

MASTER RICHARD'S
BESTIARY OF LOVE
AND *RESPONSE*



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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Master Richard
and to the memory of
his unknown lady.

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Here begins Master Richard's Bestiary:



ALL MEN NATURALLY DESIRE knowledge. And inasmuch as no one has the capacity to know everything (although everything has the capacity to be known), it behooves everyone to know something, then what one man does not know another will. Thus everything is known in such a manner that it is not known by one man for himself, but rather it is known by all in common. But all men do not coexist together. Some die and others then are born. Our forebears knew what no one now alive could find out by his own intelligence, and it would not be known unless it were known from the ancients.

Wherefore God, who so loves man that He wants to provide for his every need, has given him a particular faculty of mind called Memory. This Memory has two doors: Sight and Hearing. And to each of these two doors a pathway leads, namely Depiction and Description. Depiction serves the eye and Description serves the ear. How one may repair to Memory's House through Depiction and Description is evident in that Memory, which guards the treasury of knowledge acquired by the mind of man by virtue of his intelligence, renders the past as if it were present.

This happens by Depiction and Description. For when one sees the depiction of a history of Troy or of some other place, one sees the deeds of those past heroes as if they were present.

And so it is with Description. When one hears a romance read, one hears the adventures as if one saw them in the present. And because one is converting past to present by these two things, namely Depiction and Description, it is clearly apparent that by these two things one can have access to Memory.

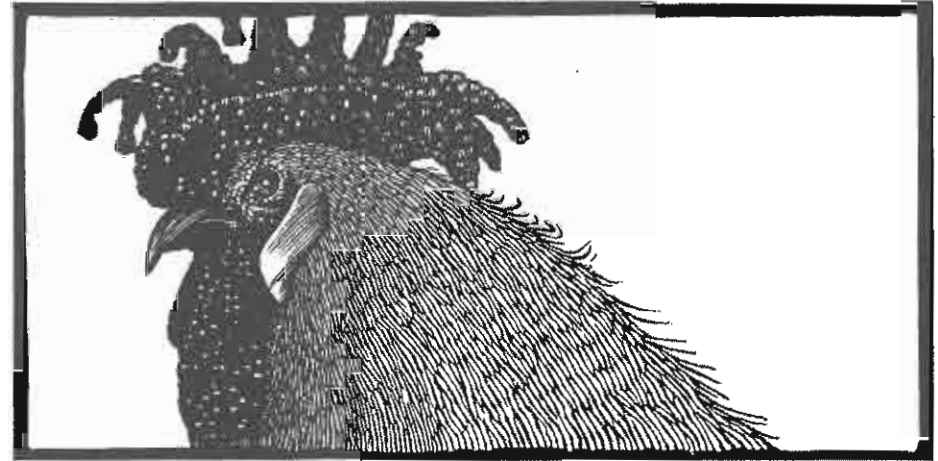
And I, from whose memory you cannot depart, fair, sweetest love, without the trace of the love I had for you being ever apparent so that I could not be completely cured of that love without at least a trace of its wound, however well I might contain myself, I should like to live forever in your memory, if that could be. Wherefore I send you these two things in one. For I send you in this composition both Depiction and Description so that when I am not in your presence this composition will by its picture and its word restore me to your present remembrance.

And I shall show you how this composition has Depiction and Description. That it describes in words is obvious, because all writing is performed to reveal the word and to be read. When it is read, the writing then reverts to word-form. It is obvious, besides, that it contains depiction, for no letter exists unless painted. Also, this composition is of such a nature as to need pictures, for animals and birds are naturally more recognizable when depicted than when described.

And this composition is, as it were, the *arrière-ban* of all I have sent you so far. As a king who goes to wage war outside his kingdom will take with him a group of his best men, leaving an even greater part behind to guard his territory, but when he sees the number he has taken cannot suffice for his needs, he summons all of those he left behind and makes his *arrière-ban*, so I must do. For if I have spoken and sent you many fine words and they have not served me as much as I needed, I must now assemble my resources in the *arrière-ban* of this last composition. I must speak as best I can to know if it might win your favor. For even if you did not love me, these are things which the eye must take much delight in seeing, the ear in hearing, and the memory in remembering.

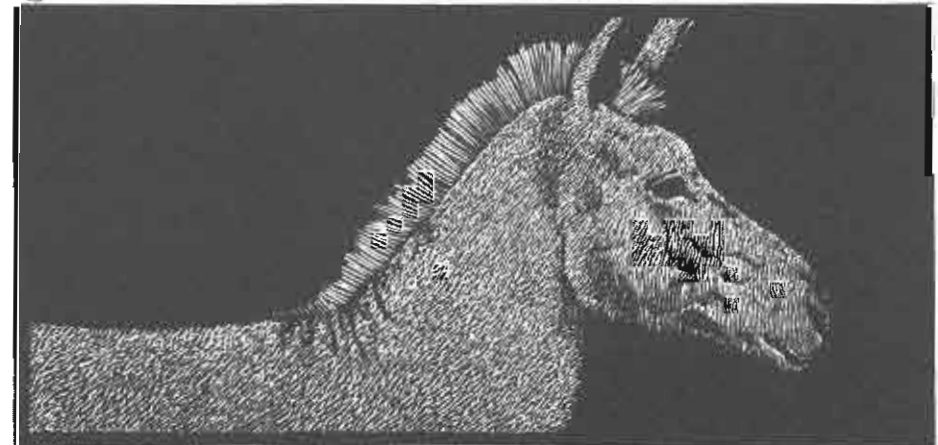
And because this composition is my *arrière-ban* as well as the last hope I can muster, I must speak more forcefully in it than I did in all the

others, as is said to be the nature of **THE COCK**. For the closer to twilight or to daybreak that the cock sings its night song, the more frequently it sings. The closer to midnight it sings, the more forcefully it sings and



the more it amplifies its voice. Twilight and daybreak, which have the nature of night and day mingled together, signify the love where one has neither complete confidence nor complete despair. Midnight signifies totally despairing love. Wherefore, since I have no earthly hope in the future of your goodwill, it is like midnight. When I did have hope, it was like twilight. Then I sang more frequently, but now I must sing louder.

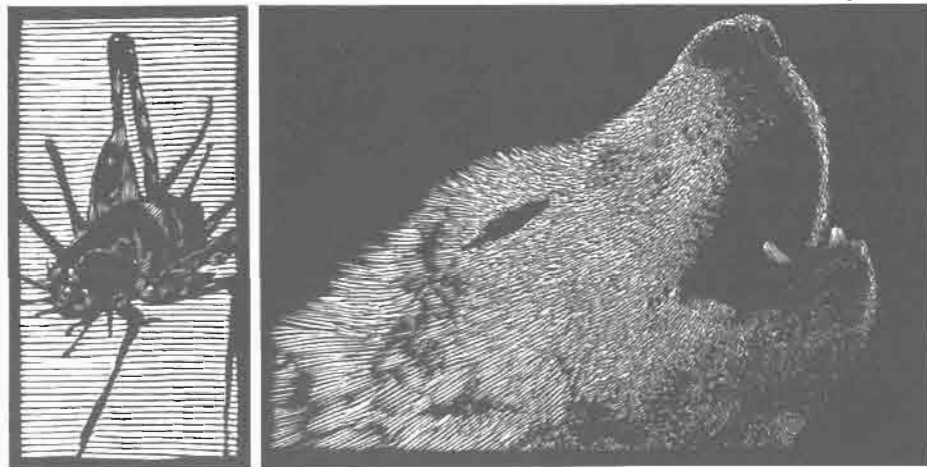
The reason that the despairing man is louder of voice is found, I believe, in the beast that puts most effort into braying and which has the ugliest and most horrendous voice: **THE WILD ASS**. For its nature is



such that it never brays unless it is ravenously hungry and cannot find the wherewithal to satisfy itself. But then it puts such effort into braying that it bursts asunder.

Wherefore, it behooves me, when I find in you no mercy, to put greater effort than ever before *not* into loud song, but into loud and penetrating speech. I am bound to have lost my singing, and I shall tell you why.

The nature of *THE WOLF* is such that when a man sees it before it sees the man, the wolf then loses all its strength and courage. If the wolf sees the man first, the man then loses his voice so that he is speechless. This nature is found in the love of man and woman. For when love exists between them, if the man can perceive first, from the woman herself, that she loves him, and if he knows how to make her aware of it, from that moment she has lost the courage to refuse him. But because I could not hold back or refrain from telling you my heart before I knew anything of yours, you have escaped me. I have heard you say this on occasion. And since I was first to be observed, I am bound, in conformity with



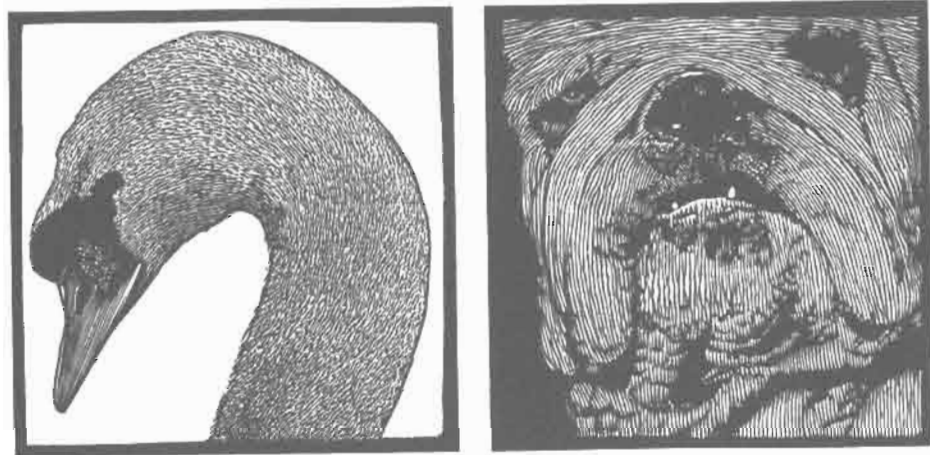
the nature of the wolf, to lose my voice as a result. That is one reason that this composition is not in lyric but in narrative form.

