

MASTER RICHARD'S
BESTIARY OF LOVE
AND *RESPONSE*



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TRANSLATED BY JEANETTE BEER
ENGRAVINGS BY BARRY MOSER
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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Master Richard
and to the memory of
his unknown lady.

THE RESPONSE
TO MASTER RICHARD'S BESTIARY OF LOVE



Here begins the prologue of the Response to Master Richard's Bestiary:

A

MAN WHO HAS INTELLIGENCE and discretion must not employ his time or his attention to say or do anything by which any man or any woman may be damaged, but the person who is able to say or do something which is profitable to the ignorant is accomplishing good work. So I have understood, fair lord, dear master, in your prologue, which you sent me in your request for love, and from which I find myself quite reassured. It has been most useful to me first to regard that prologue, which shows me that I cannot easily be wise about everything that could be useful to me. And truly you have shown me by rational argument that no one has the capacity to know everything, although everything has the capacity to be known. So it behooves me in the making of this response to employ great pains not to say or do anything by which a base-thinking man or woman might eventually ridicule me. For when you and I shall have done as much as we ought, avenging Love will render due reward to everyone.

Wherefore, fair master, I beg you in accordance with what you have told me, not to interpret it as villainy if I aid myself with your intelligence, according as I have retained some of it. For although I cannot

know all that you know, yet I know something that you do not. Wherefore it is very useful for me to aid myself with that since my need is great, I who am a woman in conformity with Our Lord's good pleasure, Who did not want to make me of less good substance than He made you. And it pleases me to tell you how, although you have not made mention of this in your work.

God who by His dignity and power created the whole world and first made heaven and earth and all that is established in the one and in the other, afterward made man to be the noblest creature He could devise. And it pleased God to make man out of a substance that is not among the most suitable of substances. And from this substance, according to certain authorities, He formed such a woman as did not please the man whom He had previously made. Then it came to pass that when God had given life to the one and to the other, Adam killed his wife, and God asked him why he had done this. He replied, "She was nothing to me and therefore I could not love her." So Our Lord came then to Adam where he slept, and took one of his ribs, and from it fashioned Eve, whence we are all descended. Wherefore some maintain that if that first woman had remained, Adam would never have yielded to the sin for which we are all in pain. But for the very great love Adam had for the woman who was made from him, he loved her in the way that became apparent. For that love for her took precedence over the commandment of Our Lord, as you have heard on other occasion how they ate the fruit that had been forbidden them.

But I must abridge this matter and attend to what I began. So, since it is the case that Our Lord gave man mastery over every creature, even over the woman whom He had made of more suitable substance than man, Scripture puts forward a reasonable argument for why He did this. Nonetheless, He who was Lord of all formed man of whatever material was at hand. Then He took from man himself, as was said earlier, and made and fashioned from it *WOMAN*.

This is why I say that inasmuch as man had been fashioned by such a noble artisan, the substance was much improved after this process. So for this reason woman was made of equal if not better material than man. And in this regard let no one come forward to challenge the following truth: that if Our Lord's grace had not been so abundant as to

cause Him to intend man to have dominion over every human creature we are created of nobler stuff than you were, fair master, but must nevertheless obey you by the command of our Sovereign. But God never did anything without reason, for it is fitting that this thing which derives from the other should be obeisant to it. Thus woman must obey man, and man the earth, and the earth God, for God was the Creator and Sovereign of its every creature. Wherefore everyone must know that he must obey that wherefrom he came, and principally Him Who made all, as has been said above.

For which reason, lord and master, I who am a woman must obey you who are a man, which is to say that I intend to put to use what seems good to me, and if there be anything else remaining, let it wait until it can be useful either to me or to another.

Since it is the case, fair lord, dear master, that you have proved to me by dint of reason that Memory has two doors, Sight and Hearing, it is assuredly very useful for me to know this truth. For since you give me to understand by this argument that memory is both treasure and guardian, I must certainly see to it and know that neither you nor any other say anything to me by which my memory might in anyway be impeded. For seemingly you give me to understand that I am all alone in your memory, whence you cannot depart, according to what you tell me in your composition.

