

Orta Çağ Anglo-Norman Romanlarında Kadın Şifacılar

Female Healers in The Medieval Anglo-Norman Romances

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Öz- Tarih boyunca temel tıp bilimlerinde cinsiyet farklılıkları kadın şifacıları olumsuz etkilemiştir. Kadınların yaratıcılığı, şifacılığı ve doğası, yaratılış mitlerine de konu olan toprak ve bitkilerle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Kadınlar, özellikle toplumsal cinsiyet ayrımcılığına maruz kaldıkları Orta Çağ'da, genellikle dini, sosyal ve ekonomik nedenlerle olumsuz tasvirlenmiştir. Kadın şifacılar genellikle sihir ve mucize gibi çeşitli soyut tedavi yöntemlerini uygulama ile ilişkilendirilse de, bu şifacıların tıbbi bilimlerdeki bilgilerini uygulama yöntemleri proto-modern tıpa örnek teşkil etmiştir. Ataerkil ve dini baskılara rağmen kadın şifacılar varlıklarını korumuş, tıbbi bilimleri uygulamış ve bu alanda de yetilerinin olduğunu gözler önüne sermiştir. Bu makale, kadın şifacıların iki Anglo-Norman romanlarında özellikle de Gui de Warewic ve Boeve de Haumtone'da nasıl ve niçin önem arz ettiğini gün yüzüne çıkarmaktadır. Bir başka deyişle bu çalışma Orta Çağ Avrupa'sında iyileştirme yöntemlerinin temsillerini ve kadın şifacıların temel tıp bilimlerini uygulaması sürecindeki konumunu irdelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler- Orta Çağ, İngiltere, Tıp, Edebiyat, Kadın, Şifa.

Abstract - Throughout history, gender differences in medicine severely and adversely affected women healers. Women's creativity, healing, and nature were associated with the earth and plants and were the subject of creation myths. Women were generally oppressed for religious, social, and economic reasons, especially during the Middle Ages, and suffered from gender discrimination. While female healers were usually associated with magic and miracles, they put the knowledge of medicine into practice, and their applications could be considered proto-modern medicine. Despite the patriarchal and religious oppressions, gifted women healers continued to exist and did not leave the field of medicine. This paper explores how and why two Anglo-Norman romances, particularly Gui de Warewic and Boeve de Haumtone portray female healers. In other words, this paper examines the representations of medical treatments in medieval Europe and the continuity of the existence of female healers in medieval England.

Keywords- Middle Ages, England, Medicine, Literature, Female, Healing.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Throughout history, gender differences in medicine severely and adversely affected women healers. The creativity and healing nature of women was associated with the earth and plants, which were the subject of creation myths worldwide. Women were generally oppressed for religious, social, and economic reasons, especially during the Middle Ages when they suffered from gender discrimination. However, female healers applied the knowledge of medicine, which could be considered proto-modern medicine, against various abstract treatments and medical applications such as magic and miracles. Despite all this severe patriarchal and religious oppression, women healers continued to exist and did not leave the field of medicine in which they were gifted. There were two different approaches to women in the Christian tradition. The first was the myth of Eve as the great seductress of Adam, notoriously tainting womanhood. Because of her sinful actions, men were punished, and Jesus Christ sacrificed his life for the salvation of humanity. In other words, a woman created the problem for a man, and another man solved it. As a result of this religious belief, women were to be dominated and subjugated by men. Otherwise, they could easily resist and lead humanity to evil.

With the dissemination of Christianity, women in Europe were confined to their homes, deprived of their right to speak, entrusted only with domestic duties, and ousted from all authoritative positions. Women healers were also greatly affected by this change and intense pressure and had to leave all branches of medicine to men. Secondly, their attitude towards the Virgin Mary as a holy woman, the mother of Jesus Christ, could not be like Eve as a seductress or evil. The Saviour of humankind can not be associated with the original sin of Eve. That is why his mother's virginity overshadowed her motherhood and creativity. She had to be pure, naive, nurturing, and selfless, like Mother Nature, who does not need a man to give birth. They forced people to feel sympathy for the Virgin Mary as the mother of their holy Saviour, which was a clear expression of patriarchal oppression. Women had two sides: one was deceitful and evil, the other pure, naive and selfless. Medieval women were dehumanised with these opposite qualities: evil or virtuous. The grave difference and alteration of women and the woman healer's status are not rigid as considered. This was a process of becoming and changing according to the circumstances of the historical periods. The process had two entirely dual oppositions: women had the highest status in society in ancient times, and they had the lowest status in the Middle Ages. In the ancient periods, they were worshipped and praised by both sexes. Yet, they were restricted and subdued in the medieval period. Although women healers were also heavily affected by patriarchal and religious oppression, they had never abandoned their natural relationship with healing and medicine. The historical process of women healers had a transitional period when some could still practise their medical knowledge with both sexes. At the same time, the others are oppressed by patriarchal and religious society.