Yet another reason for the same is found in the nature of *THE CRICKET*, for which I have been much on my guard. Such is its nature that the poor creature so neglects to eat and search for food and it so delights in singing that it dies in song. And I took heed of that because singing has served me so little that to trust myself to song might mean even

my self-destruction and song would never rescue me; more particularly, I discovered that at the hour when I sang my best and executed my best lyrics, things were at their worst for me, as with *THE SWAN*.

For there is a country where the swans sing so well and so easily that when a harp is played to them, they harmonize their song to it just like the tabor to the flute, particularly in their death year. So one says, when hearing a swan in full song: "That swan will die this year," just as one says also of a child who shows particular brilliance that he is not long for this world.

And so I tell you that because of my fear of the swan's death when I sang my best, and of the cricket's death when I sang most easily, I abandoned song to make this *arrière-ban*, and I sent it to you as a sort of counterstatement. For from the moment that the wolf saw me first, that is to



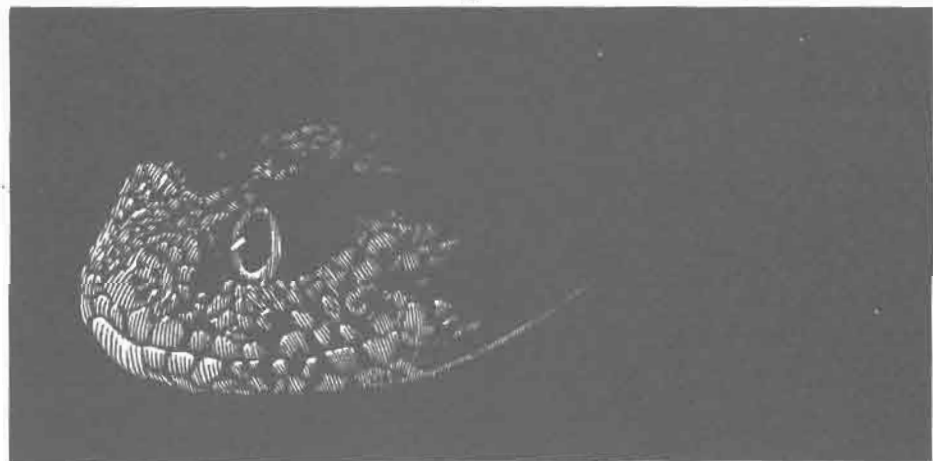
say, that I realized that I loved you before I knew what the fate of my love might be, I was destined to lose my voice. Alas! I have so often since repented that I entreated you and thus lost your sweet company. For if I could have acted like *THE DOG*, which is of such a nature that, after vomiting, it can return to its vomit and re-eat it, I would happily have swallowed down my pleading a hundred times, after it flew out through my teeth.

And do not marvel if I have compared the love of woman to the nature of *THE WOLF*. For the wolf has many other natures, also, by which there is much greater resemblance. One of its natures is that it has a neck so rigid that it cannot bend it without swiveling its whole body

round. The second nature is that it will never capture prey near its lair, but only at a distance. And the third is that when it enters a sheepfold with the utmost stealth, it will take vengeance on its own foot and bite it very viciously if by chance some twiglet snaps beneath it and makes a noise.

All these three natures can be found in woman's love. For she cannot give herself in any way but totally. That conforms with the first nature. In conformity with the second, if it happens that she loves a man, she will love him with the utmost passion when he is far away from her, yet when he is nearby she will never show a visible sign of love. In conformity with the third nature, if she is so precipitate with her words that the man realizes she loves him, she knows how to use words to disguise and undo the fact that she has gone too far, just as the wolf will avenge itself on its foot with its mouth. For a woman is very desirous to know of another what she does not want known of her, and she knows how to protect herself securely against a man whom she believes to love her, like *THE VIPER*.

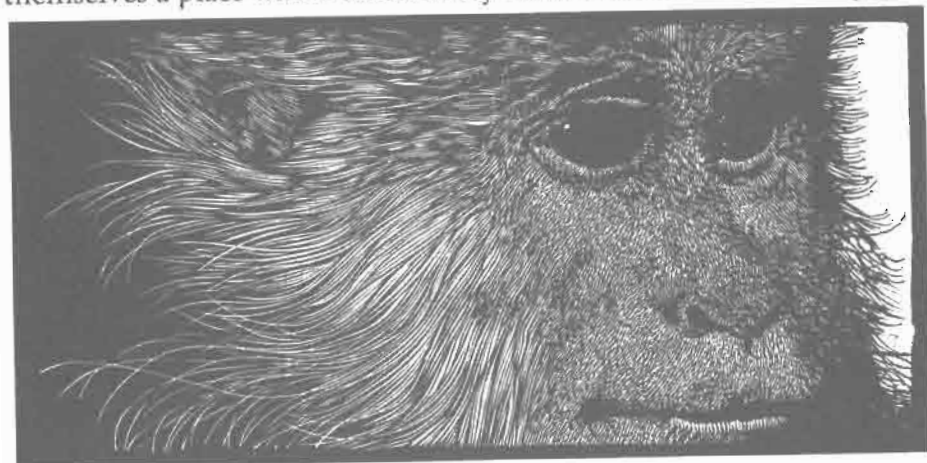
It is of such a nature that it is frightened and insecurely flees when it



sees a naked man, yet it attacks him and has nothing but contempt for him if it sees him clothed. You have acted in exactly the same way with me, fair, sweetest love. For when I met you I found you to be of a gentle disposition and somewhat modest, as is fitting—as if you were a little fearful of me because of the newness of our acquaintance. Yet when you knew I loved you, you were as proud as you wished toward me, and you attacked me sometimes with your words. New acquaintance is like

the naked man, and confirmed love like the clothed man. For as man is born naked and then clothes himself when he is grown, so is he naked of love at the first encounter and exposed, so that he dares to speak his heart fully to the woman. But later, when he is in love, he is so enveloped that he cannot disengage himself. He covers himself completely so that he dares say nothing of his thoughts. Instead, he is in constant fear of blame. He is caught as surely as *THE SHOD MONKEY*.

For the nature of the monkey is such that it tries to imitate whatever it sees. So the clever hunters who want to capture it by ruse, spy out for themselves a place where the monkey can see them, and then they put



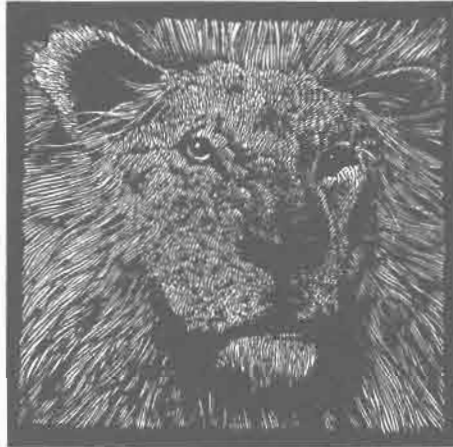
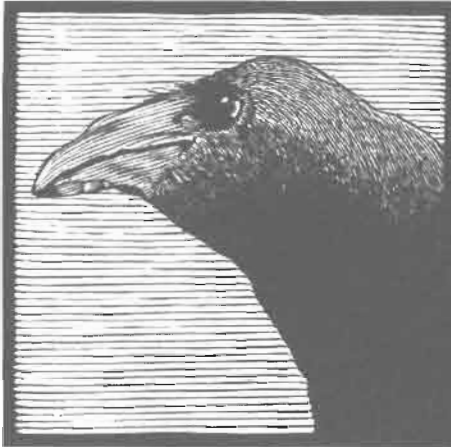
on and take off their shoes. After that they go away, leaving behind a pair of shoes to fit the monkey, and they hide themselves somewhere. The monkey comes and tries to copy them. It takes its shoes and puts them on to its misfortune, for before it can take off the shoes again, the hunter jumps out and attacks it. The monkey with its shoes on cannot run away or climb or scramble up a tree, so it is captured.

This example clearly confirms that the naked man is comparable to the man who does not love, and the clothed man to the lover. For as the monkey remains free as long as its feet are bare, and is not caught until it puts on shoes, so man is not imprisoned until he is in love. This example reinforces that of the viper, and by these two means I clearly see the reason that you were not as nice to me after you knew I loved you as you were before: the monkey is not captured until it is shod and the viper attacks the man when it sees him clothed.

Yet it seems to me that you should have done the opposite. I should have been better treated by you when you saw me clothed with your love than when I was naked of it. For such is the nature of THE CROW that, while its babies are unfledged, it will not look at them or feed them, because they are not black and they bear it no resemblance. They live on dew until they are covered with feathers and resemble their father.

This is what you should have done, I think, fair, sweetest love: when I was naked of your love you should not have cared about me, but when I was clothed with it and could carry an escutcheon of your arms, you should have cherished me and nurtured me in your love, however new and tender, as one hand-rears a baby. In love it would be better for the nature of the crow to triumph than that of the viper or the monkey.

For the crow has yet another nature which above all things resembles that of love. For its nature is such that when it finds a dead man, the



first thing it eats of him is the eyes, and from the eyes the crow extracts the brain. The more brain that it finds there, the more easily it extracts it. Love does likewise. For at the first encounters man is captured through his eyes, nor would Love ever have captured him if he had not looked at Love.

