

Annette Volting, Oriel College, Oxford

Sweet Hermaphrodite: (En)gendering Desire in Alan's *De Planctu Naturae* and in Frauenlob's *Minneleich*

The aim of this essay is to read Frauenlob's *Minneleich* as a creative response to Alan's *De Planctu Naturae*.¹ The first section will examine the relationship between the two texts, arguing that the *Alanus*-references at the start of the *Minneleich* signal an important intertextual relationship. The second section will focus on Frauenlob's hermaphrodite, arguing that this figure, placed at the imaginative centre of the *Minneleich*, represents an innovative and provocative take on the questions of transgressive desire and gender instability that run through *De Planctu Naturae*.

*

Christoph Huber points out that with Frauenlob, we are on somewhat firmer ground than is normally the case when it comes to demonstrating the influence of Alan of Lille on Middle High German literature.² This relative certainty owes something to the fact that Frauenlob's entire corpus shows a marked interest in ontological hierarchies, including the operational scope of Love and Nature personified;³ but it is also bolstered by two explicit references to *Alanus* at the start of the *Minneleich*.

Alanus is mentioned soon after Frauenlob's persona has opened with a programmatic list of reasons as to why men must praise women. These are (i) because of the pleasure arising from social and sexual congress; (ii) because of women's ability to give birth; and (iii) out of respect for the Virgin Mary.⁴ Frauenlob's persona then

¹ The *Minneleich* is item III in Frauenlob, *Leichs, Sangsprüche, Lieder*, ed. by Stackmann/Bertau 1981, 330-379 (henceforth referenced by versicle and line numbers). Alan of Lille's *De Planctu Naturae* is quoted from Alan of Lille, *Literary Works*, ed. and transl. by Wetherbee 2013, 21-217 (henceforth referenced by section and subsection numbers (for the prose passages) and by section and line numbers (for the verse passages). The translations are from this edition.

² Huber 1988a, 136.

³ Cf. Huber 1988a, 136-199; Newman 2006, 68-79, esp. 78: „Frauenlob's final resolution of this debate lies not in *Minne und Welt* but in the *Marienleich*, where he adopts the extraordinary solution of melding both goddesses (Love and Nature) with the person of Mary.“ Cf. also Bartel 2014.

⁴ III,1,4-6: *Das erste ist durch geselleschaft, / daz ander durch der formen cleit, / daz dritte ist durch der hochsten vrouwen minne*. Stackmann/Bertau 1981, 689 suggest that line III,1,5 could refer either to female beauty (i.e. woman are clothed in beautiful forms) or to the female potential to give birth (i.e. to clothe others in new forms). Given that the

instructs his own intellect or inner self, personified as *Her Sin*, to form the image of a woman, in order that he might assert his own normative masculinity by praising her:

„Her Sin, nu bildet mir ein wip,
sit ich ouch trage eines mannes lip.“ (III,2,1-2)

Her Sin responds by evoking the Old Testament figure of Esther – an obedient wife whose coronation by Ahasverus prefigures the coronation of the Virgin by Christ.⁵ Surprisingly, perhaps, this suggestion is not met with much enthusiasm. Instead, the persona asks him to use his imagination to recreate the visionary experience of *Alanus*:

„Sprich diner fantasien zu,
waz feien sach Alanus uf der glanzen gru
und wie gebriset was ir ordenlicher zesem,

Ir wat und ouch ir ertlich sege,
weistuz?“ (III,4,1-5)

Her Sin replies:

„Die feie, die Alanus sach,
truc aller creatiuren dach
und ouch der elementen vach,
planeten mit der firme.

Den allen si besloz ir art,
complexen und ir mische vart.“ (III,5,1-6)

There is general agreement that this *feie* is to be understood as *Natura* from *De Planctu Naturae*. However, whilst *Natura* in the Latin poem is presented as an attractive woman in her own right, to whom the narrator responds erotically,⁶ the *feie* does not seem to have the same effect on *Frauenlob*'s persona. He even has to ask *Her Sin* to help him understand how this vision might be relevant to his project of praising women:

„wie sol ich wip, der triuwen zart,
gelichen zu der tirme?“ (III,5,7-8)

more hedonic aspects of contact between the sexes has already been covered in III,1,4, the latter reading for III,1,5 seems more plausible.

⁵ Cf. *Biblia Pauperum*, ed. by Labriola and Smeltz 1990, 54 and 176. According to Stackmann 1988, 15, this typological relationship is crucial for understanding the rejection of Esther in the *Minneleich*: „Sie bedeutet den wohlkalkulierten Verzicht auf das Vor-Läufige zugunsten des Endgültigen.“

⁶ For the erotic appraisal of *Natura* by the narrator in *De Planctu*, see Rollo 2011, 90-93.

Her Sin explains that the relevance is one of analogy rather than exemplification: just as Natura contains and dispenses life, so women contain and dispense joy:

,Daz sage ich dir,
wiltuz von mir:
recht alsam jene besloz in ir
gar aller creatiuren macht,

Sust vrouwen lip
und wiplich wip
besliuzet aller vröuden trip,
die menschlich herzen sin ie vlacht.

(III,6)

Recht als Nature wart gegeben,
daz sie daz wesen und daz leben
in manige strenge vlichtet,

Sust vrouwen bilde und vrouwen nam
menschlicher vrucht zu vröuden quam:
wip alle wunne tichtet.

(III,7)

From versicle 8 onwards, *Her Sin* fades away. The persona articulates one versicle of praise for women (III,8), before describing a different, more detailed allegorical vision experienced by a figure named Selvon.⁷ This vision is of a hermaphrodite who represents *der minnen kraft* (III,9-14). The remainder of the poem (III,15-30) provides extensive examples of how to praise women, as well as some poetological reflections on the process. The poem closes with a brief tribute to the Virgin Mary.

Despite the prominence of Alan's Natura at the start of Frauenlob's poem, there has so far been limited critical interest in drawing on *De Planctu Naturae* for a wider interpretation of the *Minneleich*. To the extent that *De Planctu Naturae* is discussed at all, this tends to be exclusively in relation to the figure of Natura; and even here, the strength of the connection is a matter of dispute. Against this backdrop, Beate Kellner's recent article on Alan's Natura-allegory stands out, not only for affirming the connection between the two text, but specifically for focussing on the poetics of Frauenlob's transformation of Alan's Natura into a figure that is closely aligned both with Minne and with the idealised female sex.⁸

As far as the iconography of Natura is concerned, Rudolf Kraye and Thomas Bein both assume that the phrase *aller creatiuren dach* (III,5, 2) represents an extreme

⁷ For interpretations of the Selvon-vision, including speculation as to the identity of this figure, see Bein 1988, 179-208; Stackman and Bertau 1981, vol. 2, 693-695; Huber 1986, 153-154; Steinmetz 1994, 75-148; Finckh 1999, 386-393; Kreibich 2000, 211-216; Wiesinger 2017, 227-244. No clear solution has been offered as to the identity of Selvon. Newman 2006, 69 suggests that Selvon might have been „an imaginary character like Mennor and Wippeon“.