Medieval literature, particularly Anglo-Norman literature, show little interest in the representation of women. There are representations of women in the Anglo-Norman literature, but female healers are overlooked. In the present study, women healers naturally gifted in medicine are examined in *Gui de Warewic* and *Boeve de Haumtone*. Gui and Boeve always need female partners. These heroes cannot complete their sentimental journey without these female companions. Felice, for instance, is a noblewoman trained by her tutors from Toledo, rejects Gui, and sends him off to battle to become a social equal in *Gui de Warewic*. After his journey to knighthood is complete, she accepts him. She cures his mental weakness, for healing is not only a physical matter but also a spiritual one, as body and soul treat for a full recovery. Likewise, Josiane acts as a healer in *Boeve de Haumtone*, and her healing power through the use of stones, herbs, or care and feeding resembles the ancient healing goddesses and the Virgin Mary. In the Middle Ages, medicine is segregated by gender; female healers take care of women and children in addition to childbearing. While medieval Christian teachings provide information about women to heal women and children, few romances suggest more than that. Thus, this paper concentrates on two Anglo-Norman literary works that focus on the portrayal of the female healer and examines the representations of these treatment methods in medieval Europe and the existence of female healers.

INTRODUCTION

Gender problems always exist in the history of humankind, and women, in particular, continue to be subjected to strong pressures in professional and social spheres. These oppressions can be found in mythological, historical, religious, and literary works. Early on, women are restricted and forced to do housework, which exclude them from fields of work, professions, and scientific disciplines.¹ However, these restrictions are lifted by women's persistence, and they enter and begin to lead scientific fields over time. Besides these fields, one of the oldest scientific disciplines is medicine, which women dominate before the brutal patriarchal and religious oppression of women. The wise women are the ones who know about diseases, herbs, treatments, and the care and birth of children. This is unsurprising given the prestigious social status of women since the early periods of human history. As for the creation myth, the association of birth and death with the earth reinforce women's position. The ignorance of man's function in fertilisation reinforces this mythological notion and the supremacy of women. Despite the few male representations in the archaeological finds of cave paintings and funerary figurines, an abundance of female figures symbolising production and fertility underlines the superiority of women in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods.² Eliade Mircea explains that women dominate humanity with their knowledge of agriculture and herbalism:

Women and feminine sacrality are raised to the first rank. Since women played a decisive part in the domestication of plants, they became the owners of the cultivated fields, which raises their social position and creates characteristic institutions, such as, for example, matrilocation, the husband being obliged [sic] to live in his wife's house.³

The origins of the Western understanding of healing are found in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. Temples are used for healing purposes, which are considered miracles.⁴ Asclepius is the ancestor of physicians and has the same healing method as the straight divine conception in the night.⁵ The deity then heals them directly or through his representatives, the sacred serpents and dogs, through an epiphany or sacred dreams. His statue, with a magic wand, a snake and a dog at his feet, is in the temple at Epidaurus.⁶ Those seeking divine assistance are expected to spend the night in the temple.

These prehistoric examples reflect the powerful status of the healers through their absolute strength and their relationship with nature. Common people respect and praise them and see them as connected to the invisible realms. However, the tremendous climate changes harm these simple people who worship Mother Nature and other healing goddesses. No matter how long they worship the goddesses, their condition deteriorate. The seasons change, and the soil rebels against all their wishes and prayers. The diseases and famine are challenging for them. They pray more and more to these goddesses and Mother Nature, but again nothing change, and this time they attribute the acts of war to Mother Nature. But, this does not change the results. These goddesses and Mother Nature are replaced by other gods who are fierce, violent, and strong physically. They have more luck fighting against harsh circumstances than the female goddess of healing and Mother Nature. With the advent of monotheistic religions, particularly Christianity, these gods are eventually replaced by male gods.⁷ During this process, all healing practices performed by women are banned and considered magic or sorcery.

¹ In the Middle Ages, labour was segregated according to gender. Men's and women's duties in public and domestic spaces were strictly defined in accordance with their gender identities from their childhood onwards. Oya Bayılıtmış Öğütçü, "Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Edimselliği ve Ortaçağ Nasihatnamaları [Gender Performativity and Medieval Conduct Books]", *İngiliz Edebiyatında Toplumsal Cinsiyet* [Gender in English Literature], (Eds. Huriye Reis and Aytül Özüm), Hacettepe University Press, Ankara, 2017, ss. 35-36.

² Patricia C. Rice, "Prehistoric Venuses: Symbols of Motherhood or Womanhood?", *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37, no. 4, 1981, ss. 402-414.

³ Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, s. 40.

⁴ Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic in New Testament Times*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, s. 67.

⁵ Kee, *Medicine*, s. 67.

⁶ Epidaurus was an important trade centre in ancient Greece, located on the eastern shore of the Argolid in the northern Peloponnese, and is famous for its temple to Asclepius, the god of healing, which dates from the 4th century BCE. Richard Allan Tomlinson, Epidaurus in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.

⁷ J. Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, Rider, London, 1990, s. 28.

Healing in Medieval Christian Tradition

The rise and dissemination of Christianity change and reverse the status of women, especially in Europe, though Jesus himself attacks the patriarchy and praises his female followers, which astonishes his contemporaries.⁸ He chooses the most loving and maternal images from the Jewish tradition and consider God as androgynous, who is both father and mother.⁹ However, towards the end of 200 AD, these feminine images are deliberately chosen in the book later entitled the New Testament.¹⁰ The criterion necessary for fully developing the woman as a healer - her creation with a sacred image - is thus found in early Christian beliefs. Under these conditions, the female correlation between spirituality and the healing profession develop naturally. Moreover, the work of the women healers of that time reflects the ancient religious teaching: the most obvious manifestation of love is the satisfaction of the physical and spiritual needs of all, without any distinction between rich and poor. The most respected healer in this period is Fabiola, a close follower of St Jerome. However, her growing reputation means a great danger and threat to her in Christian society. Especially the attitude and quotes of her close mentor, St Jerome, about female healers creates a strong foundation for Christianity's misogynistic approach.¹¹ However, the first 1000 years -after Jesus's birth- are considered the calm before the storm and the beginning of the Dark Ages.

Both Christianity and pagan traditions mark these periods. To clarify the difference between Jesus's miracles and magic, any kind of procedure is considered magic and rejected. Accordingly, secular healing with herbs, stones, procedures, and devices is considered natural or white magic.¹² Healing with forbidden and evil rituals and procedures such as bloodshed and summoning the dead is rejected as dark magic by the religious authorities. According to the religious authorities, healers who do not adhere to religious teachings, are considered wise women. Their healing methods are considered white magic.¹³ These wise women have extensive knowledge and the ability to use indigenous and dangerous herbs such as highly risky alkaloids. All their knowledge and healing procedures are carried out in secret.¹⁴ This confidentiality is related to the knowledge of treatments and considered magic. For example, they are able to brew some treatments that induce uterine contractions during labour, abortions in unwanted pregnancies, or produce a placebo effect. However, their power and knowledge inevitably irritate the Christian authorities.

In addition to these particular types of healing, there are two different approaches to women in the Christian tradition. The first is the myth of Eve as the great seductress of Adam, notoriously tainting womanhood. Because of her sinful actions, all human beings are punished, and Jesus Christ sacrifices his life for the salvation of humanity. In other words, a woman creates the problem for a man, and another man solves it. As a result of this belief, women are to be dominated and subjugated by men. Otherwise, they cannot easily resist and lead humanity to evil. With the dissemination of Christianity, women in Europe are confined to their homes, deprived of their right to speak, entrusted only with domestic duties, and ousted from all authoritative positions. Women healers are also greatly affected by this change and intense pressure and have to leave all branches of medicine to men.

Secondly, it is their attitude towards the Virgin Mary as a holy woman, the mother of Jesus Christ. The Saviour of humankind cannot be associated with Eve's original sin.¹⁵ That is why his mother's virginity overshadows her motherhood and creativity.¹⁶ She has to be pure, naive, nurturing, and selfless, like Mother Nature, who does not need a man to give birth. They force people to feel sympathy for the

⁸ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 38.

⁹ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 39.

¹⁰ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 39.

¹¹ Friedrich, Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe, 1100-1350*, translated by Janet Sondheimer, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962, s. 322.

¹² Katharine, Park, "Medicine and Society in Medieval Europe, 500-1500", *Medicine in Society*, 1992, s. 64.

¹³ Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, D.S. Brewer, Cambridge, 2010, s. 117.

¹⁴ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 42.

¹⁵ It is also for this reason that Christine de Pizan cites Virgin Mary as the queen of her allegorical city of ladies in her *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Oya Bayılmış Öğütçü, "Christine de Pizan'ın *Kadınlar Şehri Kitabı* ve İdeolojik Bir Aygıt Olarak Edebiyat [Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* and Literature as an Ideological Apparatus]", *Batı Edebiyatında İdeoloji – Ideology in Western Literature*, (Eds. Ertuğrul İşler, et al.), Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Denizli, 2012, s. 571.

¹⁶ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 53.