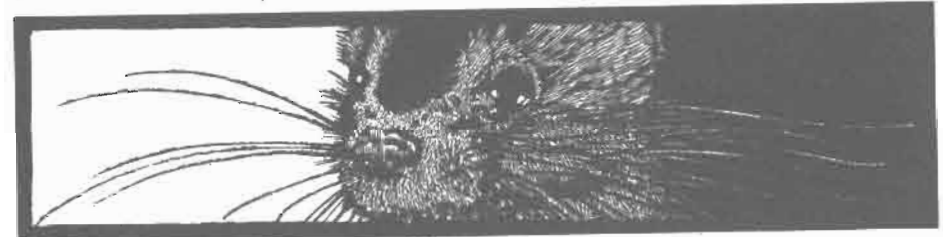
For Love acts like THE LION. If it happens that a man passes by and looks at the lion when it is eating its prey, the lion necessarily fears his face and glance, because the face of man bears as it were imprints of lordship inasmuch as it is made in the image and likeness of the Lord of Lords. But because the lion has natural boldness and feels shame at having fear,

it attacks the man as soon as he looks at it. Yet the man could pass the lion a hundred times and the lion would not move as long as the man did not look at it. Wherefore I say that Love is like the lion, for Love attacks no man unless he looks at Love.

So Love seizes the man in those first encounters through his eyes, and through his eyes man loses his brain. Man's brain signifies intelligence. For as the spirit of life, which gives movement, resides in the heart, and as warmth, which gives nourishment, resides in the liver, so intelligence, which gives understanding, resides in the brain. And when man loves, no intelligence can avail him, rather he loses it altogether, and the more he has the more he loses. For the more intelligent the man the more Love strives in passion to hold him.

On account of this nature I say that Love resembles the crow, and this nature proves that its other previously mentioned nature deserves to prevail in love rather than the viper's or the monkey's, and that a woman should prefer to love the man who is clothed with her love rather than the man who is naked of it.

And I believe that some women do. But there are some women who have holes pierced in their heads so that whatever goes in one ear comes out of the other. Where they love they also refuse to give themselves, like THE WEASEL, which conceives through its ear and gives birth



through its mouth. Such women really act in that way, for when they have heard so many fair words that they feel bound to grant their love (and have thus conceived by ear, as it were), they then deliver themselves by mouth of a refusal, and out of habit jump readily to other words as if frightened of being captured, again just like the weasel which transports its litter to another place from the one where it has given birth for fear of losing them.

This last nature of the weasel represents one of love's greatest despairs, that one should refuse to speak of the very thing that is potentially

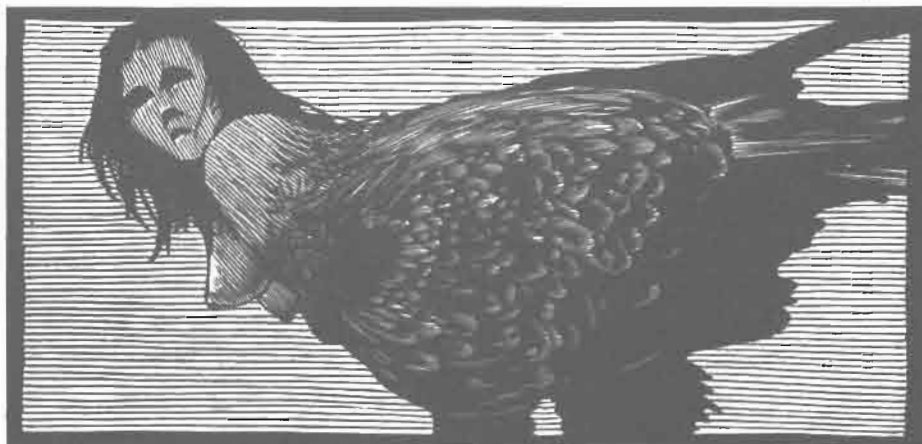
of greatest value, and should want always to speak of something else. This despair conforms with the nature of *THE CALADRIUS*. When this



bird is brought into the presence of a sick person, if the caladrius will look that person full in the face, that is a sign that he will recover. But if the caladrius turns aside and refuses to look at him, the sick person is judged doomed to die.

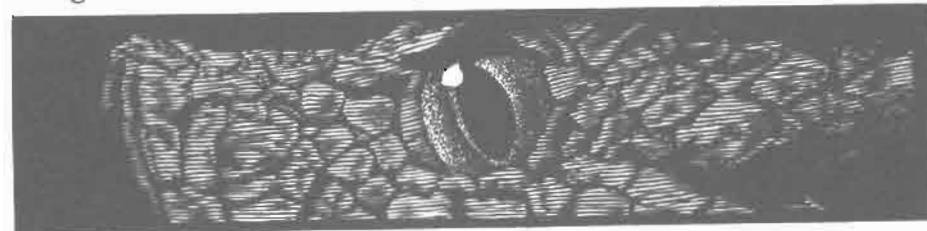
And so it seems to me, fair, sweetest love, that since you are distressed I ever pleaded with you, and since you would readily have enjoyed my acquaintance and kept company with me provided that I said nothing of my sickness, you never wanted to look at me, a sick man, full in the face. Consequently, I must be given up for dead. For by this you have thrown me into the sort of distress that accompanies utter despair without hope of mercy. That is death by love. For as in death there is no recovery, so there is no hope of love's joy when there is no expectation of mercy. So I am dead, that is the truth. And who has killed me? I do not know. You or I, except that both of us are guilty, as with the man whom *THE SIREN* killed after she lulled him to sleep with her song.

There are three sorts of siren: two are half woman and half fish, and



the third is half woman and half bird. All three make music; the first with trumpets, the second with harps, and the third with straight voices. Their melody is so pleasing that, however far away, no man hears them without being forced to approach. When he is near, he falls asleep, and when the siren finds him asleep, she kills him. And it seems to me that the siren has much guilt for her treacherous killing of him, but the man also has much guilt for trusting himself to her. And I am dead through such a killing, in which you and I are guilty. But I do not dare to accuse you of treachery, I shall take full blame upon myself, and shall say that I killed myself.

For although I was captivated by your voice when you first spoke to me, yet I need not have had a care if I had been as clever as the serpent that guards the balm. It is a serpent called *THE ASP*, and as long as it is

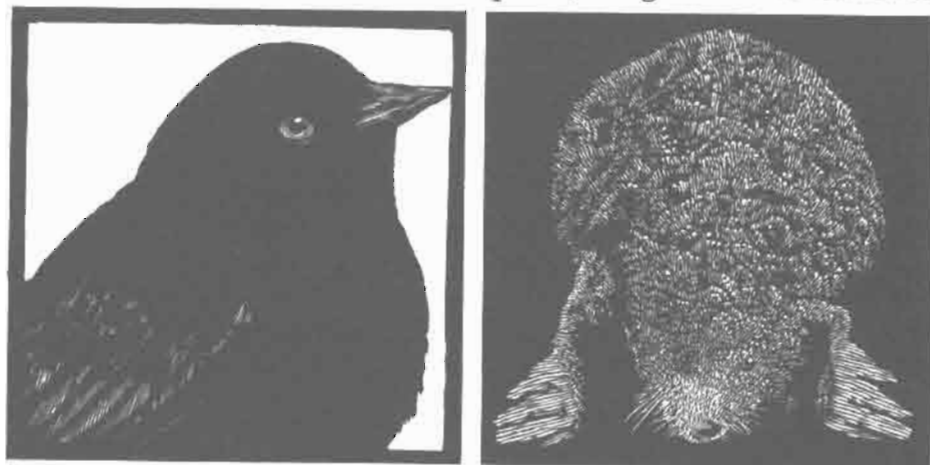


awake, no one dares to approach the tree from which the balm is dripping. When someone wants to get some balm, the asp must be put to sleep with harps and other instruments. But the asp is naturally so intelligent that when it hears them, it stops up one of its ears with its tail and rubs the other in the ground until it has filled it with mud. Deafened in this way, it has no fear of being put to sleep.

I should have done likewise. Nevertheless, I believe you knew very well how reluctantly I went to meet you that first time. And yet I did not know why this was, except that it was like a warning of the misfortune that has since befallen me. At all events I went and lulled myself with the siren's song, that is, with the sweetness of your acquaintance and of your fair words. When I heard them I was captured.

Was it surprising that I was captured? No, for Voice has so much power that it excuses many things that are unpleasant, as with *THE BLACKBIRD*. Although the blackbird is the ugliest bird in captivity and it sings only two months of the year, people keep it in preference to other birds because of the melody of its voice. And Voice has many other

powers of which ordinary folk know nothing. One of its powers is that through voice Nature repairs one of the greatest defects that can occur in a living being. For living things experience sensation with five senses, namely sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. And when it happens that a living thing lacks one of these, Nature repairs her damage to the best of her ability by one of the other senses. Thus it happens that no man is as quick to see as a man who is naturally deaf; no man hears as distinctly as a blind man; and no man is as lecherous as the fetid man. For the nerves from the brain to the nostrils and the palate, along which the faculties of

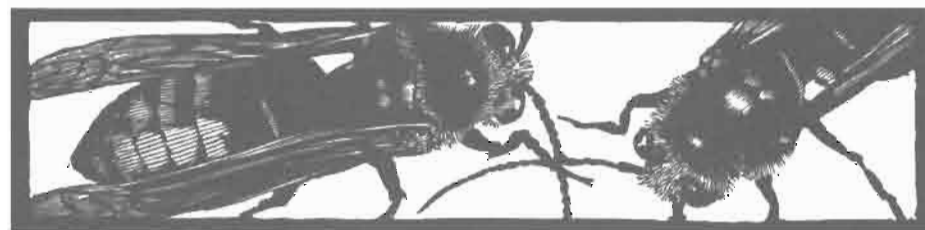


sensation pass, realize their functions more perfectly in proportion as they have less to do. And so it is with the other senses.