⁸ Kellner 2017, 137-143.

distillation of Alan's lengthy *descriptio* of Natura's clothing which features images of all living creatures;⁹ and Kellner reads the phrase in a similar way.¹⁰ Huber, however, argues that Frauenlob goes his own way iconographically and that the *dach* more plausibly refers to some kind of small-scale model of the cosmos that Natura might carry in her hand as an attribute.¹¹ Whilst this reading has been challenged in the *Frauenlob-Wörterbuch*,¹² it is supported by Ralf-Henning Steinmetz.¹³ Furthermore, the corruptible cosmological house carried as an attribute by Philosophia in Heinrich von Mügeln's *Der meide kranz* provides a slightly later counterpart that adds plausibility to Huber's reading: *des treit ein hus die hende min / in dem ist angest, not und pin*.¹⁴

As well as casting doubt on the iconographical link with Alan's text, Huber also argues for a simpler philosophical conception of Natura in the *Minneleich* than in *De Planctu Naturae*:

Bei nicht unbedeutenden Abweichungen im Erscheinungsbild schließt sich Frauenlob an den Preis der Göttin in ihrer Rolle als *domina mundi* an. Ihre Funktion als *mater generationis* tritt an anderen Stellen, vor allem im Streitgespräch, stärker hervor.¹⁵

This tendency to play down the relevance of Alan for the *Minneleich* is continued by Steinmetz who argues that Frauenlob's intellectual framework comes closer to that of William of Conches and of Abelard;¹⁶ and by Susanne Fritsch-Staar, whose article on the medical aspects of androgyny in the *Minneleich* makes minimal reference to *De Planctu Naturae* despite recognizing Frauenlob as „ein Meister inter-textuellen Spiels.“¹⁷

There is, of course, the problem of the form in which Frauenlob might have known *De Planctu Naturae*, or known of it – as Huber puts it, „So ist Bekanntschaft mit dem ‚Planctus‘, etwa über ein Compendium, nicht abzuweisen. Leider ist hier die lateinische Tradition (anders als beim ‚Anticlaudianus‘) noch völlig unerschlossen.“¹⁸ Nonetheless, as Huber goes on to assert more confidently, „Auf der andern Seite ist zu bedenken, daß Frauenlob Grundzüge des Gedichts und spezifische chartrensische Formeln sehr genau erfaßt hat.“¹⁹

The differences in the presentation of Natura do not necessarily mean that Frauenlob did not know the Latin text well or that it was not relevant for literary

⁹ *De Planctu Naturae* 2,19-34. Cf. Kraye 1960, 50-54; Bein 1988, 122-123. For Alan's Natura-iconography, see also Modersohn 1997, 29-46.

¹⁰ Kellner 2017, 140.

¹¹ Huber 1988a, 142-143 and 198.

¹² Stackmann with Haustein 1990, 52.

¹³ Steinmetz 1994, 70.

¹⁴ Heinrich von Mügeln, *Der meide kranz*, lines 161-162. Quoted from Volting 1997, 46 (based on the edition by Willy Jahr).

¹⁵ Huber 1988a, 198.

¹⁶ Steinmetz 1994, esp. 37-50.

¹⁷ Fritsch-Staar 1999, 70.

¹⁸ Huber 1988a, 198.

¹⁹ Huber 1988a, 198.

undertaking. The question that persona addresses to *Her Sin* about the *wat* of Natura (III,4,4) implicitly acknowledges the clothing *descriptio* as one of the more striking features of *De Planctu Naturae*; indeed, the question may even be intended to come across as pedestrian and predictable, with the alternative iconography set out by *Her Sin* serving as an insightful corrective.

Furthermore, the catalogue of animals has in fact not been eliminated, but rather transposed, in abbreviated form, to a later point in the *Minneleich*: instead of describing a pre-existing allegorical textile, the persona creates his own version of the catalogue in versicles 15-19, when a flamboyant succession of 21 comparisons, mostly drawn from the natural world, provides a rhetorical set-piece demonstrating how the praising of women is to be done. The entire priamel is structured according to the formula „woman is sweeter to man than is x to y.“ There are, admittedly, some differences in organization. In Alan’s *descriptio*, the clothing of Natura is divided into different zones, featuring birds (on her dress), fish (on her mantle), land animals (on her tunic) and plants (on her shoes and undergarments).²⁰ In the *Minneleich*, by contrast, Frauenlob structures one set of comparisons around the four elements, focusing in each case on one representative inhabitant (the salamander, the chameleon, the mole and the herring):²¹

noch süzer dan dem salamander viures wage,
noch süzer dan der luft *dem* gamalione,

Noch süzer dan der erden zins
dem moltwerfe und sins ordens vlins,
noch süzer dan dem *hering* dünke wazzers glins, (III,18,3-7)

Similarly, Frauenlob groups together four species (the lion, the unicorn, the eagle and phoenix) that lend themselves to obvious christological interpretation:²²

Noch süzer dan des lewen welf
ir vater quickendiger gelf,
noch süzer dan ein stolze meit in vlucht dem eingehürne,

Noch süzer dan dem adelar
in siner muze ein brune clar,
noch süzer dan dem fenice sin wandel nach der bürne, (III,17)

In the *De Planctu Naturae*, each of these christological animals is listed amongst its fellow creatures in the appropriate zone.²³ This re-arrangement of the christological animals foregrounds the scope for spiritual interpretation and ties in with the brief

²⁰ *De Planctu Naturae* 2,20-24 (birds); 2,26-27 (fish); 3,29-33 (land animals).

²¹ Cf. Bein 1988, 248-253. For the herring, see *De Planctu Naturae* 2,26; the salamander, chameleon and mole are not included on Natura’s apparel.

²² Cf. Bein 1988, 241-246.

²³ *De Planctu Naturae* 2,20 (eagle); 2,21 (phoenix); 2,30 (lion and unicorn).

evocation of the Virgin Mary at the beginning and at the end of the *Minneleich*.²⁴ However, like narrator on *De Planctu Naturae*, Frauenlob's persona desists from actually providing that interpretation; on the face of it, these animals are just listed as inhabitants of the natural world who exhibit particular behaviours and desires. However, whereas the behaviours of many of the animals in *De Planctu Naturae* are disturbing and disorderly (thereby undercutting Natura's suggestion of a simplistic opposition between conformist animals and disobedient humans),²⁵ Frauenlob's priamel emphasises the unity and integrity of desire in the natural world: each creature is drawn to its own particular habitat or defining experience, in a worthy, though imperfect, approximation to man's desire for woman.

