tricks and ruses... betrayal...deceit]

<sup>36</sup> *L'éthique de la psychanalyse: Le Séminaire Livre VII 1959-60*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris, Seuil, 1986), p. 96.

<sup>37</sup> '*Le Roman de Renart*', p. 26.