Ah, true God, since it is the case that I am all alone in this treasure house, how useful it would be to me to proclaim this *arrière-ban* which you say is necessary to the king who cannot make do with the number of retainers he has taken with him! And it is apparent that the need is great. For I understand, in conformity with the nature of *THE COCK*, that you have spoken penetrating words to me, which are in your view necessary to accomplish your will. And because I am not wise enough to make use of what you tell me, I do not know where to turn for comfort, unless I give mind to *THE WILD ASS* of which I heard you speak. For you seem to be saying that it never brays before it is out of its mind with hunger.

In faith, I can certainly bray! For according to what you have told me, I have great need of help. For as you have told me concerning *THE WOLF* that its nature is such that, if man sees it before it sees man, it loses its strength and its courage, but that if the wolf sees the man first, the man

becomes hoarse and loses as it were the power of speech, I must truly say that I was seen first by you whom I must for this reason call the wolf. For it is with difficulty that I can say anything to counter your words. Wherefore I can truly say that I was first seen by you, and I must thus be on my guard if I am prudent.

Wherefore, lord and master, I shall disregard *THE CRICKET* of which I heard you speak. For although it enjoys its song so much that it neglects to search for food and dies of starvation, I am not served by attending to your words, which appear to put me at your disposal. In my view, I must certainly not trust to them, in conformity with the nature of *THE SWAN*.

For you have told me that in the very year the swan must die it has the greatest desire to sing. Ah, God, why would I not be hesitant to do what could result in my misfortune, according to the nature of the cricket and the swan? By God, these two natures show me clearly that I must not be too precipitate to do something that would put me in a fool's power. No, I will not. Rather I shall be mindful of *THE DOG* whose nature, I have heard, is such that when it is in a place of abundant food, it takes what it needs, then garners the surplus and vomits it into a secret place. Then when famine threatens, the dog eats up the food again.

So must I do, fair lord and master. For truly I am bound to treasure the amount of honor I have, since you are so covetous to get it. But, in conformity with the nature of the dog, I must take care to keep for myself what good I can have. And if there is a surplus, I will not let it go, but will rather garner it like the dog, and in so doing will do my best to provide for myself in time of need, God willing.

For truly I do have need, insofar as I have been observed first by you, as was said above about the nature of *THE WOLF*, which shows me that I should be as wise as the dog in the story.

I remember further that the wolf has another nature which clearly shows me I must be on my guard. For I understand that it is so rigid that it cannot bend unless it swivels its whole body round. Wherefore I say, lord master, that I should be very foolish now if, without another word, I granted your request when I have neither the heart nor the will to make me do it, in conformity with the nature of *THE VIPER*.

For I understand that it attacks the clothed man and has no assur-

rance against the naked man. Do you think I am bound to attack you because you say you are clothed by your love for me? I have not clothed you with my love, rather you are quite naked of it. Therefore I fear you, which is not very surprising, in conformity with the nature of *THE MONKEY*. For you have told me that the monkey tries to imitate what it sees. In God's name this can help me. For after I saw you or another had spread nets to capture me, I should be crazy to come near. It is good to be barefooted and I would not believe anyone so foolish as to do what you say the monkey does after knowing this adventure.

By this argument which I see, lord and master, I tell you that you have spread your nets to capture me, and it behooves me to act in conformity with the nature of *THE CROW*. The crow is of such a nature that before its babies have black plumage like its own, it will not feed them. Likewise, I can tell you that because I would be contrary to your disposition and you to mine, and we would be in conflict both in habit and in will, I could not concur with your will, however much you might concur with mine.

You say further that the crow has a second nature by which I am bound to be improved. It seems to me that inasmuch as you say that the crow seizes man through his eyes and through them it extracts his brain, this is in contradiction with your words. For although Love captures man and woman through the eyes, it does not follow from that that the crow resembles Love. I say, rather, that one must with the eyes of the heart compare it to Hate. For inasmuch as man gets most help from the members that serve him, and this is taken from him first, one must consider that as Hate. And because I understand from you, lord and master, that the intelligence of man and woman resides in the brain and the crow robs him of that through his vision, I say that this is a sign of hatred, and I cannot compare it with Love, but with Treachery.