Virgin Mary as the mother of their holy Saviour, which is a clear expression of patriarchal oppression. Women have two sides: one is deceitful and evil, the other pure, naive and selfless. They have to be fixed with these opposite qualities: evil or virtuous, which dehumanise medieval women. The grave difference and alteration of women and women healers' status are not rigid as considered. This is a process of becoming and changing according to the circumstances of the historical periods. The process has two entirely dual oppositions: women have the highest status in society in ancient times, while they have the lowest in the Middle Ages. In the ancient periods, they are worshipped and praised by both sexes. Yet, they are restricted and subdued in Medieval Europe. Although women healers are also heavily affected by patriarchal and religious oppression, they have never abandoned their natural relationship with healing and medicine. The historical process of women healers has a transitional period when some can still practise their medical knowledge with both sexes. At the same time, the others are already oppressed by patriarchal and religious society.

Medieval literature, particularly Anglo-Norman literature, shows little interest in the representation of gifted women. While, there are representations of women in Anglo-Norman literature, female healers are overlooked. In the present study, women healers who are naturally gifted in medicine will be examined in *Gui de Warewic* and *Boeve de Haumtone*. Gui and Boeve always need female partners to support them. These heroes cannot complete their sentimental journey without these female companions. Felice, for example, a noblewoman trained by her Toledo tutors, initially rejects Gui and sends him off to battle to become a social equal in *Gui de Warewic*. After his journey to knighthood is complete, she accepts him. She cures Gui's mental weakness, for healing is not only a physical matter but also a spiritual one, as body and soul are one and must both be treated for a full recovery. Similarly, Josiane acts as a healer in *Boeve de Haumtone*, and her healing power through the use of stones, herbs, or simply care and feeding resembles the ancient healing goddesses and the Virgin Mary.¹⁷ In the Middle Ages, medicine is segregated by gender; female healers look after women's and children's health in addition to childbearing.¹⁸ These areas are left to women because male healers are restricted. While medieval Christian teachings provide information about women who are only allowed to heal women and children, few Anglo-Norman romances seem to suggest more than that.

The Female Healer in *Gui de Warewic*

In *Gui de Warewic*, Felice's spiritual healing of heartbreak is significant. It leads Gui to a hopeless and incurable disease, a lovesickness. In the Anglo-Norman romance, the author describes this illness so that no doctors can cure it, only the person who causes it. The distance and difference between the two sexes are emphasised in the literary narratives as in the case of Felice. Linda E. Mitchell argues that medieval women are oppressed and forced into silence by a male-dominated society, and women hold important positions as queens, urban matrons, and nobles.¹⁹ Amy Livingstone also points out the power of nobles and their active social role in the Middle Ages.²⁰ Although female identities are less important than male ones in the medieval imagination, this is overlooked in the few literary narratives. Felice is a noblewoman, she is well educated by tutors who are from Toledo. As an intelligent and wise woman, expresses her intelligence through arrogance:

'She was courteous and learned, instructed in all the arts: her tutors, all hoary and white-haired, had come from Toledo and taught her astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry. She had a very proud heart'.²¹

¹⁷ Diane Watt, "Mary the Physician", *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, (Ed. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa), D.S Brewer, Cambridge, 2015, s. 27.

¹⁸ Monica Green, "Women's Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 2, 1989, s. 435.

¹⁹ Linda E Mitchell, "Sources for the History of Medieval Women", *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, (Ed. Linda E. Mitchell), Routledge, New York, 2011, s. X.

²⁰ Amy Livingstone, "Powerful Allies and Dangerous Adversaries; Noblewomen in Medieval Society", *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, (Ed. Linda E. Mitchell), Routledge, New York, 2011, s. 8.

²¹ Judith Weiss, *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui De Warewic: Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, 2008, s. 98. Judith Weiss, *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui De Warewic: Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, 2008, ss. 97-98. Weiss' modern English edition will be used.

Curteise ert e enseigné,
 De tuz arz ert enletré
 Ses meistres esteient venuz
 De Tulette, tuz blancs chanuz
 Ki l'aperneient d'astronomie
 D'arismatike, de jeometrie
 Mult par ert fere de corage.²²

She is well educated and superior to the lay women of medieval England. The portrayal of her tutors also emphasises the high quality of her education, as they are all very wise. As Corinne Saunders states, Toledo was one of the most important cities where occult sciences were taught, along with Salerno, Verona, and Naples.²³ The occult sciences originated in the Arabic tradition of education, include seven independent arts such as music, astronomy, geometry, grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and arithmetic, in addition to the magical arts such as astrology and sorcery.²⁴ Because of her education, she emphasises her superior status, which makes her incredibly proud. She does not accept love from ordinary men. The man she will marry must be her equal. This is the reason why she mercilessly rejects Gui several times:

Aren't you that Gui who is son of Seneschal Sequart? Now, I think you are really fool for asking me for love; you're certainly too bold. (...) Am I not your lord's daughter? You do me great dishonour when you are so foolish as to ask me to become your beloved.²⁵