As even this brief comparison has shown, Frauenlob's reception of Alan's Natura-figure cannot be understood without an acknowledgement of the wider thematic connections between the two works; and it is surprising that critics to date have been so reluctant to recognise them. Although *De Planctu Naturae* and the *Minneleich* differ significantly in scale and genre, they are both fundamentally concerned with gender, heteronormativity, and the link between rhetoric and sexuality. Furthermore, Frauenlob uses a range of metaphors which, although perfectly understandable without recourse to Alan of Lille, take on a particular resonance when read against the Latin text. For example, the suggestion that the idealized woman is clothed in *aller tugent ganzez kleit* (III,25,3) would be unexceptional in many *Minne*-contexts. Here, however, it serves as a programmatic signal for the superiority of this woman over Natura herself – even though Frauenlob does not make any other references in the *Minneleich* to the rip in Natura's clothing.²⁶ Similar considerations apply to images of hammers and anvils. Craftmanship is a common poetological metaphor in Middle High German literature,²⁷ and Konrad von Würzburg's *Die Goldene Schmiede* provides an obvious vernacular model for the notion of the poet as a blacksmith. Nonetheless, when we consider the image of *reiner minne goldgesmide* (III,30,2), or the worry of the persona that his tongue might not be hard enough to hammer out the requisite praise of women –

min zunge wirke, ob lobes hamer,
ist weich gein der metalle,

Da vrouwen lop sich wirket abe: (III,29,7-9) –

it would seem contrary not to remember the reproductive anvils in *De Planctu Naturae*, or to draw on Alan's particular configuration of the interplay between the rhetoric and sexual desire.

²⁴ Cf. Frauenlob III,1,6 (quoted in footnote 4 above); III,33,7-8: *die gute, / durch die man alle vrouwen eret!*

²⁵ Cf. Rollo 2011, 118-121, esp. 120: „The fauna of the natural world, therefore, show the vices of men and women, and Nature, repeatedly declaring that man alone ignores her regulations, remains blind to the widespread dysfunctions of her hegemony.“

²⁶ *De Planctu Naturae* 2,28; 8,23-24. For the theme of „gestörte Natur“ elsewhere in Frauenlob's works, see Huber 1988a, 148-152.

²⁷ Obermaier 1995.

De Planctu Naturae is a complex text that famously subverts its own apparently heteronormative plea for plain speech and procreative sex. Alexandre Leupin claims that „the very discourse of censorship effects a return of repressed sodomy“,²⁸ Susan Schibanoff that Alan’s grammatical trope „makes a place, however nominally despised, for sexual perversion“,²⁹ David Rollo that the narrator, far from being wary of „venereal discourse“, is to be considered its „exuberant practitioner“. ³⁰ Even Valerie Allen, who reads *De Planctu Naturae* as a celebration of „straightness“, concedes that „straightness“ in this context is „ethically provisional and contingent, embattled, never safe from being undone, only as certain as the moment in the here and now, and crafted from the shifting, ‚promiscuous‘ categories of gender.“³¹

These „shifting“ categories are indeed at the core of the problem in *De Planctu Naturae* – and not only because young men are inconsistent in their performance of gender, with some of them using the hammer of Venus inappropriately, and others choosing to assume the role of anvil.³² The narrator too is guilty of inconsistency in his use of gender categories. He frames his complaint about sexual deviancy in terms of a binary opposition between male and female:³³

cum Venus in Venerem pugnans illos facit illas,
cumque sui magica devirat arte viros. (De Planctu Naturae 1,5-6)

²⁸ Leupin 1989, 72.

²⁹ Schibanoff 2001, 29.

³⁰ Rollo 2011, 88.

³¹ Allen 2013, 49. Other critics who simulatenously affirm both the subversiveness of *De Planctu* and its conservative moral agenda include Bruneau 2009 (e.g. 85: „ . . . feminism is valued in Alan’s text, albeit at the price of accepting a heteronormative, generative sexuality in which only one male and one female participate“); Scanlon 1995 (e.g. 242: „sexual regulation is itself a species of desire“); and Guynn 2007 (e.g. 97: „the subversion of intellectual, allegorical, and moral coherence in the *De planctu* is used to shore up ecclesiastical power and to legitimate aggressive disciplinary and penitential practices“).

³² E.g. *De Planctu Naturae* 8,10 *Multi etiam alii iuvenes mei gratia pulcritudinis honore vestiti, siti debriati pecuniae, suos Veneris malleos in incudum transtulerunt officia*. [And many other young men, endowed with glorious beauty through my favor, but drunk with the thirst for wealth, have converted their hammers of Venus to perform the function of the anvil.] Cf. also *De Planctu Naturae* 1.28: *horret et incudem malleus ipse suam*. [the very hammer detests its anvil.]

³³ Later, the narrator adduces specific examples of men changing category: *De Planctu Naturae* 8,16: *Bachus etiam et Apollo, paternae cohaeredes lasciviae* [. . .] *verterunt in feminas pueros invertendo*. [Bacchus, too, and Apollo, coheirs of their father’s lechery, pervertedly turned boys into women [. . .]]

[when Venus, warring against Venus, makes he's become she's, and unmans men with her magical art.]

Nonetheless, this is undermined by the metaphorical nature of the alleged gender shift. The sodomite may behave like a woman in certain respects (e.g. by submitting to sexual penetration), but he possesses the same body as before, with the same humours and the same genitals. He is still a man, albeit supposedly „unmanned“.

The category of the hermaphrodite – who is not entirely male, nor entirely female, but possibly both, and possibly neither – challenges this binary system, whilst also providing another term with which to lambast the sodomite. Confusingly, the narrator has no compunctions about describing the sodomite simultaneously as a woman and as a hermaphrodite:

Femina vir factus sexus denigrat honorem,
Ars magicae Veneris hermafroditat eum. (*De Planctu Naturae* 1,17-18)

[Man become woman demeans the dignity of his sex; the art of a Venus turned sorcerer renders him hermaphrodite.]

Cognates of the term „hermaphrodite“ occur only twice in *De Planctu Naturae*: in the passage just quoted, and in the disparaging presentation of the bat that is listed as the last of the birds on Natura's dress: *Illic vespertilio, avis hermafroditica, cifrae locum inter aviculas obtinebat* (2,24 [Here the bat, the hermaphrodite bird, occupied the position of a cipher among the little birds.])