And so I say that I shall pay attention to the first nature of the crow: before I know that you agree with me I shall never agree to your request, for the nature of *THE LION* is not in agreement with this, as you yourself have taught me. I understand that when the lion eats its prey and man passes by it, the lion will attack the man if the man looks at it. Wherefore I say with conviction that I will not look at what might hurt me or at what might not be profitable to me. Rather I shall go where I

know my advantage lies, to mold and perfect, if I can, what has not been well said or well conceived, as even *THE LION* does. The lion, as I understand from you, ejects a piece of flesh when giving birth, and that piece of flesh does not seem in the lion's judgment to be properly molded in its image. So the lion goes around it, shaping it with its tongue to its proper form. I long to do the same, lord master. If it happens that I must say something which I have not properly conceived, that is, thought out, I should like to go around it, molding it to sense and reason through the good doctrine which is available to me in your words.

Thus I am mindful of what I heard about *THE WEASEL*, namely that it conceives through its ear and gives birth through its mouth. I am truly anxious to remember this nature of the weasel. Conceiving through the ear and giving birth through the mouth has great significance. For I say that conception is something which involves great fear of initiating what will cause grievous suffering when one gives it birth. Ah, Lord God! Some people should be more careful than they are! For through them some will conceive a thing they hear, and to give it birth is so terrible and so dangerous! Some people throw out a word which they should have carried themselves until their dying day. For truly man and woman can do no worse than to give birth to, that is, utter, something unfitting which may destroy a kingdom.

God, I am so fearful of this that I do not know how to counsel myself. For if I uttered something I had conceived by ear and gave birth to it by mouth, I am very much afraid it would be venomous and would need to die, as is said of the weasel's babies. For when they are taken away from her, killed, and restored to the burrow, the mother knows by nature how to resuscitate them. But I am sure I could not do this, I have not learned how. Thus I must be on my guard much more than if I had the wisdom of *THE CALADRIUS* of which I have heard you tell.

For it is of such a nature that it knows when a sick man must get well or die, so that I have understood from you that when the bird is brought before a person who is lying sick in bed, it will turn its face away if he must die, but wondrously it looks him straight in the face if he will live. Wherefore I say that if I were as wise as the caladrius, I should not be wary of this act of giving birth, whatever the nature of the conception.

Oh God, protect me from conceiving anything that would be dan-

gerous to bring to birth. And I shall not fail to protect myself also, provided that I am not as foolish as the man who falls asleep at the sweet song of *THE SIREN*. For it could certainly happen that I trusted myself to your fair words and sweet deceit, lord master, until soon I perished. So I must pay attention to *THE ASP*, with which you made me wise. For, as you say, it guards the balm that drips down from the tree, and it cannot be tricked by any instrument's power because its ear is always watching against being lulled to sleep and losing sight of what it wants to guard.

In God's name, that serpent has strategy, subtlety, and subterfuge! So I certainly must pay it heed, then I shall not be deceived like *THE TIGER* by the mirrors. For I clearly see and know that just as mirrors are strewn in front of the tiger to transfix it, so you produce for me your beautiful words. They are more delectable to hear than the tiger is to see, as has been said above, and I know well that you would not care who perished by them as long as your will be done.

Verily, master, if I were a woman to be transfixed like that, I should certainly need the true *PANTHER*. For it seems to me that I could not be drawn toward you in any way at all without being wounded. And I should be very fearful lest the panther might not be friendly to me. The panther is of such a nature that when some hurt or sick beast comes to it, the true panther will cure it with its sweet breath.

By God, here is sovereign medicine, and such a beast well deserves to be loved. For I know of a truth that there is no beast to be feared like the soft word that comes deceiving. And I truly believe that against that soft word one can have little protection, any more than one can against *THE UNICORN*. By my faith, I fear that unicorn very much. For I know well that there is nothing so wounding as fair speech for, to tell the truth, nothing can pierce a hard heart like a soft and well-placed word.

And so, fair lord master, it would serve me well to be as wary as *THE CRANE* of which I heard you speak. For your words have hands and feet, and it truly seems that I can have no reason to deny you anything that you want. And yet the crane teaches me that I must not put any of my trust even in the most trustworthy thing in the world, any more than the crane that flies through the air. For when it rests on the ground it puts little pebbles inside one of its feet (because it is standing upon the other). And when it sleeps, the stones begin to fall, and the crane then

rearranges itself to keep better vigil so that it cannot be surprised.