But among all the other senses none is as noble as sight. For none of the others brings knowledge of so many things, and it is repaired only by voice, as with *THE MOLE*, which cannot see at all, for its eyes are under its skin. However, its hearing is so acute that nothing, provided it emits some sound, can go unperceived and surprise the mole. So Nature repairs her defect through voice. For voice serves hearing, colors sight, odors smell, and flavors taste. But many things serve touch, for with it one feels hot, cold, moist, dry, rough, smooth, and many other things. And Nature thus restores the mole's defect through voice so perfectly that no living thing can hear as clearly: rather, the mole is one of the five animals which supersede all others with the five senses. Because for each sense there is an animal that supersedes all others, like the "line" (a little white worm which travels over walls) for sight, the mole for hearing, the vulture for

smell (for it senses by smell a carcass that is three days' journey distant), the monkey for taste, and the spider for touch. And the mole has another peculiarity also: it is one of the four beasts which live on pure elements. Because there are four elements from which the world is made: fire, air, water, and earth. The mole lives on pure earth and eats nothing but pure earth, the herring pure water, the plover pure air, and the salamander (a white bird which is nourished by fire and whose feathers serve to make those materials that are cleansed by fire only) pure fire. The mole has these peculiarities, and in one of them the power of voice is demonstrated.

And it is not so surprising that voice can compensate for lack of sight by the sense it serves (namely, hearing), or likewise that it compensates for the defect of the very sense it serves. That is a power that is found in nothing else but voice. And it is written in the books on animal properties that *BEEES* have no hearing. Nevertheless, whenever a hive of bees has



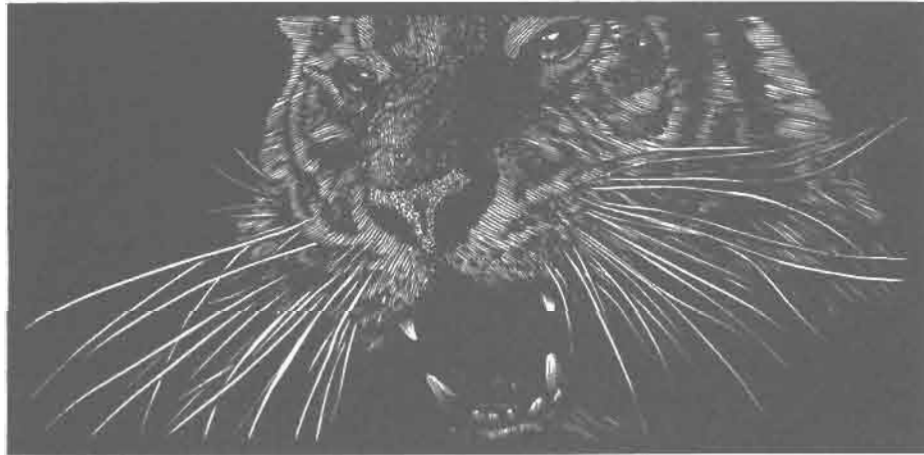
swarmed, they are led by whistle and by song. This is not because they hear it. It is clearly apparent by the mastery of their accomplishments that their nature is so noble and well ordered in their way that good and perfect order cannot pass them without being perceived by them. And those who have read and understood the high philosophies know well what the powers of music are. It is evident to them that in all things that exist there is no order as perfect or as exquisite as in song.

The order in song is so perfect and so powerful that it can move hearts and change wills. That is why the ancients had chants that were appropriate to be sung at weddings because no one who heard them could fail to be inspired to rejoice. They had others to be sung at services for the dead, which were so mournful that no one who heard them, however hardhearted, could hold back the tears. And others were so tempered and so balanced between two moods that they neither made hearts too light nor made them too heavy.

And since the order in song is so perfect, it cannot pass by the bees, whose structure is so orderly, without their sensing it. And yet they have not heard it, but they experience it through touch, which is the most general of the senses, and is properly served by several things, as has been said above. And so voice compensates for the lack of the very sense it serves, namely hearing, through another sense.

This power is one of the most miraculous that exists and no such power is found in anything but voice. And voice has many other powers by virtue both of speech and also of song, of which there is no place to speak now. May this much suffice you in accordance with our subject matter. And if voice has such great power, then it was not surprising that I was put to sleep by the power of voice. For this was not just any voice but was the voice of the loveliest creature that in my judgment I had ever seen.

Did sight help to capture me? Yes, I was more captured by my sight than THE TIGER in the mirror. For however great its rage if its cubs have

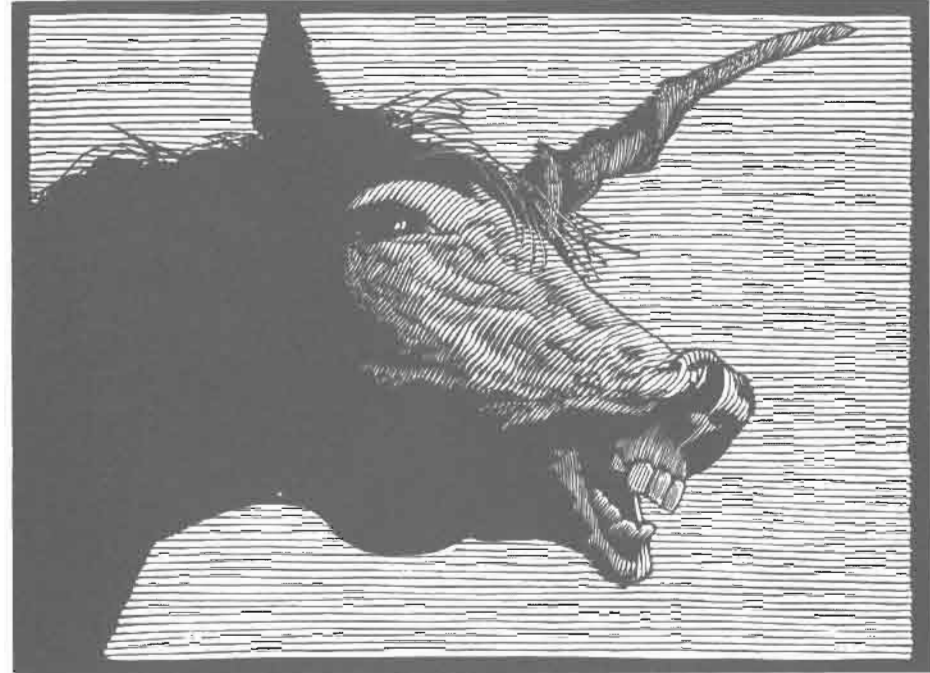


been stolen, if it comes upon a mirror it has to fasten its eyes upon it. And it so delights in gazing at the great beauty of its good form that it forgets to pursue the men who stole its cubs. It stands there as if captured. Wherefore clever hunters put the mirror there on purpose to rid themselves of the tiger.

Thus I say that if I was captured through hearing and through sight, it was not surprising if I lost my good sense and my memory in the process. For hearing and sight are the two doors of memory, as was said ear-

lier, and they are two of man's noblest senses. For man has five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, as was said earlier.

I was captured also by smell, like THE UNICORN which falls asleep at the sweet smell of maidenhood. For such is its nature that no beast is so



cruel to capture. It has a horn in the middle of its forehead which can penetrate all armor, so that no one dares to attack or ambush it except a young virgin. For when the unicorn senses a virgin by her smell, it kneels in front of her and gently humbles itself as if to be of service. Consequently, the clever hunters who know its nature place a maiden in its path, and it falls asleep in her lap. And then when it is asleep the hunters, who have not the courage to pursue it while awake, come out and kill it.

That is just how Love avenged itself on me. For I had been the haughtiest young man of my generation toward Love, and I thought I had never seen a woman that I would want for my own, a woman I would love as passionately as I had been told one loved. Then Love, who is a clever hunter, put a maiden in my path and I fell asleep at her sweetness and I died the sort of death that is appropriate to Love, namely despair without expectation of mercy. And so I say that I was captured by smell,

and my lady has continued to hold me since by smell, and I have abandoned my own will in pursuit of hers, like the beasts that, after they have sensed the odor of THE PANTHER, will not abandon it. Rather they follow it to the death because of the sweet odor which emanates from it.

And so I say that I was captured by these three senses: hearing, sight, and smell. And if I had been completely captured by the other two senses—taste by kissing and touch by embracing—then I would truly have been put to sleep. For man is sleeping at the moment when he experiences none of his five senses. And from the sleep of love come all the perils. For death overtakes all sleepers, whether it is the unicorn who sleeps because of the maiden or the man who sleeps because of the siren.