Nonetheless, the concept of hermaphroditism has been accorded central importance in some interpretations of *De Planctu Naturae*. Leupin discerns a „poetics of hermaphroditism“ in the pattern of repeated doublings.³⁴ The most striking of these are the two husbands of Venus (Hymenaeus and Antigamus), and the two infants (Amor and Jocus) that from each union; however, Leupin extends the pattern to the figure of Genius, „Nature's sacerdotal double“:³⁵

Just as adultery separated Venus into two antagonistic agencies, so a division fractures the writing practiced by Nature's priest. Following the biblical code, the priest's right hand traces examples of orthodox writing: Cato, Plato, Cicero, Aristotle. But that incestuous sister, the left hand, usurps the canonical function of her orthodox sibling . . .”³⁶

Similarly, Rollo reads *De Planctu Naturae* as one of a number of hermaphroditic fictions of the Middle Ages, arguing in particular for an implicit fusion of the narrator and Natura, with the result that „Alanus becomes a male spirit who inhabits a female body“.³⁷ This „mutual reproduction of Alanus and Natura would appear the most unhallowed of

³⁴ Leupin 1989, 76.

³⁵ Leupin 1989, 76.

³⁶ Leupin 1989, 76.

³⁷ Rollo 2011, 103.

couplings, a double simulacrum caught in a vertiginous *mise en abyme* of self-reflexivity, at once hermaphroditic, onanistic, and incestuous.³⁸ Rollo also notes that Remigius, in his commentary on Martianus Capella, claims that there are in fact two Venuses – a virtuous one and a sensual – and that the latter is the mother of Hermaphroditus, a figure who „signifies a particular lasciviousness of speech . . .“³⁹ For Remigius, Hermaphroditus in *De nuptiis* therefore plays an equivalent part to that of the disruptive Jocus in *De Planctu Naturae*.

Medieval thinking about hermaphroditism was coloured by many different and conflicting intellectual strands: not just medical, theological and legal, but also mythographic and alchemical. From a medical perspective, the main conflict was between the Hippocratic/Galenic approach and the Aristotelian one. The former operates with a spectrum of gender determinacy, and allowed for the possibility that the hermaphrodite, having grown in the middle of the seven chambers of the uterus, is genuinely intersex.⁴⁰ The Aristotelian model, by contrast, views the hermaphrodite as essentially either male or female, albeit endowed with double genitalia; on this account, the gender of the individual is to be determined by reference to the predominance of certain humours, and the redundant genitals viewed on a par with harmless tumours. The possibility of surgical correction also becomes a topic in some medieval texts.⁴¹

The legal – or even grammatical – classification of hermaphrodites poses inevitable problems. Augustine, who discusses them in the context of the monstrous races, opts for a simple convention. Although he tends toward the hippocratic model of regarding hermaphrodites as persons in whom *uterque sexus apparet* [the characteristics of both sexes manifest themselves],⁴² he notes with apparent approval that they are normally referred to in the masculine: *Nam nemo umquam Androgynaecas aut Hermaphroditas nuncupavit*. [For no one has ever used the feminine terms, *androgynaecae* or *hermaphroditae*.]⁴³ By contrast, later theologian and canon lawyers take a more Aristotelian view and advocate sexing hermaphrodites on a case by case basis. In a famous passage by Peter the Chanter, the hermaphrodite is required to adopt, and stick to, his or her dominant gender, precisely in order to avoid the risk of sodomy:

Si magis calescit, ut vir, permittunt eum ducere; si vero magis mollescat, et mulier permittunt ei nubere. Si autem in illo instrumento defecerit, nunquam coincederetur ei usus reliqui instrumenti, sed perpetuo continebit, propter vestigia alternitatis vitii sodomitici, quod a Deo detastatur.⁴⁴

³⁸ Rollo 2011, 105.

³⁹ Rollo 2011, 78.

⁴⁰ For useful overviews of the medical perspective, see Cadden 1993, 198-203; Nederman/True 1996; Daston/Park 1996, esp. 118-123.

⁴¹ Cf. Metzler 2010, 35-36.

⁴² Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, ed. by Dombart and Kalb 1955, 509 (XVI,8).

⁴³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, ed. by Dombart and Kalb 1955, 509 (XVI,8).

⁴⁴ Peter the Chanter, *Verbum Abbreviatum*, ed. Patrologia Latina 205 (1855), 334 (Caput 138: *De vitio sodomitico*).

[If he is predominantly hot, like a man, he should be allowed to take a wife; or if predominantly soft, then allowed to be married as a bride. However, if it is then the case that the organ is deficient, the use of the other organ should not be allowed, but rather be repressed for ever, because alternation is the sign of the vice of sodomy, which is abhorred by God.]

The difficulties that such an approach caused to real individuals in the medieval period have been set out by Miri Rubin.⁴⁵ Whilst the model just described might seem to allow some wiggle room for personal preference, the reality of gender imposition would have trumped any ideal of self-determination.⁴⁶

Mythography opens a range of perspectives on gender duality.⁴⁷ The Platonic androgyne represents „an ideal third kind of human being, a harmonious combination of the two as halves reunited in the perfection of the circular whole“,⁴⁸ whilst the *Recognitiones* of Pseudo-Clementinus features a dual creature, described as *masculo-feminine*, that emerges from the cosmic world egg.⁴⁹ Such creation myths stand in marked contrast to the Ovidian myth of a monstrous and violent metamorphosis leading to the formation of the hermaphrodite: here, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite is assaulted by the nymph Salmacis, and, by divine intervention, the two are then fused into one body. The pool in which this transformation takes place is then said to have the power to effect a range of possible sex changes (male to female, female to male, either to hermaphrodite) in anybody who bathes there.

Whilst the Ovidian myth has fusion at its core, a separate, more symbolic approach considers hermaphroditism in terms of fission – of an entity losing its integrity by becoming split or bifurcated, without, however, separating entirely into two parts. In the *Policraticus*, John of Salisbury uses the pool of Salmacis to describe the hermaphroditization of anybody who attempts to serve two incompatible masters;⁵⁰ and similarly Anne Hudson notes the Lollard use of the phrases *hermofodrita* and *ambidexter* to describe the roles of clerks in secular offices.⁵¹ Alan’s *Natura* even alludes to her own bifurcation as she sets out the impact of hermaphroditic sodomy. Evoking the rare rhetorical figure of *tnesis* (i.e. the separation of parts of a compound word by an intervening word or words),⁵² she claims that the wrong-doing of the sodomite has done more than to tear her dress – it has effectively split her down the middle, rendering her as unnatural and hermaphroditic as the sodomite himself: *Dumque in tali constructione me*

⁴⁵ Rubin 1994.