Certainly animals that possess such noble intelligence that they provide themselves with what can be painful to them are highly to be respected. Fair, sweet God, how one must respect the man or woman who knows how to provide against obvious misfortune and, even more, against misfortune in the dim and distant future! This is clearly signified for us in *THE PEACOCK'S TAIL*, as I heard previously. For it is true that a tail, insofar as it is to come (that is to say, is behind), signifies the obvious fact that those who travel along their way are not completely secure from evil men. And the person who wants to guard against them should not travel alone, but should travel with every provision to avoid surprise. The provident person is not quickly deceived.

Oh God, what is this providence? In God's name, that peacock's tail, which has so many eyes that it is bound to look ahead in more than one way demonstrates providence well to me, the more sorts of eyes are signified and shown us on the tail. For it seems to me that if one wishes to provide for oneself, it is necessary to see above, below, beside, and across. And I agree without reservation to this: that it is reasonable that if anyone does *not* wish to be on his guard like the crane mentioned above, he should suffer for it.

Oh God, how to be on guard? In God's name, *THE LION* now certainly shows me that. For I have heard that when it is chased by many people or by some other thing that may harm it, it covers and undoes its tracks with its tail. In this way it is not noticeable that anything has been there. Fair, sweet God, what a noble creature is this, which can do all this by its intelligence! In faith, it seems to me that if by chance I were induced through some defect of mine or through the faculty of speech to say or do something unreasonable, then I should pay attention to the peacock's tail and look at the direction from which I could most easily be harmed or helped. And if harm or misfortune should threaten, I should like to do like the lion, which covers with its tail what will possibly do it harm.

And so if I did something that was not good but, before I was damaged by it, I could right it before anyone perceived it, that should be considered as good sense on my part. For to wait until recovery is impossible is to repent too late. A woman would lose a great deal, even if she had as many eyes as has the peacock's tail and saw as clearly with each eye as if

with one hundred but was then neglectful, as I heard concerning *ARGUS*. You told me he had a hundred eyes, and despite all that he was tricked and killed, as was said above.

And I believe without a doubt that if this Argus had been as wise as *THE SWALLOW*, which is of such a nature that it restores vision to its babies when someone has robbed them of it, he would still have been killed according as he was careless. For it is very clear, because he saw Mercurius was putting his eyes to sleep two by two, that Mercurius would put him to sleep in all his hundred eyes.

Thus for this reason sight is no use without something else. In the name of God, that is true. But what? In faith, I do not know, unless it be carefulness,* that is taking care to use what can serve in time of need. God, what is this need? In the name of God, the need to protect oneself from death—that is, not to lose one's honor. For the person who loses honor is indeed dead. Certainly that is true. And the person who is dead has little hope of recovery. For not everyone has *THE WEASEL* or *THE PELICAN* as a parent. For, as I heard before, those two have a nature to resuscitate their young. And thus it seems to me that it would not be good to put one's trust in Sight, if one is careless in another respect.

Fair, sweet God, how excellent a thing is total providence, and how much one must do to be completely provident! For there is no living creature, however wise and provident, that can be secure from the misfortunes that hold so much terror. For I understand that when it happens that a person has done something to the best of his ability and has no thought of fearing anyone, some malefactor will come to disturb him, throwing him into deep distress before he is finally restored to quiet, as I heard concerning *THE WOODPECKER*, which builds its nest in the tree's hollow where no other bird can enter. Then some fool comes to disturb it and stops up its nest. The woodpecker, unwilling to lose what it has built, seeks out a herb which by its nature it knows, applies the herb to the plug, and the plug jumps out.

If this bird is not to be valued highly—since by its intelligence it can recognize that herb—and if, moreover, I did not value the wise person who can save himself when something untoward happens, may I be damned, lord master!

Also I have heard you say there is a type of person that possesses the

nature of THE SWALLOW. For you say that whatever the swallow does is done in flight. And by God, it is verily true that there are many people of this nature. When they engage themselves in one place, they do it in such a way as never really to approach, and they want to know everything, learn everything, but one can never learn anything from them. If anyone asks them something, they will never speak the truth about it but will say the opposite. And they will vary to and fro, one hour backward, the next hour forward. Thus, when one thinks to have pinned them down to some truth, it is fable, and they are quickly into some other point of view.