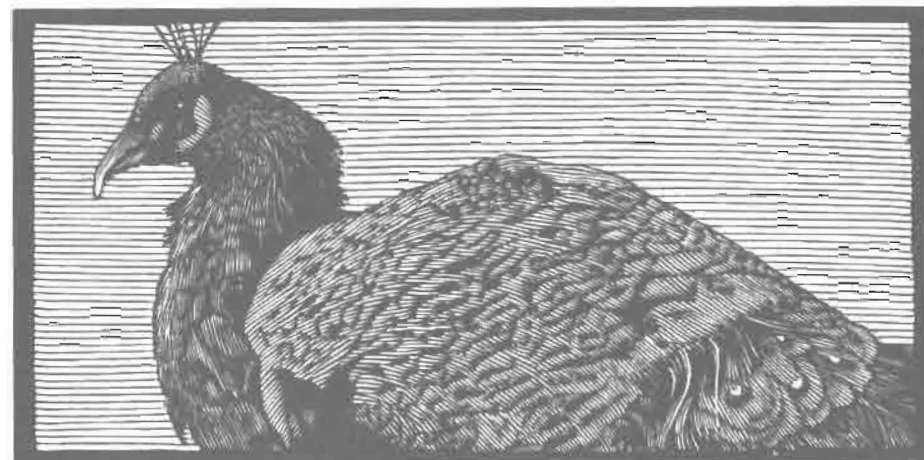


But if I had wished to protect myself against this peril, I should have acted like THE CRANE which guards the flock. For when cranes group together, one of them is always watching while the others sleep, and each crane takes its turn to watch. And the crane that is on watch prevents itself from sleeping by clutching little pebbles in its feet so that it cannot stand firmly or sleep soundly. For cranes sleep standing, and when a crane cannot stand firmly, then it cannot sleep.

I say that I should have acted likewise. For the crane that guards the others is Foresight, which must guard all the other virtues of the mind, and the feet are the Will. For as one moves by one's feet, so the mind moves by the will from one thought to another, and man moves from one deed to another. The crane is putting stones in its feet to prevent its standing firmly and falling asleep when foresight is keeping the

will so much in check that the other senses dare not trust themselves to it and consequently be surprised. The man who had taken these precautions would have had nothing to fear.

But the man who has no foresight is as damaged as THE PEACOCK is marred without its tail. The peacock's tail signifies foresight because a



tail, inasmuch as it is behind, signifies what is to come, and the fact that it is full of eyes signifies the foreseeing of the future. And so I say that the peacock's tail signifies foresight, and the term *foresight* means nothing other than to foresee the future.

That the tail signifies foresight is confirmed by one of the natures of THE LION. For the lion has such a nature that if when chased for capture it is unable to defend itself and has to flee, it will cover the tracks of its feet with the sweep of its tail so that no one will know where to follow it. A wise man who has foresight does likewise. When he must perform an action that would bring him blame if it were known, he makes provision as he does it that it will never be known, so that his foresight covers the tracks of his feet, that is to say the good or bad publicity that may result from his actions. Thus the tail signifies foresight and, more especially, the peacock's tail, because of the eyes that are upon it. Wherefore I say that, as a tailless peacock is an ugly object, the same impoverishment is seen in the improvident man.

Nevertheless, if I had as many eyes as the peacock has upon its tail, I could still have been lulled to sleep by the power of voice. For I have heard a story about a woman who possessed a magnificent cow. She

loved it so much that she would not have wanted to lose it for anything, so she gave it to the care of a cowherd called ARGUS. This Argus had a



hundred eyes, and he never slept in more than two eyes at a time. His eyes rested continuously two by two, and all the other eyes kept guard and watched. Yet with all that the cow was lost. For a man who had grown fond of the cow sent over one of his sons who was marvelously skilled at making melody on a long, hollow reed he owned. The son was called Mercurius. Mercurius began to talk to Argus about this and that, and to play all the while on his reed, and he turned so around him, playing and talking, that Argus fell asleep in two eyes, then in two more, and so he fell asleep in his eyes pair by pair until he slept in all hundred of them. Then Mercurius cut off Argus' head, and led the cow away to his father.

And so I say that because Argus fell asleep through the power of voice, although he had as many eyes as are on the peacock's tail, which signifies foresight, it is not surprising if with all my foresight I too fell asleep through the power of voice, or that I died. For Death always stalks the man who has fallen asleep from love, as was said earlier of the man who sleeps because of the siren, and of the unicorn who sleeps because of the maiden, and here also of Argus.

So I am dead, that is true. Is there any remedy? I do not know. But what remedy for it *can* there be? The truth is that there may be some remedy, but I do not know what that remedy is any more than I know the remedy of THE SWALLOW. For it has been proven that when the swallow's babies are taken from it, blinded, and returned to the nest,

they will not fail withal to see before they are fully grown. And it is thought that the swallow cures them, but it is not known by what medication. Exactly the same thing happens in the case of THE WEASEL, if its young are killed and handed back to it completely lifeless. The weasel by its nature knows a medicine by which it can resuscitate them. This is known to be absolutely true, but it is impossible to learn what the medicine is.

So I say of myself, fair, sweetest love, that I believe there is some medicine by which you can resuscitate me, but I do not know what the



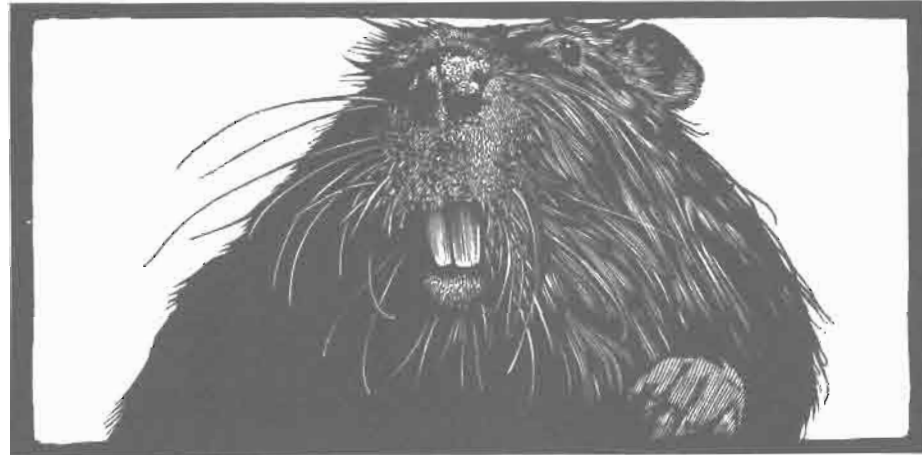
medicine is except only that one may learn the nature of one animal from the nature of another. And it is well known that THE LION resuscitates its cub, and it is well known how. For the cub is born dead and on the third day its father roars over it and resuscitates it in this way. So it seems to me that if you wished to recall me to your love, that could well be the remedy to resuscitate me from the love-death which killed me.

So it is too with THE PELICAN. For it is well known that the pelican resuscitates its babies, and it is well known how. For the pelican is a bird which loves its babies wondrously. It loves them to the point that it will play with them very willingly. Now when they see their father play with them, they become confident enough to dare to play also, and they fly so much in front of his face that they strike his eyes with their wings. He is so proud of manner that he cannot bear anyone to harm him, so he becomes angry and kills them. And when he has killed them, he repents. Then he lifts his wing and pierces his side with his beak, and he sprinkles

the babies he killed with the blood that he draws from his side. In this way he brings them back to life.

And so, fair, very sweet beloved, when I had newly met you and the newness of the acquaintance had made me as it were your chicken, you were so nice to me that I believed I might certainly dare to speak with you of what would please me most. And you esteemed me so little in comparison with you that my words displeased you. Thus you have killed me with the sort of death that pertains to Love. But if you were willing to open your sweet side so that you sprinkled me with your good will and gave me the fair, sweet, desired heart that lies within your side, you would have resuscitated me. The sovereign remedy to help me is to have your heart.

Now if it were for no other reason than that I have sometimes heard you say it annoyed you that I pleaded with you and that without that you willingly would keep company with me, you should give me your heart to be free of the annoyance of me, as *THE BEAVER* does. The beaver is an



animal which has a member that contains healing medicine, and it is hunted for that member. It flees as far as it can, but when it sees it can no longer get away, it fears it will be killed. Nevertheless, it has so much natural intelligence that it well knows it is being pursued only for that member, so it sets upon it with its teeth, tears it off and drops it in the middle of the path. When it is found, the beaver is allowed to escape, because it is hunted only for that.

So fair, very sweet beloved, if my pleading annoys you as much as

you say, you might as well deliver yourself from it by giving up your heart, because I am pursuing you only for that. Why would I pursue you if not for that, when nothing else but that can be of any use to rescue me from death by love? Further, it is the sovereign remedy to help me, as has been said earlier. But it is locked up with a lock so strong that I would not be able to reach it, for its key is not in my possession, and you who have the key refuse to open it. Wherefore I do not know how this side may be opened, unless I had some of the herb by which *THE WOOD-PECKER* ejects the plug from its nest.

For its nature is such that when it finds a hollow tree with a small



opening, it will build its nest in the hollow. And to see the woodpecker's surprising feat people will stop up the opening with a plug which they ram in by force. When the woodpecker returns and finds its nest stopped up in such a way that its strength would not be adequate to the task, it conquers force by ruse and by intelligence. For it knows by its nature a herb that has loosening properties. It searches until it has found the herb, brings it back in its beak, and touches the plug with it. The plug jumps out immediately.

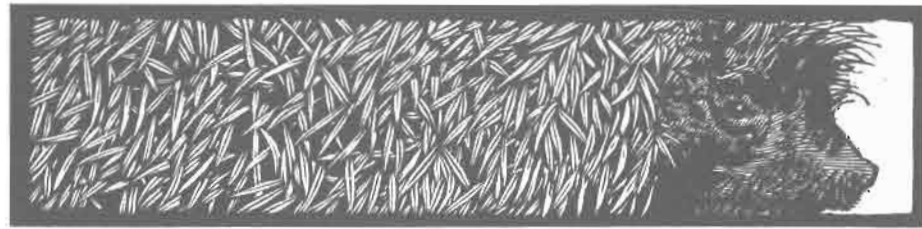
Wherefore I say, fair, sweetest love, that if I could have some of that herb, I would test whether I could open your sweet side to have your heart. But I do not know what herb it is, unless it be Reason. No, not Reason! Reason it is *not*. For there are only two sorts of Reason: the one is of words and the other is of things. It is not the reason of words. For although Reason has such power that one can prove by reason to a young

girl that she should love, one cannot for all this prove that she *does* love. On the contrary, however well it may be proved to her, she may still say, if it suits her, that she wants nothing to do with it.