⁴⁶ Cf. Daston/Park 1996, 124: „Choice of sex was not free in Foucault’s sense; this would have been the case only for the ‚mythical‘ perfect hermaphrodite.“

⁴⁷ For a survey of mythological constructions of gender duality (including Plato’s androgyne, Ovid’s Hermaphroditus and Adam from Genesis), see Aurnhammer 1986, 9-30.

⁴⁸ Swift 2011, 97.

⁴⁹ Cf. Dronke 1974, 83-84; Wiesinger 2017, 237.

⁵⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb 1909, 329-330 (5.10). Cf. Nederman and True 1996, 506-507.

⁵¹ Hudson 1997, 41-51.

⁵² A modern example of *tnesis* would be „abso-bloody-lutely“.

destruit, in sua synaeresi mei themesim machinatur. (8,8 [He works my destruction by such constructions, and his combinations threaten to divide me.])

The notion of the hermaphrodite being split down the middle is to some extent present in Augustine and Isidore, who understand the hermaphrodite to have the right breast of the male and the left breast of the female. However, it is primarily in the schematic representations of the late medieval alchemical hermaphrodite that we see a figure that is entirely male on the one side and entirely female on the other – like the ideogram now in use on some gender-neutral toilets.

Platonist creation myths aside, it is rare to find positive assessments of the hermaphrodite. Berchorius interprets the Hermaphroditus-Salmacis myth as analogous to the relationship between Christ and the human soul; and Le Franc, a late medieval French contributor to the *Querelle des femmes* expresses his pro-feminine stance by claiming that he would gladly bathe in the pool of Salmacis.⁵³ The alchemical hermaphrodite is also rated more positively. Cynthia Mason notes that in alchemy, „divinity is the figurative result of sexual conjunction between active and passive partners“.⁵⁴ Accordingly:

Whereas Alan emphasizes the negative and sinful outcome of confusing gender (masculine and feminine), of interchanging the subject and predicate (male and female), of inverting the passive and the active, alchemists advocate such union or interchange... Thus, unlike the hermaphrodite's negative portrayal in the *Plaint*, in alchemy the hermaphrodite's portrayal positively figures the intended goal of alchemical conjunction.⁵⁵

For this reason, alchemical writing also lends itself well to Christian allegorization.⁵⁶ However, Katherine Long argues (with respect to the early modern period) that even the alchemical hermaphrodite is fundamentally unsettling:

The hermaphrodite is associated in virtually all of the alchemical literature and some of the satirical materials with incest and human sacrifice (the cutting of the body into tiny pieces). Thus the dissolution of the family and of the body itself seems to be a menace related to that of the elimination of gender distinction.⁵⁷

She also notes that alchemical writing „is ‚hermaphroditic‘ in nature, often calling for two very different, even opposing readings.“⁵⁸

The possible sources for Frauenlob's hermaphroditic vision have been discussed extensively, with particular reference to alchemical models (Bein) and medical treatises

⁵³ Cf. Swift 2011, 99.

⁵⁴ Masson 2014, 118.

⁵⁵ Masson 2014, 119.

⁵⁶ Cf. Newman 2002, 234-244.

⁵⁷ Long 2006, 21.

⁵⁸ Long 2006, 157.

(Steinmetz).⁵⁹ The alchemical images adduced provide a good iconographic match, but the late dating of this material casts some doubt on its relevance.⁶⁰

Iconographically, Frauenlob's hermaphrodite is an allegorical figure divided with perfect symmetry into a male and a female side. Even the head is bipartite, with the male side wearing a crown, and the female side a garland appropriate to virgins. In its hands, this figure holds the four *complexen* – a term which appears to relate to the basic qualities of hot, cold, wet and dry that make up the four elements and the four humours. However, as Bein has noted, the allocation of the qualities is jumbled (hence *wilde* (III,9,4); normally cold and wet are the female qualities, but here it is cold and dry that are held in the female hand.⁶¹

Selvon, der sach ein dunstlich bilde,
halp maget, halp man, geteilet nach der lenge,

Daz truc die vier complexen wilde
in siner hant, ez vloz in twalmes henge. (III,9)

Kalt unde trucken truc ez in der vrouwen hant,
warm unde viuchte truc sin manlich ellen.

Ein sinnic man, der sinnet, waz ez tut bekant.
spreche ich da von icht mere, ez were gevelle. (III,10)

Die forme, halp gecrönet
nach küniges recht
und halp ein meitlich borte , (III,11,1-4)

Whilst the participle *geteilet* (III,9,1) and the repetition of the term *halp* (III,9,2; III,11,1; III,11,5) suggests the fission or bifurcation of a single individual, there are also hints of the fusion of two lovers as one flesh – in happier harmony than was the case with Hermaphroditus and Salmacis. Frauenlob's hermaphrodite is not only causally responsible for sexual desire in the world, but also serves as a visual representation of *coitus*. The apparent virginity of the female side is no obstacle to such a reading, given

⁵⁹ Bein 1988, 163-181. Cf. also Aurnhammer 1986 118-128 (for „Androgynie in alchemistischer Mythenallegorese“ more generally) and 119, note 284 (for tentative links between alchemy and Frauenlob's *Minneleich*). By contrast, Steinmetz 1994, 112-126 focusses on the medical background to Frauenlob's use of the term *twalm* (III,9,4), which he undertands as a kind of erotic *pneuma* that permeates the universe and ensures continued procreation.

⁶⁰ Newman 2006, 71.

⁶¹ Bein 1988, 185.

the allegorical status of the entire construct: Alan's Natura is also simultaneously a virgin,⁶² the mother of the narrator,⁶³ and the bride and the mother of Genius.⁶⁴

Frauenlob's celebration of the hermaphrodite represents a sophisticated response to the framing of gender issues in Alan's *De Planctu Naturae*. In the Latin text, the responsibility for procreation is shared between Natura and Venus, with Natura providing the equipment (the hammers and the anvils) and Venus providing the desire. However, things go wrong because of the dual nature of Venus; by splitting herself between two partners, one virtuous and one deviant, she becomes a metaphorical hermaphrodite herself, guilty of reducing men to a state of indeterminate gender. In Frauenlob's text, this dual Venus has been replaced by an actual hermaphrodite who does a much better job at upholding the *ordo* of the world; even if there is something disturbing about this hermaphrodite's apparent ability to have sex with itself, the *coitus* is at least heterosexual.

A particularly provocative aspect of the *Minneleich* concerns the question of which pronoun to use for the hermaphrodite. Given the perfect symmetry and balance of the elements in this creature, the Aristotelian approach of looking for a dominant gender would not work. Augustine's grammatical convention (whereby the male embraces the female) might have been possible, but is not the route chosen by Frauenlob. He temporarily fudges the issue by referring to the hermaphrodite as *die forme*, and then continuing with a pronoun specifically relating to that feminine noun:

Die forme, halp gecrönet
nach küniges recht
und halp ein meitlich borte,

Sie was so clar geschönet.