In God's name, lord and master, I have seen people like this, and one does well to beware of them if possible. For they take what belongs to another, and they cannot by another be taken any more than the swallow, which cannot be captured by any bird of prey unless by surprise. But there is nothing that cannot be captured by someone who is willing to take trouble and use guile. You have told me also about THE HEDGEHOG, which is so spiny that it sticks out in all directions, but it can be captured only by spines. By God, that is certainly true, and I know well that there are many such people who cannot be caught unless by spines. But they are caught and held somehow, nevertheless, And I would like the men and women who hold such people to hold them so relentlessly that their needles and spines pierce their own bodies and they die for good and all.

And I believe with no hesitation that a man may be full of gentle words who would be very harsh and cutting if he had what he seeks, just like THE CAT, which at one moment has the sweetest face and softest, smoothest fur on the outside. But pull its tail, then it will show its claws on all four feet and tear your hands to shreds unless you quickly let it go. By God, I believe that a man also may for the moment behave very gently and say words to win confidence and to get his way, and yet he would do far worse than the cat can do, if he were on top and were not given all he wanted. It would be good to look out for such men.

And certainly, according as the swallow and the hedgehog cannot protect themselves at all times from being caught by some means, I am very fearful lest I be caught, whatever precautions I may have taken. For I very much fear that COCKATRICE of which I heard you speak. Fair lord master, although you say that when it has taken and devoured the man it

wants, thereafterward it cries and grieves for him, that cannot do much good to the devoured or dead! For truly there is little hope of rescue after death. Wherefore I say that I am bound to fear that cockatrice very much. For if I were deceived by a man who had his way with me so that I lost my honor, anyone's lamenting would be of little use to me. For I know that I would then be held in poor esteem, and I know truly that who reverences and esteems me greatly now would then make fun of me. And then my heart would depart from me and I should die even more than that same cockatrice which THE HYDRA deceives, as you have told me. For it is true that the person in despair is much easier to deceive than the person who has all his wits about him. And because of what I have heard from you, I know truly that if I had anything by which I might be subjugated and some man who had designs on me were to come and deceive me until he got what he wanted with me, he then would afterward hold me in such disregard as I can now know well.

Oh fair, sweet God, keep me from this cockatrice, for upon my soul I have such fear of it that I shall never feel safe. For in God's name I am not of the nature of THE HYDRA, concerning which I have heard that when its head is cut off, two grow in its place. Certainly this could not happen to me. If anyone took away my honor, he would never bring it back to me. Rather I would have to do what I have heard THE SERRA does. For I believe that it follows the ship that is traveling over the high seas, and it wants to test itself at what in the end it cannot manage. Similarly, I know truly that if I were taken, as many are, I would have to act as if nothing degrading had happened to me. I would want to cover myself, and the less visible I was the more I would try to build my credibility and to malign, to cover my wrongdoing, those women who had suffered this misfortune. Verily! But in the end the truth would out. I would have to put down my false wings, which could not in the long run withstand the truth any more than the wind can force back the ship from moving ever forward while the water lasts. In God's name, the man who wants to do this thing I tell of *cannot do it*. People's pride and real life, good or evil, must be understood. Wherefore I say that if I could not hide my folly and my foolish enterprise, I should be as confused as THE SERRA, which plunges to the bottom of the sea.

Alas for me! What would then become of me? In God's name, I could

then truly say that I would have to act like the miserable TURTLEDOVE when she has lost her mate, and refuses ever to take another. She will never again come to rest on verdure. And by God, in this same way I truly know that if such misfortune had befallen me, I would never again have happiness in me, and nobody would care. Moreover, if I were to strive for it, someone would say: "Look how that foolish woman would sell herself if she could find a buyer!"

Help me, God, help me! How could I ever be that sort of woman I am talking about? By the Holy Cross, if God please, it will not happen to me. I shall be wise and guard against error. Wherefore I shall not be as lazy as THE PARTRIDGE, for when she has laid, another partridge comes and takes her eggs and hatches them. But that is through some defect that is in her. She cannot endure the bother of hatching, or she thinks she cannot lose the babies because partridges return to their true mother. But even if it were not for either of these two reasons, yet I know truly that there can be no good justification for her not to hatch them, because she will never love them as much as if she had hatched them herself.