Dune estes vus iço Gui
 Fiz estes al senescal Sequart?
 Mult vus tienc ore a musart
 Quant d'amur m'avez requis
 Trop estes certes hardis.
 ...
 Dune sui jo fille vostre seigneur?
 Mult me faites grant deshonor
 Quant me requerez de folie
 Que jo seie vostre amie.²⁶

She reflects her education through arrogance and distinguishes herself from other healers because she first ails, then heals him. As Achterberg states, the best way to show love and affection is to satisfy all mental and physical needs.²⁷ She becomes the reason for Gui's heartbreak; then she provides the solution and the path to his healing. Gui's lovesickness for Felice leads him into depression and madness:

I certainly don't want to live! Most of all, I want to die, for that would please me. Oh death, what keeps you? I am so defeated by love! Why don't you come and take me? I've quite gone out of my mind. I'll never again have joy in my life, and I certainly don't care who hears it. I've well deserved to die,

²² *Gui de Warewic* is extant in sixteen MSS and fragments. Alfred Ewert, *Gui de Warewic*, Roman du XIIIe Siècle, Paris: É. Champion, 1933, ll. 63-69. Ewert's Anglo-Norman edition will be used.

²³ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, s. 104.

²⁴ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, s. 104.

²⁵ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s.101.

²⁶ Ewert, *Gui de Warewic*, ll. 334-38; ll. 343-46.

²⁷ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 39.

when the woman who hates me more than anything else is the very one, I love more than my life. This will make me go quite mad.²⁸

Vivre certes mes ne ruis!
 Sur tote rien morir desir
 Car ço me vendreit a pleisir.
 Ahi! mort, u demuers tu?
 Ja m'at amur si vencu!
 Pur quei ne viens e si me prens?
 De tut ai mes perdu les sens
 De ma vie n'avrai mes joie
 Ne me chaut certes qui l'oie.
 La mort ai deservi bien,
 Quant cele qui me het sur tote rien
 Aim plus que ne faz ma vie
 Ço me turnera a grant folie.²⁹

The Count is concerned about his health and sends doctors to heal him. The doctors inquire about his illness, to which he replies that it is highly resistant to treatment. However, this process of heartbreak acts as a catalyst for Gui's development into a hero. He goes to Felice and begs her to murder him. Gui faints while pleading, but Felice does not care of him. Further to his countless faints, Felice pities on him. She promises to recover him if he becomes a splendid, polite, famous, and brave knight. She will offer her hand if he comes back to Warwick with all these qualities. Gui must be her equal by achieving victories in battles and tournaments and returning with glory. When he returns with this glory, Felice accepts him, and they marry.

The Female Healer in *Boeve de Haumtone*

In *Boeve de Haumtone*, the cure refers to the heroine, the Saracen princess Josiane. The text reflects her wisdom, affection, and ability to heal people. The first approach Josiane confronts is the description of the Saracens.³⁰ The Saracens are described as ignorant, faithless, and vicious, and this provides a glimpse to the interactions between the crusaders and the Saracens.³¹ In the text, Boeve often curses and denigrates Josiane's father, Hermine, and other Saracens due to their religion and prophet. For instance, when Josiane's father asks Boeve to marry Josiane, he refuses and curses her;

'King' said the child 'you talk foolishly. Not for all the land in heathen parts nor your daughter with it, rosy-cheeked as she is, would I renounce Jesus son of Mary. Mahomet can't even do as much as an ant, for an ant can move and he can't. Shame on him who trusts in Mahomet'³²

'Rois', ceo dist l'emfes, "vus parlez de folie;
 ke pur tut la tere ke est en paenie
 ne pur ta file ov tut, ke taun test colorie,

²⁸Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 101.

²⁹Ewert, *Gui de Warewic*, ll. 406-16.

³⁰See Hülya Taflı Düzgün, "Sarazenler: Pagan, Müslüman, Türk Çıkması": *Ortaçağda Anadolu'dan İngiltereye: Antakya'nın Şarkısında Türkler, Siyasal Kitabevi, Ankara, 2019, s. 24.*

³¹For further information regarding the Saracen and crusader interactions, see Hülya Taflı Düzgün, "Paiens unt dreit? Reversed dichotomy and the East in *Boeve de Haumtone* and *Bevis of Hampton*", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 47, no. 4, 2020, ss. 560-578.

³²Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 32.

ne vordrai reneier Jhesu, le fiz Marie.

Mahun ne put taunt fere con la formie,

Ke la formie mut, e si ne fet il mie.