Nor is it the reason of things. For if one paid attention to Reason and Justice, the truth is that I am worth so little in comparison with you that I should have lost everything. Rather, I have greater need of mercy than of reason.

But on the other hand this herb is neither Mercy nor Pleading. For I have pleaded with you and cried for mercy so many times that, if this were bound to serve me, your side would have been open long ago. So I cannot learn what this thing is. So I cannot open that side. Yet there is no other medicine to reopen my life except to open your side so that I may have your heart. It is therefore evident that I am irrecoverably dead, it is true, so I must forget about recovery, it is true.

But, in faith, it is possible to find consolation of sorts in total desolation. How is that? If one has the hope of being avenged. And how could I be avenged in this? I do not know, unless she too loved somebody who did not care about her. Stop there! Now who would be so crazy that he did not care about her? No one, unless it were a type of person who has the nature of *THE SWALLOW*. The swallow is of such a nature that it never eats or drinks or feeds its young or does anything except in flight. And it fears no bird of prey, for no other bird captures it. And there is a type of person that does nothing except in flight. They even make love only in passing. As long as their love is in sight it has meaning for them, nothing more. Furthermore, they are captured by no bird of prey, for no love of woman or maiden exists which could hold them. They are the same to every female, like *THE HEDGEHOG* which can roll up in its



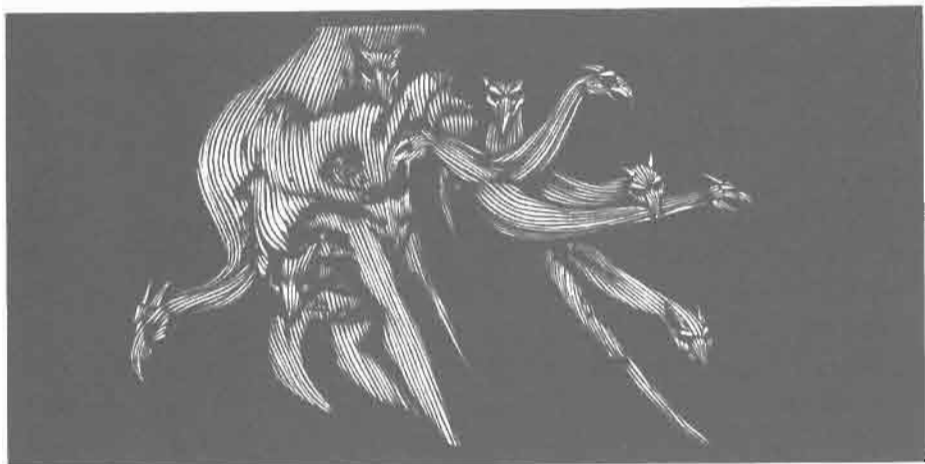
spines then one cannot touch it in any place without its pricking. And when it rolls itself in apples, it can load itself in every place because in every place it has spines. And so I say such men are like the hedgehog,

for they can take from every place and cannot be taken in any place.

Wherefore I say that a man of this sort really could avenge me, but this vengeance would give more rage than relief to me. For I would prefer her dead and me dead than that she love another man than me after she refused me.

So what would I like? Rather that she did not love either me or anyone else. How then could I be avenged? I do not know, unless it were that she repented of the harm which she had done me. For Repentance is a courtly type of vengeance, and he is well avenged of his enemy who can lead him to repentance. So I would like her to repent after the fashion of *THE CROCODILE*. The crocodile is an aquatic serpent which common folk call a cockatrice. Its nature is such that when it finds a man it will devour him, and when it has devoured him it weeps daily for him all its life.

I would like things to happen thus to you on my account, fair, sweetest love, since I am the man you found, yes truly "found." For as one possesses without effort what one finds, so I am yours in that same sense that you have me for nothing. And since you have devoured me and killed me with love's death, I would like you to repent of that, if possible, and weep tears for me from your heart. In that way I could be avenged as I should like, for I would not want the other sort of vengeance at any price. Nevertheless I would fear that the other type of vengeance might supervene. For it seems an easy thing for a woman, when she repents of having let her loyal friend go, to bestow herself on another with less difficulty, if he begs her, as happens with *THE CROCODILE* and with another serpent called *THE HYDRA*. The hydra is a serpent that has several heads, and it is of such a nature that if someone cuts off one of its heads, then two more heads grow back. This serpent hates the crocodile with a natural hatred, and when it sees that the crocodile has eaten a man and is so repentant that it now no longer wants to eat another, it thinks in its heart that the crocodile is now easy to deceive because it no longer cares what it eats. So the hydra rolls itself in mud as if it were dead, and when the crocodile finds it, it devours the hydra and swallows it down whole. And when the hydra finds itself inside the crocodile's stomach, it tears the crocodile's entire bowel to pieces and emerges with great jubilation at its victory. Wherefore I say that after the vengeance of repent-



ance I would fear that the other vengeance might supervene. For the many-headed hydra signifies the man who has as many loves as he has acquaintances.

Stop there! What masterful authority and what a magnificent heart such men must have when they can break it up into so many pieces! For no one woman can possess it totally, but if each had even a fragment of a heart of such magnificence, they would then be completely happy! Nevertheless, I believe no woman gets any of him, rather he serves them all with his heart just like the player who holds the baton in the game of "brichouart"* and offers it all but leaves it with nobody. If he wished to be fair, he should at least leave it in one place. But since he wants to fool his companion totally, he carries it with him. That is how such men serve women and maidens with their hearts. And even if they left a part in every place, I should not think they could do any good by that, as one says of the man who, as jack of all trades, will be master of none.

But now I shall leave him and return to my subject. For I would wish that those men who make so many pieces out of their hearts should be dealt with so that their hearts shatter into pieces in their bellies once for all.

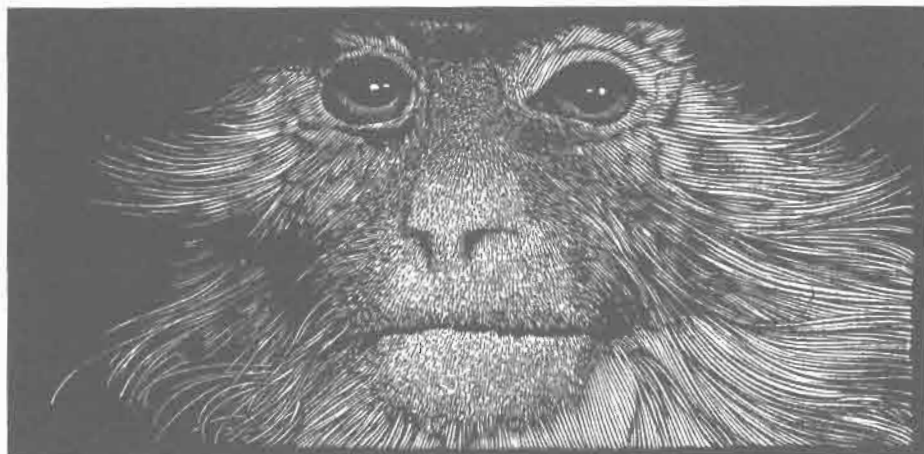
The other thing about the hydra is that when it has lost one of its heads, it gains several others, and it therefore gains from its loss. This signifies that if one woman tricks a man, he will trick seven women, or, if she tricks him once, he in turn will then trick seven times. I am very fearful of this hydra, and I would very much like my lady to beware of it, and

specifically of those who show her most obeissance. For the man who will say most often, "Lady, help me to prove my worth," and who will say, "Lady, let me be your knight," is the very man of whom she should be most wary, if she wishes to keep her affair secret. For he will not believe he is her knight unless he gives her knightly service even while he laces up his leggings or is on his way to joust, in front of such a host of people that anyone of them may repeat it; nor will he believe that she has helped him prove his worth unless he has shouted her identity for all to hear while spurring on his horse. What is more—and what is worse—he seems to think that he must have a minstrel shouting from the parapets that his lord is performing each and every act of generosity and prowess solely for the love of that sweet creature whom the entire world must adore.

This is the type of man I would like my lady to be very wary of, for such men will treat her no better than *THE VIPER* treats the parents that engendered it. For the viper is of such a nature that it never comes into this world before killing its father and its mother. For the female conceives by mouth from the head of the male in this way: the male puts its head inside the female's jaws, she bites off its whole head with her teeth and swallows it and from this she conceives, and the male is dead. And when she comes to term, she gives birth through her side, and so must burst and die. Wherefore I say that I can truly call this manner of man a viper. For as the viper kills those who engendered it before it is even born, so these men cannot attain the worth of which they talk except by noising abroad the women who are helping them be worthy, who are *making* them worthy, if any worth there is!