So also I can say concerning myself that if I do not strive to keep myself in check and to curb certain dispositions and desires that are not good, my eggs, that is the good words which I have heard from the natures of certain animals teaching me to guard what I have to guard, could certainly be stolen from me. Complaining would never serve me then, for there would be no recovery, although the partridge has one.

And certainly the partridge is not as foolish as I understand THE OSTRICH to be. For there is nothing in the ostrich to deserve that good news ever be heard about it. I have heard that when the ostrich has laid its egg, it will never look at it again. If that is not villainy on the ostrich's part and if it is not courtesy on the sun's part to rescue the egg by its warmth and hatch it so that the ostrich has no fear of losing it, may I be damned!

Ah lord master, how strongly I believe that if I put my trust in you as does the ostrich in the sun, you would rear me abominably! Cursed be anyone who trusts in you, however sincerely you behave. And I am not very courteous when I am not yet in your debt at all and yet have said so much. For it seems to me that there are few things as foolish as foolish speaking. According as I have heard concerning THE SCREECH OWL

that when she has reared her baby birds until they are grown and she is so old that she can no longer fly, her babies pluck out all the feathers from her wings, for she would never moult by herself as other birds do, and they nourish her in their turn as much or more than she did them, God, could it be true at all, lord master, if I acted thus with you that you might do the same for me if there were need? Yes, you have told me so. But by the faith I owe God I am not yet reduced to the point where I feel bound to do this, and I do not know if ever I will do it, for it would be foolishness to swear something which one may have to abjure.

For I remain terribly fearful of something which, it seems to me, few people are without, namely pride, which you have compared to the beak of THE EAGLE. Certainly I say of a truth that pride is good as long as through pride one guards what should be guarded. For many people attribute to pride what honesty attributes to human nature, and this is clearly signified to us on various occasions. For I say truly that if I see someone who keeps me company and pretends to be charming for something he wants to get from me, or if it seems that by keeping company with me he will attain such improvement as he wishes to attain, reason shows me that I would not be improved thereby, but rather, damaged if I did not interpose a tower of cruelty, which some call pride. That is doubtless why I do not claim to have pride in excess of what is good for me, according to what I have understood from you. And I do not know, in conformity with the nature of THE CROCODILE which moves its upper jaw when eating, that this is unreasonable. It is *not*, for such is its nature.

So I can certainly say that if it happened that I actually loved anybody, in conformity with the nature of THE WOLF, I should then say that most passionately to the man who wanted to come close to me, if there were need, but I should do so only where I could not be captured, in conformity with the nature of THE MONKEY. For I well know that if I had something about which I did not want the world to be informed, it would be very much to my advantage to speak of it at my own discretion. Then I think that, although not concealed, yet it cannot do me as much harm as it can do me good. So that is not, I say, speech misused. But it would be speech misused if I were to say something which the man might want to use against me so that he would lord it over me. True love makes

its presence clearly felt so that words and revelations between lovers, woman to man and man to woman, are nothing but speech misused. I do not say that a woman should not say to her lover, "I am happy that all the honor and good you can attain will be in my name," and that he for his part should not say to her, "Madame, (or Mademoiselle), I am in all sincerity at your disposition." But to say, "Lover, I am grieving (or dying) for you. If you do not rescue me, I am betrayed and shall die," those words are, in my view, "eating in the wrong way." I will never, by God, have any trust in him after he reveals himself in that way.

Nor would I have any confidence in such a lover but, in conformity with the nature of *THE SHOD MONKEY*, I would have greater trust in the man who had no ability to say what he wanted. For it truly seems to me that the man who puts on such a tragic act with words belongs to the category one can rightly call *THE DRAGONS*—they know how to flail around with their tongues so that they deceive poor, foolish women and with their flailing subjugate them. Ah true God, what great malice this is, how much this dragon is to be feared, and how I wish that no one would trust it until it were brought to the very fate they mention. In God's name, I wish women could be as prudent as I understand the female *ELEPHANT* to be. For I have clearly understood that she is very fearful of that dragon so that when she is about to give birth, she will place herself in a large stretch of water where there is an islet, and she will give birth there because of her fear of that dragon. For I understand the dragon's nature is so ardent that it cannot endure a lot of water any more than fire can. So because the female elephant fears the dragon, she places herself in the water, and she is still not secure if the male is not on the bank to stop the dragon if it were to come and try to enter the water.