(III,11,1-5)

Soon afterwards, however, Frauenlob's persona makes a definitive ruling. The hermaphrodite counts female – on account of its sweetness: *Sie wart geheizen sie durch ganze süze*. (III,14,1) Here, it is possible that the first feminine pronoun also refers back to the *forme* mentioned earlier; however, the line only makes sense if it is read as a statement about the gendering of the hermaphrodite, rather than about the grammatical gender of a word that is already recognized as feminine and which does not derive this gender from the quality of sweetness.

The feminization of the hermaphrodite not only aligns it/her with established allegorical figures such as Venus and Minne, but also allows for a seamless transition from the allegorical vision to the ideal woman who is to be the object of the persona's praise in the remainder of the poem. However, when read against *De Planctu Naturae*,

⁶² *De Planctu Naturae* 2,4: *Ut ipse tamen vultus loquebatur, non Dionaeva clavis eius sigillum reseraverat castitatis*. [And yet, as her countenance attested, the key of Dione had not broken the seal of her chastity.]

⁶³ *De Planctu Naturae* 8,21.

⁶⁴ *De Planctu Naturae* 18,10: *Quae non ex pruritu Affrodites promiscuo propagata, sed ex solo Naturae natiq[ue] geniali osculo fuerat derivata . . .* [She [=Truth] had not been spawned by the lustful itch of Aphrodite, but had sprung from the pure genial kiss of Nature and her son [=Genius] . . .]

this feminization is radical, compounding the already provocative way in which the hermaphrodite is presented positively as the engenderer of normative desire. On one level, it might seem as though the *Minneleich* is merely copying the way in which Alan's narrator uses metaphorical invective to blur gender categories, creating a spurious implicit syllogism along the lines of „The sodomite is a hermaphrodite; the sodomite is a woman; therefore a hermaphrodite is a woman.“ On another level, the proposal that „sweetness“ should serve as the key criterion in gender allocation makes a mockery of the apparent horror expressed in *De Planctu Naturae* in relation to the transformation of „he's“ into „she's“. Whereas on Alan's account, it is the subject acting on his illicit desires who changes gender (from male to female, or male to hermaphrodite), in Frauenlob's system, it is the object of desire whose gender is negotiable: if something is sweet enough, it may be classified as female. The logic here is just as faulty as in Alan's implicit syllogism: even if all (proper) women are sweet, it does not follow that all sweet things are female. But with this sleight of hand, Frauenlob's persona cuts through Natura's anguish: provided that the object is perceived as sufficiently sweet, all male desire becomes nominally heterosexual.

The ease with which the persona transforms an „it“ into a „she“ suggests, at the very least, a certain level of abstraction when it comes to construing femininity as the object of desire. It also undercuts the interest shown elsewhere in the poem for procreative potential of the female body,⁶⁵ reducing, or arguably elevating, the idealized woman to a ciphre, an undifferentiated *summun bonum* enabling the process of praise. The verbal sleight of hand used to feminize the hermaphrodite has its counterpart in the persona's quasi-etymological definition of *wip* as „the joy of the earthly paradise“:

Wip schribet sich mit drin buchstaben:
w wunne wil zu diute haben,
i irdisch in im hat begraben,
p paradis gesprochen.

(III,22.1-4)⁶⁶

Here, he is not only attempting to use orthography as the basis for an essentialist argument about the female sex; he is also highlighting the fact that for his purposes, a woman is a textual construct, made up of letters and words.

Despite the coital imagery deployed in the representation of the hermaphrodite, and despite the importance accorded to procreaion, the core imperative of the *Minneleich* relates to literary rather than to sexual practices. The hammer that really interests Frauenlob is the one that signifies the tongue rather than the penis. Whilst *De Planctu Naturae* ostensibly urges men to sleep with women (as opposed to sleeping with other men), the *Minneleich* urges them to praise women (as opposed to engaging in less respectful forms of discourse). In *De Planctu Naturae*, desire is bifurcated, with the

⁶⁵ See footnote 4 above for discussion of III,1,5. In III,21,5-6, the term *vrouwe* is reserved specifically for women who have given birth: *Meit, wip und vrouwe, ganzer vröuden tempel / gezirket hat sich uf die dri genende*. Frauenlob also expounds the triad *maget; wip/mittel-sie; vrouwe* in V,102-104.

⁶⁶ Cf. Bein 1988, 272-274; Volting 2012.

potential for legitimate or illegitimate gendering. In the *Minneleich*, the real risk is not wrongful desire, but no desire at all.

Accordingly, the relationship between desire and literature is also configured differently in the two texts. Alan's Natura worries about the existence of literary works in which content and form are equally lascivious. When the narrator asks her about Jupiter's *translatio* of Ganymede (an act that signifies the decadence of metaphor itself), Natura responds with a diatribe against „the poets“, with particular contempt for sweetness as a criterion for literary or moral worth:

. . . an umbratilibus poetarum figmentis quae artis poeticae depinxit industria
fidem adhibere conaris? [. . .] An ignoras quomodo poetae sine omni palliationis
remedio auditoribus nudam falsitatem prostituunt, ut quadam mellitae
delectationis dulcedine velut incantatas audientium aures inebrient?

(*De Planctu Naturae* 8,17)

[Or are you attempting to claim credibility for the cloudy fictions of the poets, which the efforts of the art of poetry have depicted? [. . .] Or do you not know how poets prostitute naked falsehood to their audience with no protecting garment, that they may make drunk the ears of the listener with the pleasure of a certain honeyed sweetness, as if by enchantment?]

Later, the association of Genius' left hand with transgressive mythological figures once again highlights the ostensible perniciousness of such stories. In the *Minneleich*, by contrast, the persona is more worried by forms of literature which do not function as a response to, and a trigger for, desire. He formulates his didactic imperative („praise women“) in nostalgic terms, advocating the return to *der alden norme* of a golden age, during which Minnedienst entailed the performance of an idealised masculine identity though a combination of chivalric and literary endeavour:⁶⁷

Man, du solt pris en vrouwen forme,
ouch eren nach der alden norme.
gedenke an hohe vürsten,

Die sich hie vor durch vrouwen gurten,
an turnei tjost mit strit behurten:
sus liez ir ger sich dürsten.

Da von sie manicvaldez grüzen
gevlochten mit den worden süzen
erwurben von den munden.

