



Medieval Transfigurations: Ruminations on Jean d'Arras's *Melusine* and Liminal Humanity

By Zach Gonzales, Department of English



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

Background

Jean d'Arras's *Melusine*; or, *The Noble History of Lusignan* (14C) traces the destinies of a fairy woman (Melusine), her mortal husband (Raymondin), and their children. Central to the machination of this medieval romance is the liminal ontological space in which Melusine exists—namely as a fairy, as a woman, as a mother, and most significantly, as a “human.” How does this figuring of Melusine inform her functional role in the story? What does this liminality entail for Melusine's existence *qua* Melusine?

Thematic Concepts:

- **Liminality:** defined as the “in-betweenness” of trans being whereby one's gender expression is not easily dictated in binary terms.
- **Hybridity:** understood as the enmeshing, the “crossing”, of two or more states of being.
- **Ontological Humanism:** assumes the “human” as autonomous, rational, and self-evident.
- **Intelligibility:** the extent to which a subject is recognizably signified through discursive means of ontology and epistemology.

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(Trans)gendering Melusine

- Melusine's claim to humanity depends on her intelligible performance of “woman” and “mother.”
- Melusine's body is a site of trans/gender insofar as her flesh is marked as “human female” and “fairy”

Defining a Trans Analytic

A trans analytic is a conceptual lens conceived from scholarship in trans studies, its aim intent on uncovering and contesting the “metacontextual conditions” informing our interactions with trans being and phenomena (Stryker and Currah 6). Thus, in this paper, a trans analytic bears new light on the figure of Melusine as a trans being as opposed to merely a “human woman” or “fairy.”

Main Claim:

That is, while Melusine bears the physical signifiers of “human woman,” her hidden cursed body undermines such signification for she is at once a human, a woman, and a fairy. This paper, thus, reads the characterizing and figuring of Melusine through a trans analytic, interrogating the underlying ontological assumptions informing Melusine's being as a natural/supernatural hybrid.