I would truly like all women to guard themselves as does the female elephant so that when a man comes and acts despairingly, he would then be told something which he would do with the utmost reluctance, and from which least harm would ensue. And then after he did that, one would act thus as needed. But this is not the way things are, and there are women who believe whatever they hear, and who remain silent about what they see.

By my faith, *THE DOVE* then also signifies this clearly to us, according to what I have understood. For it seems to me that in all the world

this is the bird that has the greatest fear of being captured. Wherefore I say that, as I have understood, it is wondrously wise and subtle. For because it fears to be captured or tricked, I believe it sits very willingly on water for the reason that water has the nature of a mirror, and the dove can see by the nature of the water if anything, even a bird of prey, whether falcon or sparrow hawk, wishes to harm it. Thus it sees from a distance their reflection in the water and because of this it flees for cover.

Wherefore there is nothing in this world as valuable as foresight, and water, which can give us such warning, is a truly marvelous thing. The dove teaches us to settle on water if we fear anything. Similarly, the elephant, which fears that diabolical dragon. And upon my soul both animals are absolutely right, for those two things are much to be feared. First, the dragon for its tongue that is envenomed to kill all the animals it touches with it.

Ah master, have we any such dragons among us? I truly believe and know we have, and I know well that they are worse than the feared dragon. And I shall tell you who they are and in what way they are worse, as I spoke above about those who act lovelorn till they die of it. *They* are calamitous. But I say upon my soul that a man may say he is dying of love when he does not even know of it as I, who by the grace of God am free of it, know love. And I say assuredly that these men are worse than the dragon mentioned above. For the dragon poisons only what it touches, but this false liar with his filthy, venomous old tongue spreads what he hopes will get him his way with the woman he covets, no matter how she may be damaged by him. Is there worse? Yes, indeed! If there were no worse, all would be well. But the evil dragon, the traitor, the wretch, now boasts that he has had his way. Is that an evil dragon? Certainly I say that no mortal man could take too cruel a vengeance on that dragon. What then will come of all this bragging? Can anyone else be hurt besides this poor, miserable, deceived woman?

In the name of God, yes. For I say that after he has flaunted himself, the woman comes despairing and she says by her good faith that she will not be the only woman deceived. Rather, she will come to another woman and will help to deceive her, that woman will do the same for a third, the third a fourth, the fourth a fifth, and so on. In the end, there are few women who have not been deceived, one through another. This is

clearly signified to us by the hunters of wild birds. For I see that when they have lured one bird, they make that bird their decoy, and the other birds come to that bird and are led to capture. And all this happens principally through that diabolical dragon, which causes such women to be led astray.

The second thing that is much to be feared is that diabolical bird of prey that arrives so suddenly that there is scarcely anyone whom it does not surprise. I speak of those clerics who are so decked out with courtesy and fine words that there is no woman or maiden who can withstand them, whom they do not wish to take. And certainly I am in sympathy, for these men have every courtesy, as I have heard. Furthermore, it is from the handsomest men that clerics are made, and from the most devious in malice. They take the ignorant by surprise. Wherefore I call them birds of prey, and it would be good to have protection against them.

Oh God, how could one find a source of protection against their malice as the dove protects itself with a source of succor? In God's name, one could pay attention to *THE ASP* which guards the balm. I still see nothing that can be more useful. For anyone who listens to the clerics must conceive by ear, like the weasel which has been mentioned above. But this conception is worse than any other, because from it one does not give birth by mouth, but one must eventually die of it, like the dragon mentioned above. Anyone wanting to act like this could have as much confidence in clerics as can be had in *THE WHALE*.