I am very fearful of this viper, and I would very much like my lady to be wary of it. And I do not know who her viper is. But whoever he is, if my lady has received anyone, I would want the same for him and me as happens with *THE FEMALE MONKEY* and her two young babies. For the nature of the female monkey is such that she always has two babies in a litter, and although she has a mother's love for both the babies and she wants to nurse them both, she still loves one so passionately in comparison with the other, and she loves that other so little in comparison with the first, that one can truly say she loves the one and hates the other. So when she is hunted for capture, although she is unwilling as a mother to

lose one or the other, still she tosses the one she hates onto her shoulders behind her—if he can cling to her, then let him and so be it—but she carries the baby she loves in her arms in front of her, and in this way flees on two feet. But when she has run so long that she is tired of going on two feet and must run on four, she must perforce relinquish the baby that

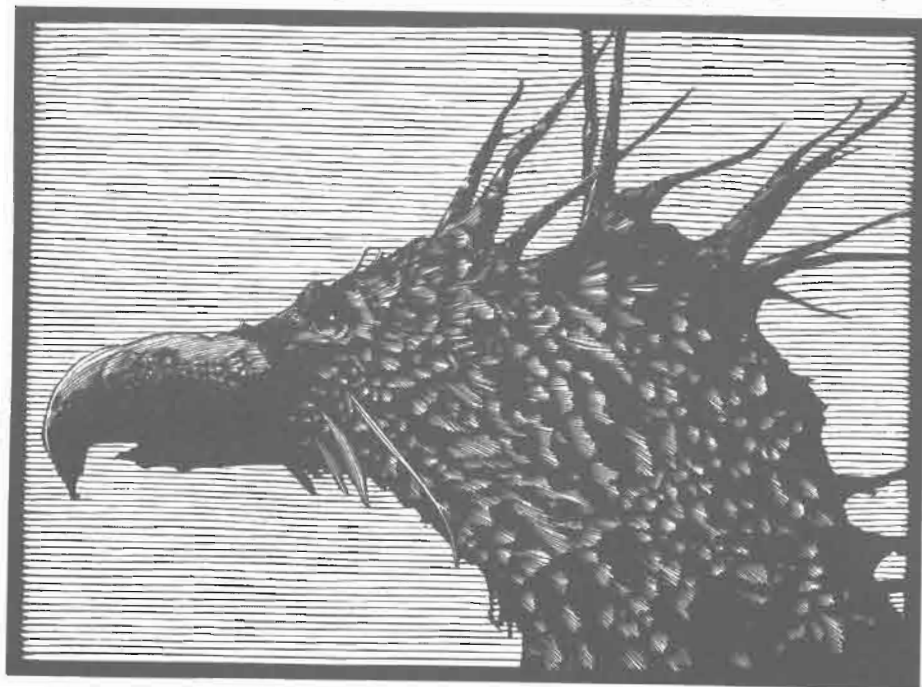


she loves and keep the baby that she hates. And this is not surprising, for the one she loves is not holding onto her, but she is holding it, and she is not holding the one she hates, but it is holding onto her. So it is quite just that when she has to save herself with her total body, hind- and forefeet, she should lose the baby she is holding, and that the one that is holding onto her should remain.

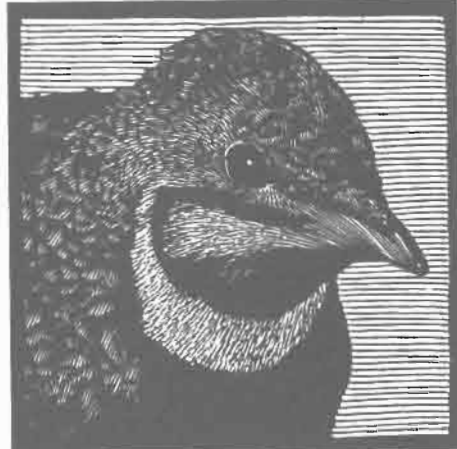
I say, fair, sweetest love, that if you have welcomed any man into your heart who has the nature of the viper or the hydra or the hedgehog or the swallow, I would want what happens to the female monkey with her two babies to happen to you with him and me. For it seems to me that even if it were true that you love him more than me, you will still lose him, and I, whom you love less, nay whom you hate, would stay with you, because he is not holding onto you, but you are holding him, while I am holding onto you, and you are not holding me. *I say he is not holding onto you, but you are holding him.* As long as you want to do his will, he will love you, but when you want something that does not please him, he will leave you in a rage, as if he sought to pick a quarrel with you. So he is not holding onto you, he is following you at his own good pleasure, not yours, in the same way that THE SERRA follows the ship.

The serra is a sea-creature of wondrous size and with great and wondrous wings and feathers by which it projects itself over the sea more swiftly than an eagle flies after a crane. Its feathers are razor sharp. This serra I am telling you about so revels in its speed that when it sees a ship racing along, it races with the ship to test its speed. And it skims alongside the ship racing with its wings outspread for a full forty or one hundred leagues at a stretch. But when breath fails it, the serra is ashamed of being beaten. It does not give up gradually and do the best it can to try to overtake the ship. Instead, as soon as it has been outrun ever so little by the ship, it folds its wings and sinks completely to the bottom of the sea.

I tell you that he is following you in just this way as long as his breath holds out. For he would certainly do your will as long as it be not contrary to his own. But as soon as it were contrary to him he would not merely bear you a slight grudge to endure your will or to reconcile himself with you. Rather, he would abandon you completely on the occasion of one burst of anger. Wherefore I say that you are holding him, and he is not holding onto you. But although you are not holding me, it is quite obvious that I am holding onto you because, begging your pardon, you



have angered me so often that if for anger I had been going to leave you, I would certainly not have loved you as outrageously as I do. But I love you totally and I hold onto you so that if I had lost you without hope (as I have, I think, if one can lose what one never had), I would not betake myself elsewhere any more than THE TURTLEDOVE changes its mate.



The turtledove is of such a nature that when it has lost its mate, it refuses ever afterward to have another.

Wherefore I still have some hope, however faint, that since he does not hold onto you and I hold onto you, you are bound to lose him yet, and to keep me, in conformity with the nature of the female monkey. And I say emphatically that I hold onto you and would not leave you for another. For even if it happened that another woman who wanted me should behave toward me as one does toward a lover, she would not be able to deflect me from my love of you, as happens with THE PARTRIDGE. For when it has laid its eggs, another partridge comes and steals them from her, hatches them and rears the baby partridges until fully grown. But when fully grown so that they now can fly with the other birds, if they hear the call of their real mother, they will recognize her from the call, and will abandon their false mother who fed them, and will follow the other mother all the days of their lives.

Laying and rearing are to be compared with two things that are found in love: capturing and keeping. For as the egg is without life when it is laid, and does not live until it is hatched, so the man, when captured by love, is as if dead and he does not live until he is retained as lover.

Wherefore I say that, since you have laid (that is captured) me, there is no woman, if she were to hatch (that is, retain) me who would not lose me. There is no woman who could prevent me from recognizing I am yours forever and from following you all the days of my life.

Wherefore I say that since I would not abandon you for any other woman, and would abandon all other women for you, I am holding onto you, although you are not holding me. And it seems to me I am the monkey that you threw onto your shoulders behind you, the monkey that you cannot lose. Wherefore I still have some degree of hope, however slight, that I may remain with you in the end. But the waiting is much to be feared by my egg. For the egg which you have laid may well wait so long to be hatched that it will be forever sterile. For know of a truth that although I said that some other partridge steals the egg and hatches them, I shall not find someone to hatch this egg. Nor do I say this because I would like to find someone, but I say it because I have found someone who has said to me: "The woman who would invest her love in you would be a fool, and you are held in such true captivity elsewhere that she would lose whatever she might invest in you." And it so happens that this statement or its equivalent has been made to me by several—such women as would retain me gladly if they did not fear I was bound to abandon them at the voice of my real mother.

But since it is the case that neither you nor another wishes to hatch this egg, it may well be lost through long delay. And it would have been lost long since, had it not been for the modicum of solace which I get



from the restorative powers and jollity of heart which come naturally to me and from which I take comfort, as happens with the egg of THE OSTRICH which the bird leaves in the sand when it has laid it, and will never look at it again. But the sun, that universal source of warmth by which all things survive, nourishes it in the sand, and thus it comes to life, nor will it ever be hatched in any other way. So I say of myself who am the egg that is hatched by nobody, that I might easily be lost without a little jollity of heart that sustains me and is like the sun. For it is the universal comfort of which each man has his share according as God has given it to him.

But there is no warmth so natural as beneath a mother's wing, and no nourishment so good for a child as his own mother's milk. And if you wished to nourish me, fair, very sweet, beloved mother, I would be as good a son to you as the young SCREECH OWLS and THE HOOPES are



to their mothers. For as much time as the screech owl spends in nourishing her young, so much do they for their part spend in nourishing their mother when they are mature, and similarly the young of the hoopoe. For when she is in poor plumage, she would never moult by herself as other birds do, but the young hoopoes come and pull out the old feathers with their beaks, and then they brood over her and nourish her until she is completely covered with new plumage. And they spend as much time brooding and nourishing her as she spent on them when she hatched them. Fair, very sweet mother, I would very gladly be as good a son to you. For if you wished to hatch and nourish me, that is to say retain me as your love, as it was stated above that laying was the capturing and hatching the retaining, know that there is nothing by which a faithful lover should test himself that I would not do for you.

But if you do not value my nurture as much as your own, and if it seems that I would not have rewarded you enough for your love if I had given you mine, I respond that there is nothing that is not equalized by

love. For in love there is neither valley nor hill. Love is all one like a waveless sea. Wherefore a Poitevin said that love that so undulates is worthless; wherefore also Ovid said that love and mastery cannot remain together on a single throne; and the Poitevin, who followed Ovid in this, said, "Pride cannot coexist with love." And that other who for his part said, "I cannot ascend if she does not descend" meant that, since she was higher and he lower, she must descend and he ascend to be one. The reason for this equality is to be found in the fact that the same path goes from St. Denis to Paris as from Paris to St. Denis.

