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Economics of Virtue in Dietrich von der Glezze's *der borte:* A Wife Errant and a Husband Caught

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Abstract This article is a Gender Theory-informed reading of a thirteenth-century German narrative entitled *der borte*. *Der borte* (1270–1290) was written by the little known, Dietrich von der Glezze and it deals with familial transgressions, perversions of knightly virtues, as well as same-sex physical encounters. Previous research maintains that this short verse narrative has not received much scholarly attention due to its *queerness*. However, I suggest that what has not received much attention is not the small measure of homoeroticism that is featured in it but rather the concept of desire quantification and how it justifies convention transgression. I claim the accepted view of *der borte* is week and prejudicial to an obviously heterosexual text. The core intent of the text has been missed by current scholarship, where the concept of desire quantification and how it is used to justify transgressions of social and religious conventions is the focus of Dietrich's narrative.

Keywords German Middle Ages · Dietrich von der Glezze · Queer Theory · Knighthood · Adultery · Homoeroticism · Homosociality · Heteronormativity · Michel Foucault · Heterosexuality · Homosexuality

D*er borte* (1270–1290) is a thirteenth century narrative written by the little known Dietrich von der Glezze. This short verse narrative provides textual space for less represented social phenomena such as willful cross-dressing, same-sex physical encounters, and various acts of mendacious behaviors. This entertaining and unique account demonstrates how transgressions are used for the purpose of obtaining material objects of one's desire. Dietrich von der Glezze shows how individuals willfully transgress conventional norms and how they are consequently defined as a

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result of their transgressions. All the key characters in *der borte* fall, but it is the *degree* to which they fall that determines the nature and appropriate measure of castigation they receive.

While the story privileges a conventional heteronormative gender model, i.e., the marital relationship between an apt knight and his beautiful lady, definite traces of alternative sociality and sexuality are featured in the text as well. Of significant interest is the central female character who manages to actualize all she desires by way of working within the set societal and familial parameters of her time and context.

In this article I postulate that Dietrich von der Glezze primarily discusses human desire, how it justifies transgression of conventions, and finally how it may be quantified. This quantification of human desire can be seen in the *quid pro quo* situations in which the characters voluntarily place themselves.

Plot Summary of *der borte*

Der borte involves a married couple, Kuonrat of Swabia and his lady, as well as a stranger/nameless knight whose actions are primarily dictated by carnal desire. Kuonrat is a great knight, well accustomed to victories and distinction. His natural abilities in tournaments are superior and he is also driven by a strong thirst to be triumphant. His noble lady has unparalleled beauty and all the necessary courtly virtues which make her lovable and desirable. She is referred to as the pure and virtuous lady of the court.[1]

One day when Kuonrat is away, a stranger knight rides by. Upon seeing Kuonrat's wife in the garden, the knight declares that he craves her sexually. He is willing to part with many of the uniquely precious and magical material possessions he has, provided the lady acquiesce to his physical desire for her. The lady sees an opportunity to aid her husband in his knightly pursuits by securing these items for him and agrees to negotiate the terms of her honor. First, the stranger knight offers her a magical hawk. The lady refuses his offer, yet instead of walking away she chooses to bargain with the stranger knight, indicating her good reputation has an actual price. She chooses to capitalize on the knight's lust for her and seizes the opportunity to obtain his possessions of inestimable value.

The knight proceeds to offer her two special hounds, followed by his superior horse. The wife does not respond to these enticements either. She needs to be offered more objects of higher value. The knight finally offers her his most desired possession, a belt adorned with precious stones. The belt is highly desirable because its wearer gains invincibility and knightly superiority. Kuonrat's wife decides, after obtaining all of the stranger knight's treasures, that she will, at that point, acquiesce to him. Thus, the noble married lady and the stranger knight engage in coitus. Unfortunately for her, their secret tryst is witnessed by Kuonrat's faithful squire.

[1] The fact that the beautiful noble lady does not have a name of her own is not a unique occurrence here. Many courtly narratives do not afford a concrete onomastic identity to their noble ladies, *frouwen*. If they do have a name, it is generally the identity they acquire by marriage.

On Kuonrat's return to the court, the squire dutifully informs him of his wife's adultery. In response, Kuonrat decides to abandon his wife and court because of the shame she has brought upon him, his noble name, and his whole court. The wife is saddened by her husband's abandonment, yet she is satisfied with the bargain she made with the stranger knight and patiently waits two years for Kuonrat's return.