The whale is a very large fish, and I certainly believe that those who cross the sea could think it an islet. Those who are tired and weary have an immense desire for rest and cool, and when they see this whale, they then believe the impossible, they disembark, and think they can do something that proves disagreeable to the whale. So the whale plunges to the bottom of the sea, thus drowning all who had trusted to it. And the whale itself is killed, for before it is wounded it stays motionless, but then the saltwater enters its flesh, causing it to come to shore where it is captured by this circumstance.

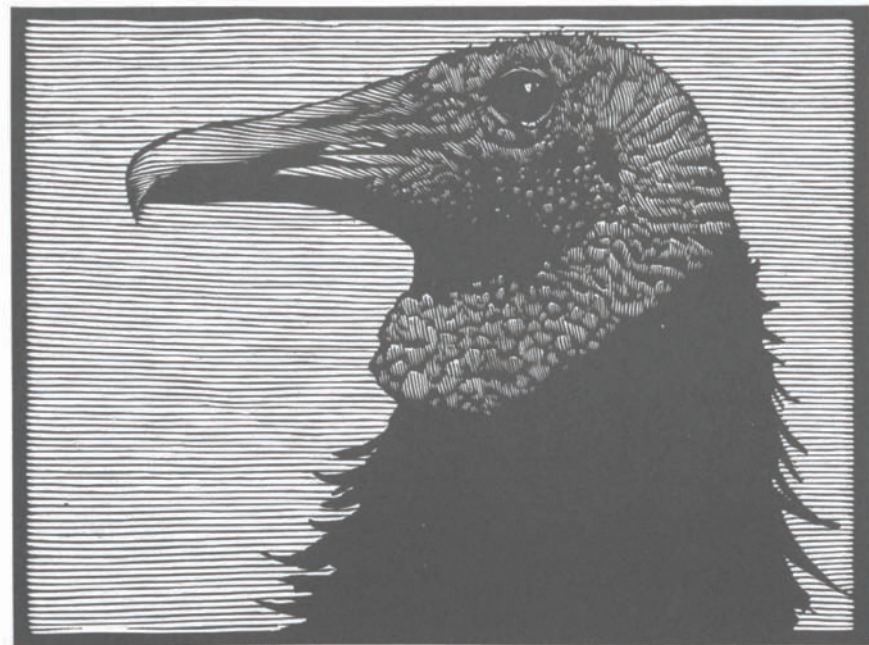
I can say the same of those women who believe of certain clerics who are simple in their manner that they are seemingly worthy of complete trust, so the women hang on their words and delight in them until

one and the other are caught and completely undone. For the cleric loses a prebend from our Holy Church where he could be canon or bishop, and the maiden could have had a knightly gentleman who would give her more happiness and honor than the cleric, who has no comparable wealth.

Now, fair master, would you advise me to have any confidence in that *FALCON*, which swoops down so fast upon its prey from half a league above that the moment of its descent is impossible to determine, as it strikes death into its unsuspecting victim? Ah, Reynard, how far out your tongue is hanging! For no reason, of course, I suppose. I am sure that if Reynard were not hungry, his tongue would never hang out in the way I heard.

By God, master, I also believe that you would not have said the words I heard for no reason. Your hunger had to be appeased, whether by me or another woman. But it is the height of malice to feign sickness or death merely because one trembles. And it is surely not believable that this is anything else but trembling.

I am mindful of *THE VULTURE* which, I have heard, detects a carcass



that is a day's journey distant, although he feels no hunger. So I believe that you have the same nature as the vulture. For you have dealings with so many people and they with you, that you have heard someone speak of me in conversation, because I have a taste for conversation and cultured people. That is why, I believe, you came here first to find out who I was, and whether anything about me pleased you.

And I do not think, as I said at the beginning, that it was by courtesy that God did not wish to make us of inferior substance to men, rather He made us of man himself because He wishes us to be loved by men, and them in turn to be served by us. Wherefore, master, I truly believe that you see some grace in me so that it pleases you to say what I have heard. And the reason that I think you have spoken thus is none other than that you want me to protect myself from evil men. And because I have heard from you that one cannot know who is good and who is evil, it is expedient to guard against all men. And this I shall do until, through reason, mercy shall find its place. In my view, when a person does not wish to do a thing, there are multiple refusals. Let that suffice for good understanding.

Here ends the Response to Master Richard's Bestiary.