



## **'Feimelo et masclei': The pregnant monk, again**

The hermaphrodite monk Klaus Oschema brought to attention recently (see <https://intersex.hypotheses.org/2963>) evidently attracted considerable attention already by contemporaries (as the near-contemporary accounts of Jean de Roy and Jean Molinet already suggest), and one way or the other the episode was remembered for a long time. So it is perhaps not surprising that Jean de Roy and Jean Molinet were not the only ones to report on the double-sexed monk who gave birth to a child in 1478. As it turns out, another near-contemporary account is found in the chronicles of Robert Gaguin (first published in 1497).

In fact, references to Gaguin are found in various sources (most prominently, [Bauhin](#)), but I first came across this reference in a somewhat unexpected context. It may be worth mentioning this source, as it also contains other references, and hints towards a long and twisted history of remembering and re-working this episode from the late 15th century. It is an odd story involving untranslatable *patois*, a brave archivist (always my heroes!), and - [in a future post](#) - some learned pornography.

### **'Feimelo et masclei': an Auvergnois *patois* account**

The documents in question are notes on the *patois* spoken in the region of Sainte-Eulalie (Cantal) compiled by [François de Murat](#) (1770-1838), apparently made in preparation of his *Dictionnaire du patois de la Haute-Auvergne* (published in 1792; not seen). These notes are found in two manuscripts (Clermont-Ferrant, BM 531 and 532). They were edited almost a century after de Murat's death in a moderately obscure journal in 1931 by the local archivist Pierre-François Fournier (<http://www.idref.fr/026871297>).

In the context of *patois* proverbs, de Murat quotes the following *Histoire du moine hermaphrodite* (a title added by Fournier, it seems):

“Un kot, al moustier dei Bei Fadzou / beinguet un pèro d'a Cliarsou, / feimelo et masclei, ein capuço / kei pourtago din lei bradzou / affa dei feillo et dei garçou. / Akeil er' un paou fadeidzaire, / et deisou kei ton dzaguosset, k'a forse dei direi et de farei, / anfin tout sougeuit s'ingroussset; / pei sei turet d'akeil affaire / tou koumo ma paouro mairei, / kou mei faguet / naou meis après kei moun pairei / i aguet fa poutouna un dzour / l'eistufloou dei Rocamadour.”

Unfortunately for the linguistically challenged like me, Fournier seemed to assumed that a reader of the *Revue de la Haute-Auvergne* would understand the local dialect (fair enough) and thus did not bother with a translation. I vaguely understand that it is about someone both female and male (*feimelo et masclei*), having both nature (*dei feillo et dei garçou*) who became pregnant (*s'ingroussset*), but otherwise I have to trust Fournier's assertion that this tale, apparently transmitted orally in late 18th c. Auvergne, goes back to the same episode also reported by Jean de Roy. (Any help by someone who has some grasp of *patois* is greatly welcome!). Fortunately, Fournier's notes are very erudite and precise. In addition to other references (including the *Histoire scandaleuse* and early modern scholarship) he also mentions that Robert Gaguin in his *De gestis Francorum* refers to the same monk.



## Robert Gaguin

Gaguin's account is indeed interesting as it provides details not found in Jean de Roy. Jean de Roy relates that the events took place in a Benedictine monastery in the Auvergne held by *le cardinal de Bourbon* (see <https://intersex.hypotheses.org/2963>). According to Gaguin, the hermaphrodite monk lived at Issoire in the Auvergne. Both accounts match, as Saint-Austremoine at Issoire was a Benedictine monastery of which Charles de Bourbon was indeed abbot. The passage in Gaguin (as quoted by Fournier; the translation is my own) reads:

“Per eos dies apud Arvernos, in cenobio Issoriensi, monachus quidam, cum hermofrodita [*sic*] esset, gravidus est, effectus asservatusque summa diligentia donec parturivit.”

[In these days, in the monastery of Issoire in the Auvergne, a certain monk, being hermaphrodite, became pregnant, was watched with greatest care until he gave birth.]

No mention is made of any punishment, but *asservatus* could well mean 'kept in custody'. Unlike Jean le Roy and Jean Molinet, Robert Gaguin used the learned term *hermaphrodita* (not *hermaphroditus*). My impression is that in general vernacular accounts only rarely (and relatively late) use terms like 'hermaphrodite'; instead, they more frequently employ descriptive vocabulary ('to have both natures', 'avoir les deux sexes d'omme et de femme', etc.).

## Sources quoted

Caspar Bauhin, *De hermaphroditorum monstrosorumque partuum natura* [...], Oppenheim 1614. [[http://books.google.com/books?id=YMDHm\\_y9NAYC](http://books.google.com/books?id=YMDHm_y9NAYC)]

Patris Roberti Gaguini, *quas de francorum regum gestis scripsti annales* [...], s. l. 1577. <https://books.google.de/books?id=v39z0mtMgE4C>

François de Murat, *Vocabulaire du parler de la région de Ste-Eulalie*, édité par Pierre-Fr. Fournier, in: *Revue de la Haute-Auvergne* 33 (1931), 1-51.