Honi seit de son cors ki en Mahun se afie!”³³

Saracens are usually portrayed negatively in order to praise Christian tradition and culture, and such a portrayal is a result of the Christian curse. Saracens are referred to in the text as Turks, Persians, Arabs, Ottomans, and Mohammedans.³⁴ This also emphasises another level of Western ignorance about the Middle Eastern cultures. While the Middle East is associated with various cultures and religions, the *jongleur* cannot differentiate the diversity and portrays the Saracens as if they are same and synonymous. In addition to the portrayal of the male Saracens, the definition of Josiane as a Saracen princess is very significant, because the emphasis on her skin colour, intelligence, and behaviour does not correspond to the traditional portrayal of the male Saracen:

‘The king was an old man, advanced in years. He had a beautiful, wise, and very young daughter called Josiane; no rose in the shade had a more lovely coloring.’³⁵

Lui rois estoit veuz homme e de grant age,

il out une file, que bele fu e sage,

Josiane out a noun, mult estoit de juvene age,

Plus fut ele colouré ke rose en umbrage.³⁶

The description of her colour emphasises her ethnicity. The medieval audience can easily understand that she is a Saracen. As a Saracen princess, she is abducted many times by other Saracen kings and used as a political commodity among them. One of them is Brademund, the king of Damascus. He is described with his pagan soldiers and swears to Mohammed that he will abduct Josiane:

Hermine’ said Brademund, ‘give me your daughter. By Mahomet, if you refuse, I’ll leave you neither castle nor city, nor even half a foot of your land. Josiane shall lie by my side, and then she’ll be given in grief and shame to the poorest man in my land!’³⁷

“Hermine”, dist Brademound, “vostre file me donez,

e, par Mahomet! si vus la deveez,

jeo ne vus lerrai chasteus ne citez

ne de vostre tere ne mie demi pez;

Josiane girra delez le moun costé,

e puis serra doné a doel e a vilté

a le plus mauveis ke seit en ma tere trouvé!”³⁸

Brademund is a fierce, arrogant king who gets everything he wants by threats or invading of lands. He is a typical Saracen king in European medieval imagination. Hermine, Josiane's father, is also a Saracen king, and described as a symbol of wisdom, virtue and compassion. As a Saracen king, his reactions are unusual to the Christian boy, Boeve. Significantly, the text juxtaposes the two opposing sides of Saracen men - the fierce and the wise. The female representations have both opposing sides. The first is Boeve's wicked Christian mother, a deceiver and seductress. When he recounts his mother's

³³ The Anglo-Norman Boeve is extant in two MSS: the fourteenth-century Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS nouv. acq. ff. 4352 and the thirteenth-century MS Firmin Didot. Stimming's Anglo-Norman edition will be used. Albert Stimming, *Der Anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, Halle, Bibliotheca Normannica, 1899, ll. 399-405.

³⁴ Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019, s. 110.

³⁵ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 32.

³⁶ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 370-73.

³⁷ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 34.

³⁸ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 503-509.

betrayal of her husband and her country, he curses her: ‘I am indeed the son of a whore, because my mother is a whore’³⁹, Fiz a une puteine su jeo verrement, / Que ma mere est puteine, si com jeo entent.⁴⁰ Her treachery and wickedness have similarities with the biblical myth of Eve, while the Saracen Josiane is described with similarities to the Virgin Mary. She is a virgin who heals people and gives birth without the support of a man. On the other hand, she accepts patriarchal and religious authority by being baptised.

Furthermore, her wisdom is represented by her knowledge of medicine and healing. She demonstrates her knowledge and education in several ways. First, she cares for full of affection and nurses Boeve many times when he returns from a battle. She also stands by him whenever he needs help. While she is in love with Boeve, she is forced to marry Yvori de Monbraunt. She manages to preserve her virginity with a magic belt when Yvori offers his hand:

Then a powerful and warlike king arrived, called Yvori de Monbraunt, with fifteen kings, all crowned, as his vassals. He came to King Hermine asking for his daughter, and Hermine most graciously consented. Josiane the beautiful heard him; in all her life she had never been so wretched. She had learnt little magic; she made a tight belt of silk.⁴¹

A taunt i vint un roi fort e combataunt,
L’en le apele Yvori de Munbraunt,
Quinze rois out suz li tuz coroune portaunt
il vint al roi Hermine sa file demaundaunt,
Hermine li graunta mult deboneirement.
Josiane le entent od le cors avenaunt,
unkes ne fu si dolent jour de son vivaunt.
Ele out apris aukes de enchaumentement,
Une ceinture fist de seie bien tenaunt.⁴²

In Christianity, virginity is very significant for women as a sign of grace, nobility, superiority, loyalty, innocence, and purity. By this belt, no man can ever approach her. While her ability is associated with so-called magic, her education includes occult sciences and magical arts in Eastern educational tradition. That is why the Patriarch first questions her virginity when he talks to Boeve. When Boeve re-encounters Josiane, he echoes the Patriarch’s words:

And there is something else I must tell you: I recently made my confession to the Patriarch and he ordered me not to take a wife unless she were, without deceit, a virgin. If you were a virgin, it would be great: you have been seven whole years with Yvori.⁴³

E une altre chose vus voil conter
Jeo me confessay al patriare l’altr’er
E il me comanda, ke je ne preise mulier,
Si ele ne fust pucele sanz fauser;
E si vus fussez pucele, se serroit a merveiler
vus avez esté o Yvori set ans plener.⁴⁴

³⁹ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s.30.