(III,28,1-9)⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Cf. Stackmann 1988, 14. See also III.4-5: *Wer willet man uf mancher hande manlich tat? / wip, bistuz?*

⁶⁸ Similarly III,14,4: *ei, man, uf vrouwen pris traget lobes gomen!*

This promulgation of *der alden norme* is partly a reflection of Frauenlob's particular position within the *wîp/vrouwe strît*,⁶⁹ but could also be read as a statement of polemical unease with broader discourses of sex and gender in which unconditional praise of the female sex is no longer necessarily the norm. Possible examples of such „disrespectful“ writing might include Neidhart-style Minnesang, or Spruchdichtung emphasising the subordination of wives to their husbands.

*

The aim of this analysis has been to show that the concerns of the *Minneleich* are intimately connected with Alan's *De Planctu Naturae*, even if Frauenlob's ultimately develops them in a very different direction. This is apparent, not only from his adaptation of the iconography associated with the Natura-figure in *De Planctu Naturae*, but also from his appropriation of certain metaphors (e.g. hammers), and above all from his foregrounding of the hermaphrodite as the allegorical engenderer of normative desire. The feminized hermaphrodite challenges the whole problematization of wrongful desire in *De Planctu Naturae*: Although Frauenlob's *Minneleich* does not have sodomy as its explicit preoccupation, and although the persona does not adduce the criterion of sweetness strategically in order to legitimise deviant sexuality, the willingness to label all objects of desire as „female“ can either be interpreted as opening the flood-gates and saying 'anything goes' – or as a step back from the specifics of sexual behaviour. For Frauenlob, the key issues are poetological, associated with harnessing desire for the purposes of praise. In this undertaking, gender is of paramount importance, yet also strangely irrelevant.

⁶⁹ Walther von der Vogelweide, *Leich. Lieder. Sangsprüche*, ed. by Christoph Cormeau 1996, 25, IV, 5-6: *Under frowen sint unwîp, / under wîben sint si tiure*. For the debates arising from of this juxtaposition, see Ludwig 1937; Wachinger 1973, 188-246; Bertau 1978; Stackmann 1989, 80-82; Kellner 1998; Egidi 2002, 245-337.

Bibliography

Primary Literature

Alan of Lille (2013): *Literary Works*. Ed. and transl. by Winthrop Wetherbee. Cambridge, Mass. / London: Harvard University Press (=Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library).

Augustine (1955): *De Civitate Dei Libri I-XXII*. Ed. by Bernard Dombart and Alfons Kalb. 2 vols. Turnhout: Brepols 1955 (=Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 14.1-2).

Biblia Pauperum (1990): *The Bible of the Poor [Biblia Pauperum]. A Facsimile and Edition of the British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2*. Ed. and transl. with a commentary by Albert C. Labriola and John W. Smeltz. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Frauenlob (1981): *Frauenlob (Heinrich von Meissen): Leichs, Sangsprüche, Lieder*. Ed. Karl Stackmann and Karl Bertau, 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (=Göttingen Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, 119-120).

John of Salisbury (1909): *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici sive De Nvgis Cvralivm Libri VIII*. Ed by Clemens C. J. Webb. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Konrad von Würzburg (1926): *Die Goldene Schmiede des Konrad von Würzburg*. Ed. by Edward Schröder. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Peter the Chanter (1855). *Verbum Abbreviatum*. Ed. By Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: s.n., (=Patrologia Latina, 205), 23-554.

Walther von der Vogelweide (1996): *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*. Ed. by Christoph Cormeau, based on the edition by Karl Lachmann. Berlin / New York: De Gruyter.

Secondary Literature

Allen, Valerie (2013), „Alan of Lille on the Little Bits that Make a Difference“, in: Brown, Jennifer/Segol, Marla (eds.): *Sexuality, Sociality and Cosmology in Medieval Literary Texts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Aurnhammer, Achim (1986): *Androgynie. Studien zu einem Motiv in der europäischen Literatur*. Cologne: Böhlau (=Literatur und Leben, N.F. 30).

- Bartel, Martin (2014): „*Sin lib, sin gut mir blibet*. Frauenlob, Frau Welt und seine Alanus-Rezeption im Sangspruch VII,30“, in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Geschichte* 143, 166-182.
- Bein, Thomas (1988): *Sus hup sich ganzer liebe vrevele. Studien zu Frauenlobs Minneleich*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang (=Europäische Hochschulschriften, 1062).
- Bertau, Karl (1978): „Zum *wîp-frowe*-Streit“, in: *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 59, 225-232.
- Julianne Bruneau (2009): „Truth, Sex, and Divine Poetics in Alan of Lille’s *De Planctu Naturae*“, in: Kerby-Fulton, Kathryn (ed.): *Women and the Divine in Literature before 1700*. Victoria: ELS Editions, 65-86.
- Cadden, Joan (1993): *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages. Medicine, Science and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daston, Lorraine/Park, Katharine (1996): „The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature. Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France“, in: Fradenburg, Louise/Freccero, Louise (eds.): *Premodern Sexualities*. New York/London: Routledge, 116-136.
- Dronke, Peter (1974): *Fabula. Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism*. Leiden: Brill (=Mittellateinische Studien und Texte, 9).
- Egidi, Margret (2002): *Höfische Liebe: Entwürfe der Sangspruchdichtung. Literarische Vefahrensweise von Reinmar von Zweter bis Frauenlob*. Heidelberg: C. Winter (=Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, GRM-Beiheft, 17).
- Finckh, Ruth (1999): *Minor Mundus Homo. Studien zur Mikrokosmos-Idee in der Mittelalterlichen Literatur*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (=Palaestra, 306).
- Fritsch-Staar, Susanne (1999): „Androgynie und Geschlechterdifferenz. Zu Frauenlobs Minneleich“, in: *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* N.F. 9.1, 57-71.
- Guyann, Noah D. (2007): *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Huber, Christoph (1988a): *Die Aufnahme und Verarbeitung des Alanus ab Insulis in mittelhochdeutschen Dichtungen. Untersuchungen zu Thomasin von Zerklære, Gottfried von Straßburg, Frauenlob, Heinrich von Neustadt, Heinrich von St. Gallen, Heinrich von Mûgeln und Johannes von Tepl*. München: Artemis (=Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 89).
- Christoph Huber (1988b), „Frauenlob zum Minneprozess“, in: Werner Schröder (ed.): *Cambridge Frauenlob-Kolloquium 1986*. Berlin: Schmidt (=Wolfram-Studien, 10), 151-158.

Hudson, Anne (1997): „*Hermaphrodita or Ambidexter: Wycliffite Views on Clerks in Secular Office*“, in: Aston, Margaret/Richmond, Colin (eds.): *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*. Stroud/New York: Sutton Publishing, 41-51.