After two years, realizing that her husband is not returning to his court and her, she designs a new plan in order to find him and claim him back. She journeys with an entourage from her court and upon arriving at an Inn, sends the company home. The wife confides to the Innkeeper that she is a male in female clothing. This lie is necessary since she needs to obtain knightly clothing and armor in order to effectuate her scheme.

The noble lady presents herself as Heinrich of Swabia[2] at the court of the Duke where Kuonrat is residing. The knights at the feast decide to go hunting, and Heinrich clearly dominates the hunting activity, thanks to his/her newly acquired hawk, hounds, and horse. Kuonrat notices Heinrich's possessions and desires them for himself. Once the two decide to be good friends, Kuonrat attempts to rely upon the newly established friendship to procure from Heinrich some of his/her objects. He thinks he can get what he desires from Heinrich simply by asking. Heinrich is unequivocal and says resolutely that no man will receive his/her possessions.

After some bartering, however, Heinrich is willing to negotiate and tells Kuonrat that as long as he complies with Heinrich's demands, he/she would give him the hawk and the hounds. First, Heinrich says that he/she loves men. Moreover, he/she proceeds with very specific sexual directives: she desires Kuonrat to lie with him/her and that Kuonrat is to occupy the bottom position. Thus, the two would be mirroring a conventional, heteronormative sexual behavior with the man, Heinrich claiming the commanding, top position. Kuonrat is willing to acquiesce to Heinrich and at this point, Heinrich *outs*[3] him/herself to Kuonrat as his legal and lawful wife. She reprimands him for his lack of discipline, but most importantly, chides his willingness to commit an unnatural, same-sex, and, therefore, heretical physical act. His act would have been punishable by both canon and the church. Kuonrat shows remorse and eventually obtains his wife's forgiveness. They return to their court in Swabia as a newly reunited man and wife.

Interpretation

Some attention has been paid to the relatively little-researched *der borte*. The most recent work comes from Albrecht Classen[4] whose contribution includes a prose translation of *der borte* but not a close reading or interpretative analysis. Other research comes from Martin Blum who proposes that scholarship has not paid much

[2] Incidentally, the wife is portrayed nameless up to this point. The identity she assumes as a man is also onomastically marked. As a man, she appropriates a fixed, knightly identity.

[3] The verb is a direct reference to Gender Theory jargon, i.e., the character chooses to reveal the true nature of the proper self.

[4] Classen (2007).

attention to this narrative due to its queerness. Blum points out that "a number of studies … attempted to 'sanitize' the text in order to include it in the canon of Middle High German literature" (111).[5] According to Blum,[6] such earlier scholarship as Gustav Ehrismann's "deliberately obscures and misrepresents the plot to erase all traces of homoeroticism" (111–112).

However, I do not accept such 'erasure' of homoeroticism as deliberate. I consider the focus of the narrative to be on the notion of human desire, sexual and other, and the degree to which it is reified and utilized. Since homosociality is ubiquitous in medieval knightly culture, Ehrismann (1932) most likely did not deem its treatment decisive to the analysis of *der borte*.

Previous scholarship does not provide any discussion of the concept of desire or any insight to the characters' attitudes vis-à-vis desire. Helmut de Boor uses the noun phrase: "unnatural desires" (277) only when referring to homosexuality[7] but does not provide much of a context for either the notion of desire itself or what is meant by same-sex physical encounters[8] during the German Middle Ages.

Blum's reading of *der borte* is close albeit ahistorical and inadequate. He concludes that the reason why traditional scholarship[9] has paid little attention to this interesting short narrative is because of a lack of comfort with queer discussions.

However, I suggest that what traditional scholarship has neglected to elucidate is not the queer aspect of the narrative[10] but rather the general notion of desire and how it occupies a clearly extensive, textual space in this short erotic tale.[11] The text obviously features homosociality and traces of conjectured same-sex physical encounters but these notions do not govern the core of the text. I suggest that reading this text as primarily one that features homosociality and male/male sexual acts is an attempt to foist modern understanding and perceptions of queerness on to a medieval text.[12]

To a medieval audience there was no "definitional narrowing of sexuality as a whole to a binarized calculus of homo- or heterosexuality" (Sedgwick 1992[13],

[5] Blum (1998).

[6] Such a reading is problematic, in my view, because it makes assumptions which are linguistically familiar to a 20th and 21st century audience but lack in historicity and contextuality.