⁴⁰ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 278-79.

⁴¹ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 43.

⁴² Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 992-1000.

⁴³ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 53.

⁴⁴ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 1474-79.

The main reason is to associate Josiane with the Virgin Mary, and portray her Saracen value for the sympathy of the Christians. On the other hand, the Saracen Josiane resembles the Virgin Mary who heals people.⁴⁵ As Taflı Düzgün suggests, women are sometimes considered seductress, evil, sentimental, irrational, and restrained in Western medieval cultures.⁴⁶ Under the authority of the church, women can practise their healing arts. However, they are only allowed to deal with gynaecology, obstetrics, and children. Only male physicians care for male patients, while nuns are allowed to treat only women and children. Jeanne Achterberg notes that women healers spend much of their time assisting pregnant women, observing births and deaths, and healing and caring for sick children.⁴⁷ In contrast to the gendered division of medicine, Josiane and Felice heal men in different ways in both texts.

Women as healers are accepted and respected by the Virgin Mary, who is recognised as a doctor and associated with childbearing and healing medicine.⁴⁸ Josiane gives birth to her twin sons alone, and her long-term treatment of Sabaoth's severe wounds is consistent evidence of her healer persona. Josiane heals Sabaoth in seven years:

‘She took good care of Sabaoth the warrior for a full seven years and three months’⁴⁹; mult garda bien Sabaoth li guerrier / jeskes a set ans e trois mois pleners.⁵⁰

She uses herbs, stones, and some remedies to heal Sabaoth. Besides healing others, she also manages her birth giving process without any support. During childbearing, she does not allow men to help her:

My lord,’ she said, ‘certainly not! It’s neither right nor a custom, nor have we ever heard of a man seeing a woman giving birth’ Go away, withdraw from here, and leave the decision to God; St. Mary will be at the delivery. They left, miserable and unsmiling. Josiane stayed in the shelter; the moment was propitious, and she gave birth to two sons.⁵¹

“Sire”, dist ele, “ma foi, nany!
N’e dreit ne lei, ne nus ne avum oi,
k’enfant de femme dust home ver.
Alez vus en, celez vus de ci,
Si lessez dameden convener;
Sente Marie serra a le departer.”
Il se turnent dolent e sanz riz.
Josian est en la loge remis;
Oure fu bon, si enfante deus fiz.⁵²

She asks her husband and Terri to leave her alone for birth giving. In other words, she creates a safe zone for herself where she can give birth alone. However, the process of giving birth without help is very laborious. It is both her natural healing instinct and her medical knowledge that help her give birth. Josiane becomes her midwife and healer during the birth, which is only possible with her medical knowledge. In addition, the birth in the forest is also a great symbol of the healer's strong relationship with nature like Mother Earth, who needs no one to reproduce and have children. However, during this strong portrayal of a healer, Josiane is depicted with a religious doctrine, worshipping the Virgin Mary instead of Mother Earth. Simone de Beauvoir explains that the patriarchal and religious oppression of

⁴⁵ Watt, *Mary the Physician*, s. 27.

⁴⁶ Hülya Taflı Düzgün, "A Model Of Sheela Na Gig In Lybeaus Desconus And The Squire Of Low Degree?" *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil Ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 54, no. 2 2014, s.73.

⁴⁷ Achterberg, *Woman as Healer*, s. 54.

⁴⁸ Watt, *Mary the Physician*, s. 27.

⁴⁹ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 77.

⁵⁰ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 2787-88.

⁵¹ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 75.

⁵² Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 2702-10.

women, and the depiction of the Virgin Mary are symbols of women's inferiority during the Middle Ages:

For the first time in history, the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority. This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin – it is the rehabilitation of a woman through the accomplishment of her defeat.⁵³

Like the Virgin Mary, Josiane accepts her inferiority to men by first trying to prove her virginity and then being baptised. She tries to be defined and oppressed by patriarchy and Christianity. From the beginning of the text, Boeve's repeated rejection of her is further evidence of her inferiority. Although she receives no positive response from Boeve, she cares for and nurses him:

‘Swiftly Josiane removed the knight’s armour. She led him into a fine chamber above and an upper room when he was disarmed. She brought him meat, which he needed, and she began to carve it’.⁵⁴

Ignelement Josiane desarme le chevaler.