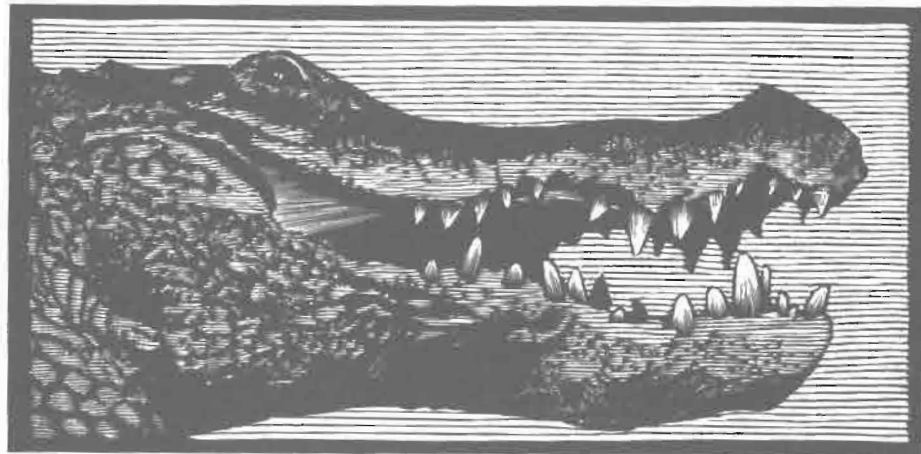
And so I say that if you wanted us to love each other, it would be one and the same love from you to me and from me to you, and the one love and the other would both be of the same lineage. Wherefore the Poitevin said, "Unequal to you in rank, yet ranked equal through love." Wherefore I say that because it would all be one, I would bestow on you as much as you would have bestowed on me. For although at this time I am not as worthy as you, if you loved me, your love would improve me until I was worth as much as you, for it would raise me to your stature.

Wherefore it seems to me that I could be as good a son to you as the screech owls and the young hoopoes are to their mothers. But it seems to me that you have more than might be helpful to me of that pride that cannot coexist with love. You should cut it down or you could not savor the joy of love, as THE EAGLE, when its beak is so overgrown that it cannot eat, shatters its beak and then sharpens it anew on the hardest stone it can find.



The eagle's beak signifies the pride that stands in the way of love. The beak shatters when one so humbles oneself as to unlock the fortress that defends the tongue for the purpose of recognizing and granting favor. But there are some who unlock it in the wrong way. For they are consistently secretive when they should reveal themselves, and find solace by seeking out no matter whom to trust, and chattering lightly to him. I say that that is shattering one's beak in the wrong way.

They resemble THE CROCODILE. For all existing animals that eat in the right way move their lower jaw to chew, and keep the upper jaw



motionless. But the crocodile eats in the reverse way. It keeps its lower jaw motionless and moves the upper. So it is in speaking of one's love. For when speaking of it in a place where that love cannot be anything but hidden, one moves one's lower jaw. And who would hide love better than the lover? No one, for it is to his advantage. But when speaking of it to anyone else in the world, one moves one's upper jaw. The lower jaw, insofar as it is underneath, signifies what is concealed, and the upper jaw, inasmuch as it is above, signifies what is revealed.

Wherefore it seems that as the crocodile eats in a perverse way when it moves its upper jaw and leaves its lower jaw motionless, so a woman who speaks of her love to anyone except her lover, and is secretive with her lover, shatters her beak in the wrong way, because there are few people who are discriminating in the selection of those to whom they must talk. For a man may present himself as a model of fidelity, yet may bite treacherously and, on the other hand (and more frequently!), a man

who has no intention of acting treacherously will not know how to be discreet about you, because it will not seem necessary for him to be discreet about you to another person when you are not discreet with him. Those men are like THE DRAGON. For the dragon does not bite anyone, but it poisons with a flick of its tongue, and some men do precisely that. They spread your news to someone else as easily as they heard it from you.

Anyone who wished to be wary of that dragon should behave like THE ELEPHANT. For the nature of the elephant is such that it fears no creature except the dragon. But between those two there is a natural hatred, so that when the female elephant reaches term, she goes into the



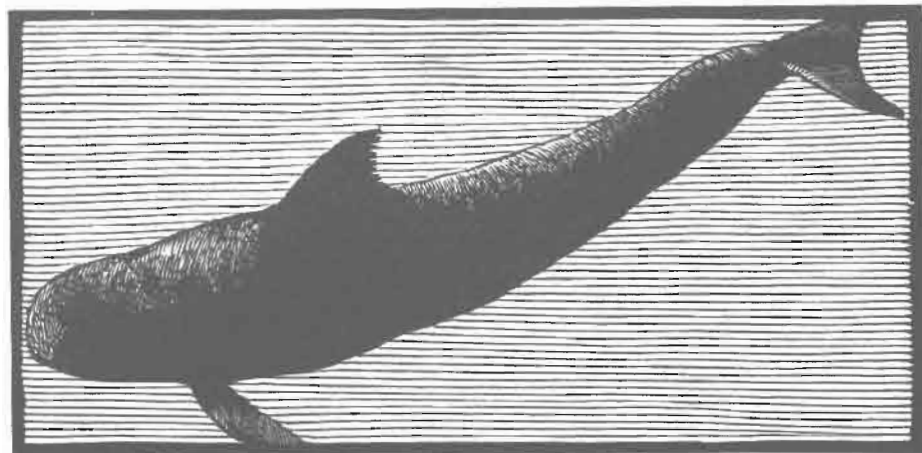
water of the Euphrates (which is a river of greater India) to give birth, because the dragon is of such an ardent nature that it cannot tolerate water, and if the dragon happened upon the young elephants, it would lick them and poison them. The male too watches by the water on the riverbank for fear of the dragon.

I say that anyone who acted in this way need have no care for the dragon. For giving birth signifies retaining in love. For it has been said

above concerning the nature of the partridge that when a woman retains a man as her lover, she makes him her child. And anyone who gave birth like this in the water need have no care for the dragon, for water signifies foresight inasmuch as it has the nature of a mirror. Wherefore it happens that A DOVE sits very willingly on water because, if a goshawk approaches to capture it, the dove is alerted from afar by the shadow of the goshawk which it sees in the water, and it has time to flee to safety.

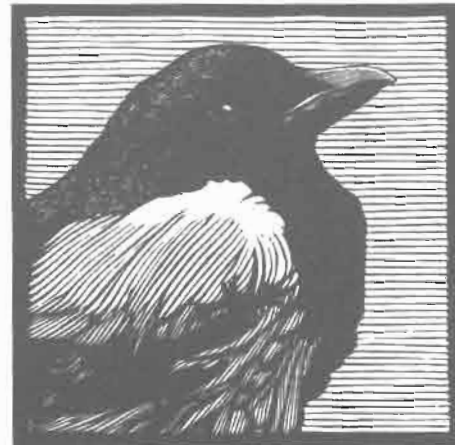
Wherefore I say that the person who acts with foresight so as to guard from afar against all those who have the power to harm is sitting well upon the water. Wherefore I say that water signifies foresight. Thus if she wishes to guard against the dragon, she must give birth in the water, which is to say that, if she wishes her love to be hidden, she must retain her lover with such providence that excessive delay does not drive him to such despair that he does mischief whence one can perceive his love while, on the other hand, she will not herself need to seek someone or other to provide her with solace, and to whom meanwhile she will joke about it.

Anyone who used such providence would not need to fear revelation. For one does not know in whom to trust, and if anyone wants to protect himself against the malicious, let him protect himself against everyone. For a man who is a treacherous renegade may give much assurance of his loyalty. The man who gives me most assurance of his word is the man I will trust the least. For when he takes such pains to be believed, he knows something that is to be feared and wants to exploit it.



Many people are dead for having trusted in such guarantors, as happens with a sort of WHALE, which is so large that when it has its back above the water, the sailors who see it think it is an island, because its skin is just like sand. So the sailors come to land on it as if it were an island, lodge on it, and stay eight days or fifteen, and they look for food on the back of the whale. But when the whale feels the fire, it plunges itself and them into the depths of the sea. Wherefore I say that one must trust least whatever in the world appears most trustworthy. For this is what happens with most who become lovers. A man will say he is dying of love when he feels no pain or hurt, and these deceive good folk just as THE FOX deceives THE MAGPIES. For the fox is of such a nature that when it is hungry and finds nothing to eat, it will roll in the mud of red earth and will lie down with its jaws hanging open and its tongue out, as if it had bled to death. Then come the magpies, thinking it dead, and they try to eat the tongue. And the fox bares its teeth, seizes them by the head, and devours them.

And so I say that a man may act completely lovelorn when he does not care at all and is bent only on treachery. But perchance you will say the same of me. And to this I respond that one joins the army for many reasons. Some go for profit, others to do their lord's service, and yet others because they do not know where to go and are going to see the world. And there is a bird called THE VULTURE whose habit it is to follow the armies because it lives on corpses, and it knows by its nature that there will be dead men or slaughtered horses there. This vulture signi-





fies those who follow women and maidens to take advantage of them, however much the women may be hurt by this. And those who go into the army because they do not know where to go, and who are going to see the world signify men who love no one. But they cannot meet anyone without speaking of love, and they cannot speak of love without begging for it. They do not do this through treachery but out of habit. And those who go into the army because their lord needs their services signify the true lovers.

Concerning this I tell you that I do not follow you out of habit like a vulture. But I cannot by any power of words make you know the species to which I belong. But if you had kept me in your service, I would show you clearly by my actions that I follow you to do the service of my lady. Nevertheless, since no rational argument can avail me anything with you, I ask nothing from you but mercy.

Here ends Master Richard's Bestiary.