[7] Which is the same adjective the Church used when referring to homosexual acts. As quoted in *Queering the Canon* (1998).

[8] I refrain from using the term 'homosexuality' as a result of its rather modern coinage and meaning.

[9] According to Martin Blum traditional scholarship has "resorted to more or less elaborate constructions in order to erase any possible allusions to queerness" (112).

[10] I find Blum's statement that the text is 'queer' quite bizarre as he seems to be anthropomorphizing the text itself.

[11] The term 'erotic tale' is taken from Classen (2007).

[12] Moreover, knightly society was permeated by homosociality as fellow knights competed and trained, and valued male bonding together. Many German medieval narratives depict instances in which knights seek the companionship of other knights as a very worthy and praiseworthy pursuit. In *Nibelungenlied*, Siegfried spends a whole year with fellow knights at the court of Gunther before he is allowed to be in the presence of Kriemhild. Knightly fellowship is a necessity and is of superior importance to knights and their progressive betterment within the order itself.

[13] *Gender Criticism* in which Eve Sedgwick proposes that there is, indeed, a stark difference between the following terms, i.e., same-sex and homosexual.

p. 275); hence we cannot read a medieval text with modernity-colored lenses. During the German *Blütezeit* and shortly after 1230 there was no systematized conceptualization of gender, sex, and sexuality. The lexemes 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' were not constructed till the latter part of the 19th century. James Schultz observes "in earlier times sexual behavior was classified according to other criteria" (54). Hence, historicity needs to be considered and not disregarded as has been done by theorists such as Martin Blum.

Claiming to decode the gendered aspects of *der borte* applying modern categorizations of sexuality is fundamentally useless.[14] As Arnold Davidson points out, if readers "perpetually look for precursors to our categories of sexuality…, we will produce anachronisms at best and unintelligibility at worst" (37).[15] Most recently, historian Katherine Crawford maintains that sexual identity categorizations are a modern expression.[16] She observes that "sex as a matter of identity is the latest iteration, but it is also the newest negotiation of the sexualities that have come before" (237). There simply did not exist a systematic and lexical depiction of various sexual identities. I suggest that refraining from applying modern labels of sexed behavior to *der borte* is not only indispensable to a fair understanding of the immediate narrative context but also a responsible course of action. After all, it is not the narrative's queerness that is being silenced, as Blum insists, but rather its characters' conscientious departure from both law and canon for the purpose of material acquisitions.

I suggest that every form and representation of desire is a reified commodity.[17] Kuonrat wants the things Heinrich has and Heinrich wants his/her estranged husband to come back to the marriage as an equal partner. Both Heinrich and Kuonrat are driven by desire for material things and both of them try to amass these things by way of commoditized sex.[18] Heinrich is invested in claiming back Kuonrat and desires to show the reason behind her sexual transgression. She engages in a sexual act with the knight not out of sexual desire for him but rather out of a concrete desire for the things he possessed which, in turn, she desires to procure for Kuonrat. By virtue of these possessions Kuonrat will be rendered invincible and

[14] Claiming that it is by virtue of its apparent queerness that *der borte* has been purposefully silenced by heterosexually minded, modern theorists is, de facto, unsubstantiated. There was, *de facto*, no concept of homosexuality in the Middle Ages. As Schultz clearly states in his recent *Courtly Love, the love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Schultz 2006), lexical depictions of sexed behaviors need to be viewed and considered historically. The only discussions of sexual behaviors in pre-modern times are to be found in classical Athens and in the thirteenth century in Thomas Aquinas'(2006) *Summa Theologica*. In short, in classical Athens those individuals who engaged in sexual activity were "divided into those who did sex (adult male citizens) and those to whom sex was done (women, boys, foreigners, and slaves)" (Schultz 54). Whereas Aquinas classifies sexual behaviors within the spectrum of utility and established Christian morality, i.e., sex needs to be performed when it leads to procreation and other forms thereof are classified in accordance with their compliance and adherence to convention.

[15] Davidson (2004).

[16] Crawford (2007).

[17] Whether that entails material possessions or sexual acts.

[18] Sex, in Dietrich's text, becomes a tool of exchange. The essence of the text is using human desire for the purpose of attaining material possessions of much value to knights. Sex is needed to obtain things, but it is not central to the plot, and the concept of desire itself should not be seen simply and solely within a sex-centered context.

therein lies her motivation. An invincible, knightly Kuonrat is a stronger noble Kuonrat. Ergo, by improving his knightly standing, Kuonrat would also improve his standing as a noble.