Quant il fust desarmé, ele li va mener

En une bele chaumbre desuz un soler;

Viaunde li aporte, dount il out mester,

Ele meimes comença la viaunde a trencher.⁵⁵

The fact is that this is another kind of healing. Josiane offers help and support physically or spiritually. While she is in love with Boeve, he rejects her and she cries most of the time. She needs a partner to complete her, for, without him, she is torn. For instance, Boeve decides to take back his land after she is baptised. When she learns of his plans, she cries and reproaches herself:

Josiane saw this and began to weep. She came to Boeve: ‘You are much to blame for wanting to leave me here behind you; now princes and their knights will come and take me by force, and I won’t be able to stop them’.⁵⁶

Josian li voit si comence a plurer;

Ele vint a Boun: “mult estes a blamer,

Kant vus me volez ci après vus lesser;

Ore vendrunt se princes e ses chevalers;

Par force me prendrunt, ne purrai veyer”.⁵⁷

Medieval Christian teachings provide information about women being allowed to heal women and children. Josiane heals men, reflecting her uniqueness. Above all, Josiane's education and Eastern origins are important in understanding her so-called otherness. Josiane, like her ancestors and healing goddesses, has been closely connected to the earth, plants, and treatments. She is wise and an expert in healing men. This assumption is only confirmed by Josiane's treatment of Sabaoth, as she heals him within seven years without a miracle or magic. Her treatment takes place over time.

CONCLUSION

While the gifted female healers have prestige since the early periods of human history, this is usually overlooked in medieval Christian tradition and literary narratives. With the dissemination of Christianity, women in Europe are confined to their homes, deprived of their right to speak, entrusted only with domestic duties, and ousted from all authoritative positions. Women healers are affected by this suppression and leave all branches of medicine to men, and this is reflected both in European medieval history and literature. However, the wise women as healers –in the case of Felice in *Gui de*

⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1958, s. 160.

⁵⁴ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 37.

⁵⁵ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 663-67.

⁵⁶ Weiss, *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, s. 62.

⁵⁷ Stimming, *Boeve de Haumtone*, ll. 1983-87.

Warewic and *Josiane* in *Boeve de Haumtone* are exceptional and are aware of diseases, herbs, treatments, and the care and birth of children. *Felice* and *Josiane* are powerful, educated, wise, and the gifted healers.

The Anglo-Norman literary tradition is male-dominated, with brutal and lengthy battle scenes related to the crusades and religious concerns originating from the *chanson de geste* tradition, however these two powerful women attract attention with their knowledge and healing abilities. *Felice* and *Josiane* assist the heroes in completing their journey and maturing spiritually and physically. In addition, these two female characters are powerful representations of medieval healers because of their natural talents for healing. *Gui de Warewic* introduces *Felice*, who heals *Gui's* heartbreak and helps him on his way to becoming a hero, so she is considered a spiritual healer, and she performs spiritual healing. She does not need sympathy from men. She reflects her education and wisdom through arrogance. She pushes the hero beyond his abilities and then heals him spiritually. Through her education with very wise teachers from Toledo, she represents a robust attitude towards men, and as a noblewoman, she demands her future husband to be her equal. As a natural healer and wise woman, she cures a disease that no male doctors can cure. Healing is a physical and spiritual feat; as mentioned earlier, women healers treat people regardless of their socio-economic status or gender. *Boeve de Haumtone* portrays the healer as *Josiane*. Although she is a Saracen princess, she heals people from different gender, ethnicity, or religion. However, the audience witnesses her healing mentally and physically and performing some magical feats she has learned. In particular, the scene with the magic belt underlines her wisdom and knowledge of occult sciences, which come from the Eastern educational tradition. On the other hand, the fact that she gives birth to twins without help significantly strengthens her medical knowledge. *Josiane's* last healing achievement, the long-term treatment of *Sabaoth*, substantiates her medical expertise as a wise healer.

Thus, the women's impressive knowledge of plants represents them. Such knowledge of herbs gives them authoritative healing power so that they are revered, praised, and respected by people. However, patriarchal and religious oppression compromise this superior status over time. Although male doctors marginalise female healers, women never abandon their inborn talents in the Middle Ages. Two female healers defy oppression and retain their knowledge and healing power in these two Anglo-Norman texts. Both *Felice* and *Josiane*, through intense training, know to reveal their identities in the patriarchal medieval world. They reflect their identity without malice, brutality, and violence, which opposes male representations. They are the symbols of nurturing, compassion, initiating life as mothers, and healing, mentally and physically, regardless of any limitations. Both heroines heal the opposite sex and reject the sexual division of medicine.

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