Kellner, Beate (1998): „Vindelse‘. Konturen von Autorschaft in Frauenlobs ‚Selbststrühmung‘ und im ‚wip-vrowe‘-Streit“, in: Andersen, Elizabeth/Simon, Anne/Strohschneider, Peter (eds.): *Autor und Autorschaft im Mittelalter. XIV. Anglo-German Colloquium (Meißen 1995)*. Tübingen: De Gruyter, 255-276.

Kellner, Beate (2017): „Allegorien der Natur bei Alanus ab Insulis“, in: Huss, Bernhard/Nelting, David (eds.): *Schriftsinn und Epochalität: Zur historischen Prägnanz allegorischer und symbolischer Sinnstiftung*. Heidelberg: C. Winter (=Germanisch Romanische Monatsheft, 1981), 113-14.

Krayer, Rudolf (1960): *Frauenlob und die Natur-Allegorese. Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchungen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des antiken Traditionsgut*. Heidelberg: C. Winter (=Germanische Bibliothek).

Kreibich, Christina (2000): *Der mittelhochdeutsche Minneleich. Ein Beitrag zu seiner Inhaltsanalyse*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann (=Würzburger Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, 21).

Leupin, Alexandre (1989): *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*. Transl. by Kate M. Cooper. Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press.

Long, Kathleen (2006): *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe*. Aldershot: Routledge.

Ludwig, Erika (1937): *Wip und frouwe. Geschichte der Worte und Begriffe in der Lyrik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart/Berlin: Kohlhammer (=Tübinger Germanistische Arbeiten, 24).

Masson, Cynthia (2014): „Text as Stone: Desire, Sex and the Figurative Hermaphrodite in the Ordinal and Compound of Alchemy“, in: Hopkins, Amanda/Rouse, Robert Allen/Rushton, Cory James (eds.): *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 111-126

Metzler, Irina (2010): „Hermaphroditism in the Western Middle Ages: Physicians, Lawyers and the Intersexed Person“, in: Crawford, Sally/Lee, Christina (eds.): *Bodies of Knowledge: Cultural Interpretations of Illness and Medicines in Medieval Europe*. Oxford: BAR Publishing (=Studies in Early Medicine 1. BAR International Series, 2170), 27-40.

Modersohn, Mechthild (1997): *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter. Ikonographische Studien zu Darstellungen der personifizierten Natur*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Nederman, Cary J./True, Jacqui (1996): „The Third Sex: The Idea of the Hermaphrodite in Twelfth-Century Europe“, in: *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6.4, 497-517.

Newman, Barbara (2002): *God and the Goddesses. Vision, Poetry and Belief in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Newman, Barbara (2006): *Frauenlob's Song of Songs. A Medieval German Poet and His Masterpiece*. University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Obermaier, Sabine (1995): *Von Nachtigallen und Handwerkern: „Dichtung über Dichtung“ in Minnesang und Sangspruchdichtung*. Tübingen: Niemeyer (=Hermaea, N.F. 75).

Rollo, David (2011): *Kiss My Relics: Hermaphroditic Fictions of the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rubin, Miri (1994): „The Person in the Form: Medieval Challenges to Bodily ‚Order‘“ in: Kay, Sarah/Rubin, Miri: *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 100-122.

Scanlon, Larry (1995): „Unspeakable Pleasures: Alain de Lille, Sexual Regulation and the Priesthood of Genius“, in: *The Romanic Review* 86, 213-242.

Schibanoff, Susan (2001), „Sodomy's Mark: Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun and the Medieval Theory of Authorship“, in: Burger, Glenn/Kruger, Steven F.: *Queering the Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 28-56.

Stackmann/Bertau (1981): see above, Frauenlob (1981).

Stackmann, Karl (1988): „Frauenlob, Verführer zu ‚einer gränzenlosen Auslegung‘“: in Werner Schröder (ed.): *Cambridger Frauenlob-Kolloquium 1986*. Berlin: Schmidt (=Wolfram-Studien,10), 9-25.

Stackmann, Karl (1989): „Frauenlob und Wolfram von Eschenbach“, in: Gärtner, Kurt/Heinzle, Joachim (eds.): *Studien zu Wolfram von Eschenbach. Festschrift für Werner Schröder zum 75. Geburtstag*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 75-84.

Stackmann, Karl, with Haustein, Jens (1990): *Wörterbuch zur Göttinger Frauenlob-Ausgabe*. Göttingen: Vandenhock & Ruprecht (= Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, 186).

Steinmetz, Ralf-Henning (1994): *Liebe als universales Prinzip bei Frauenlob. Ein volkssprachlicher Weltentwurf in der europäischen Dichtung um 1300*. München: Niemeyer (= Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 106).

Swift, Helen (2011): „Pourquoy appellerions nous ces choses differentes, qu'une heure, un moment, un mouvement peuvent rendre du tout semblables?‘ Representing Gender Identity in the Late Medieval French Querelle des femmes“, in: L'Estrange, Elisabeth/More, Alison (eds.): *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe. Construction, Transformation, and Subversion, 600-1530*. Farnham, Surrey/Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 89-106.

Volfing, Annette (1997): *Heinrich von Mûgeln, 'Der meide kranz'. A Commentary*. Tübingen: Niemeyer (=Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 111).

Volfing, Annette (2012): „Wunne in paradise: Zur Definition von wîp in der Spruchdichtung und der meisterlichen Liedkunst“, in: Brüggem, Elke/Coxon, Sebastian/Holznagel, Franz-Josef/Suerbaum, Almut (eds.): *Norm und Normativität im deutschen Mittelalter. XX. Anglo-German Colloquium*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 401-418.

Wachinger, Burghart (1973): *Sängerkrieg. Untersuchungen zur Spruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts*. München: Beck (=Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 42).

Wiesinger, Michaela (2017): *Mischungsverhältnisse. Naturphilosophisches Wissen und die Elementenlehre in der Literatur des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: De Gruyter (=Hermaea, N. F. 142).

Abstract

This article suggests that Frauenlob's *Minneleich* should be read as a creative response to Alan's *De Planctu Naturae*. The first section examines the relationship between the two texts, arguing that the *Alanus*-references at the start of the *Minneleich* signal an important intertextual relationship, the broader significance of which has generally been downplayed by critics. The second section focuses specifically on Frauenlob's hermaphrodite, placed at the imaginative centre of the *Minneleich*. It is argued Frauenlob's very positive presentation of the hermaphrodite constitutes an innovative and provocative take on the questions of transgressive desire and gender instability that run through *De Planctu Naturae*. In the *Minneleich*, the particular foregrounding of sweetness as a criterion implies a certain flexibility in the construction of gender roles. Conversely, the article also highlights the link between sexual desire and the production of literature: In the *Minneleich*, normative male sexual desire is fundamentally linked to the requirement to produce an equally normative form of literary praise.