The wife's *êre*[19] is negotiable. She unostentatiously knows she is worth much and does not stop negotiating with the stranger knight until she obtains all she desires. In terms of the conventional gender roles in the medieval realm, the highest crime committed by the stranger knight is penetrating the realm of a fellow knight and claiming that which belongs to another nobleman.

The wife's constant refusal of the stranger knight places him in a state of wretchedness. In agony he says the lady has wounded him; he tries to be relieved of the grasp of lust by finally opting to part with his magic belt. The stones adorning such a belt are rare and come from different corners of the world such as Morocco, India, Syria, and Greece. However, what is of most value are not the rare and bejeweled stones themselves but rather what the belt can magically do for the knight who possesses it. Its owner can vanquish every opponent and be ever victorious, "Er wirt nimmer erslagen/Er gesiget ze aller zît."[20]

At the stranger knight's words, the wife turns pale and then blushes on account of the soon-to-happen sexual transgression between her and the knight. The wife now knows she has reached the limit of the offer. The belt equipped with rare stones will seal the deal. At this point in the negotiation, she loses some measure of her calculating nature. The wife is pragmatic, but her blushing *outs* her as an embarrassed and inexperienced transgressor.

The act of transgression with the stranger knight is witnessed by a servant faithful to Kuonrat, hence her transgression is rendered public. Kuonrat leaves precipitously to avoid facing public shame and the wife finds herself abandoned but in possession of objects valuable to a knight.

She decides to claim back Kuonrat by employing the possessions she acquired as ammunition and clothing. They render her knightly and invincible. The new onomastic identity she gives herself is that of Heinrich and as Heinrich she manages to trap and force Kuonrat into forgiving her for her initial transgression.

As Kuonrat and the wife-turned-Heinrich, become acquainted, Kuonrat asks about her origin. She says she comes from Swabia and that her name is Heinrich of Swabia. The two agree that they need to support each other and foster a friendship since they both originate from the same place. As a matter of fact, it is Kuonrat who suggests that they need to celebrate their friendship, "Wir suln machen veste/Unser zweier vriuntschaft" (549–50).[21] Kuonrat's offer of friendship, however, is ripe with ulterior motives. He is primarily interested in Heinrich's possessions, which he assumes he may acquire by vouching friendship and knightly love to the able knight.

[19] As the *Lexer* suggests, this medieval substantive means not only honor but primarily glory, renown and good reputation. Thus, Heinrich is not only negotiating with her personal honor in mind, but also her public name, good reputation, and general [public] glory. Lexer (1966).

[20] **Note**: All *der borte* translations from Middle High German to English are my own.

[21] We should establish/our friendship between the two of us.

There is a systematic build-up of tension in the plot, as Kuonrat's desire for Heinrich's possessions increases after each of Heinrich's rejections. Heinrich observes for a second time how a man is willing to do anything to have his desire quenched. Such lack of self-control earns both men, the stranger knight and Kuonrat, a mocking. Heinrich has the opportunity to deride them both: the knight who was willing to give up precious gifts simply because of a sexual act and, second, her husband who was willing to engage in a same-sex act for the purpose of obtaining two hounds and a hawk (779).

Finally, Heinrich suggests to Kuonrat that his desire for her things could be placated provided Kuonrat agree to lie together with Heinrich. Kuonrat responds instantly that he will suffer anything so that he may obtain the hawk and hounds. He specifically states that he desires/wants to endure [lîden] anything for the sake of obtaining the animals, "daz wil und muoz ich" (768–779).[22] Moreover, he shows diligence when he says that he does not want to skip on anything at all, "nihtes niht vermîden" (771),[23] meaning he will satisfy Heinrich's request completely.

Kuonrat maintains that he will, indeed, do whatever Heinrich desires: "Swaz ir wellet, daz sol sîn" (736).[24] Heinrich proceeds to tell him that he/she has never had a woman: "nie dehein wîp ich gean" (740).[25] Kuonrat will be able to attain the hounds and hunting bird under two conditions: (a) that he lie with Heinrich the way a man and woman lie together and (b) that the act needs to happen in secret.

Kuonrat's surprise shows in his attempt to come to grips with Heinrich's unusual request. "Ez muoz mîn klage immer sîn,/Daz iuwer stolzer lîp/minnet die man, und niht diu wîp" (747–48).[26] It is a shame that such a beautiful body as the one Heinrich has would be shared with men and not women, laments Kuonrat. The request Heinrich makes on him is heavy and unnatural to Kuonrat and he acquiesces out of desire for the material objects. Heinrich desires that Kuonrat be acted upon sexually when occupying the bottom position. In Heinrich's earlier encounter with the stranger knight she was asked to lie down as well: "Dô die vrouwe nider seik/und der ritter nâch neik" (349)[27] The knight is in the dominating position in this setting and the lady is fully subservient to him.

Heinrich continues with very specific directives with regards to sexual positions (755–56).[28] In these verses Heinrich switches back to the familiar 'du,' which is

[22] That I want and must [have].

[23] Do not leave anything at all out.

[24] That which you want, must so be.

[25] I have never had [liked] a woman.

[26] It must always be my pain/that such a beautiful body as yours/loves the men and not the women.

[27] Then the lady sank down.

[28] Dû muost dich nider zuo mir legen,
sô wil ich mit dir pflegen.

appropriate since she is giving directions and orders to Kuonrat. Further, she requires that they lie down the way a man and a woman do: i.e., Heinrich desires to replicate a heterosexually conventional model of coitus. After all, it is the only model she knows. Heinrich says: "dar zuo swes ein ieglîch man/Mit sîner vrouwen pfligt…/swenne er nahtes bî ir ligt," that they need to engage in the sexual act the way a man and his wife do (760–62).

In the first sexual act between the stranger knight and the married woman, nature reacts positively to their act of union. The trees begin to creak, the roses are full of fecund laughter, and the birds sing. Nature is condoning a natural union between a man and a woman, a union which may result in reproduction, "Die boum' begunden krachen,/die rôsen sere lachen,/Diu vogelîn von den sachen/ begunden doene machen' (345–48).[29] The nature imagery continues: "Vil rôsen ûz dem grase gienk,/dô liep mit armen liep enpfienk/Dô daz spil ergangen was,/dô lachten bluomen und gras" (353–56).[30] The roses rise above the grass as the couple embrace. The love-making act is described gently and via tropes. It is portrayed indirectly via nature and it oozes a sense of fecundity and fertility. The lady is being inseminated the way the earth is. Once the game of sex is over, nature is in a postorgasmic state of content laughter: the flowers have sprung open and the green grass is happy. The sympathy of nature is not seen in the Heinrich/ Kuonrat pseudo sexual encounter. No flowers or grass beam with joy at the prospect of love being made and exchanged between two males.

When the sexual act is about to begin, Heinrich changes her tone and starts his/ her speech with 'weiz got.' God is her witness, or God knows that Kuonrat deserves to be the object of ridicule and derision: "ir sît worden mir ein spot:/Welt ir nû ein kezzer sîn/durch hunde und den habech mîn" (763–79).[31] Heinrich derides Kuonrat because he is willing to be a heretic, i.e., *kezzer* for the sake of obtaining two hounds and a hawk.

Of interest is the use of following substantives: *kezzer* and *habech* in lines 790–91, "Nû welt ir ein kezzer sîn/vil gerne durch den habech mîn." Both nouns belong to the grammatical masculine gender, and incidentally instead of observing that Kuonrat would rather become a *kezzer* because of his desire to have possessions of such value as a fast horse, hounds, or even a magical belt, the wife uses the hawk, the least valuable of the four possessions, with which to analogize *kezzer* thus evoking inferences of male sexuality as noted earlier. Kuonrat was willfully prepared to break established norms of sexuality and therefore transgress both canon and natural laws.

Heinrich takes off his/her male masking and reveals to Kuonrat that she is his legal wife, resorting to the formal form of address, 'iuwer.' Heinrich castigates

[29] The tree began to crack/the roses laughed heavily,/the little birds from the [happening] thing/began to make sounds.

[30] Many roses went out of the grass/Then body received body with arms/As the game was played out,/ then laughed [bloomed] the flowers and the grass.

[31] You have become a mockery to me!/
Would you now [rather] be a heretic for just dogs and my hawk?

Kuonrat for having lost his virtues (786–87).[32] Heinrich's *zorn* is inflamed by the fact that Kuonrat was willing to a) commit an act of infidelity and (b) engage in an unnatural sexual union with another male for the sake of the gifts of smaller value, "durch die minsten gabe zwô." She is also infuriated by the fact that Kuonrat is willing to part with his *êre*, or reputation and good name, so willingly and easily. Kuonrat's seemingly willful abandonment of knightly virtues is disconcerting to Heinrich. Kuonrat, whose morality and reputation were beyond reproach pre negotiations, seems far too eager to transgress for the purpose of striking a good deal. The portrait Kuonrat paints of himself is not one of moral superiority and it does not reflects the knightly virtues of his time.[33]

In spite of her own transgression, the wife places herself in a position to castigate both men. The basis for her castigation and derision is the men's immaturity and lack of control over their physical bodies and general desires. The stranger knight was full of desire and utterly driven by lust, whereas her husband did not shy away from Heinrich's request to penetrate him (760–61). In sum, this text demonstrates that desire is driven by a need to acquire material things and such desire ends up dictating the actions of the characters. The way these characters go about actualizing their respective desires serves as a revelatory tool of their humanity and imperfections. For instance, Kuonrat, who has conventionally been referred to as a superior knight, reveals himself as a foible human being laced with imperfections and carnal desires.

Kuonrat's desire may be *queered* simply because he concedes to Heinrich's request to be penetrated by him. However, it does not encapsulate the full range and scope of his desire: he was wholly interested in the material possessions and on account of procuring them, was willing to suffer whatever was necessary. The sexual act itself is not what drives him, but rather, the desire for the possessions which will become his if he acquiesces to Heinrich. The simple truth of the narrative is that conventional morality is easily breached when things of great value are involved and, most importantly, desired.

[32]

Vil untugenthafter lîp	You very disgraceful person
Ich bin iuwer elîch wîp	I am your lawful wife
Durch habech und durch winde	By hawk and hounds
und durch daz ros geswinde	and the fast steed
Und durch mînen borten guot,	and by my good belt,
der mir gibet hôhen muot	that gives me high courage
Ze strîten unt ze tschuste,	to battle and to joust,
einen ritter ich kuste	a knight I kissed
Und liez in bî mir slâfen…;	and let him sleep by me…
Nû welt ir ein kezzer sîn…	Now you want to be a heretic…
ir habt iuch selben geschant;	you have shamed your own self
Daz ich tet, daz was menschlîch:	That which I did was human
sô woltet ir unkristenlîch…	but you wanted to act unchristianly…
Daz ir durch die minsten gabe zwô…	on account of the two gifts of smaller value
sehet, daz ist mir zorn. (779–802)	You see, this is my wrath.

[33] My use of the notion of knightly virtues here is based on conventionally accepted knowledge about Arthurian romances, knighthood and knightly values. I gleaned from both primary and secondary sources here. Kuonrat does not have the resilience of a truly uncompromising knight. His behavior is most certainly incongruous with the precepts of the order of knighthood. See Cappellanus (1990) as well as G. Ehrismann (1932) and Bumke (2000).

Heinrich continues her castigation (791–888) by weighing the seriousness of the two transgressions.

ir habt iuch selben geschant;
Daz ich tet, daz was menschlîch:
sô woltet ir unkristenlîch
Vil gerne haben getan;[34]

All of the characters break out of the societal boxes (such as Christianity, knighthood, and marriage) to which they are assigned or into which they willingly fall. It is a sign of fallibility to break the parameters of any institution to which one subscribes. It is natural to be led astray. Heinrich, however, shows that a more enlightened being is one who understands human nature and the importance to bridle one's desires and apply ample discipline.

The notion of equality is important in this text. The only way the wife can become equal with her husband is by trapping him in a situation in which he would be seen as the greater transgressor. The conclusion of the narrative places the wife on higher moral ground: a sexual transgression is frowned upon, but it is easier to be forgiven than an act of sodomy which falls under the category of heresy, a severely punishable crime by law and canon. A sodomitical act would have forced Kuonrat outside the community, and the gravity of such an act is more serious than a heterosexual transgression. The wife understands the severity of heresy and successfully traps Kuonrat in a situation which forces him to forgive his wife her previous act of adultery. The wife is capable of executing her plan precisely because of her ability to be in charge of her reason and not be entirely led by sexual desire. She fuses her power of reason and intuition and as a result manages to use various situations to her advantage. Her ability to manipulate facilitated her new marital and social standing. This very fusion places her on a level which allows her to claim what she desires: higher social standing and prestige with Kuonrat, yet more importantly, equal footing in the marital union itself.

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[34] You have shamed yourself/that which I did was human/but you wanted to be unchristian/quite gladly.

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