



Melusine's secret discovered, from *Le Roman de Mélusine* by Jean d'Arras, ca 1450-1500. Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Mermaids

ECL: Literature and the Environment

Fall 2025. Professor Pressman

Day 10: The Medieval Melusine

ADMIN

- No class on Thursday— start thinking about midterm essay (due 10/19)
- To help... today brainstorming

“Discovery” OR Close Reading brainstorm

- **DISCOVERY:** What kind of “object” might you bring to class to discuss to expand, support, enhance our learning? Why?
- **CLOSE READING:** Which text do you want to close read? Which part of it (section, idea, aspect)? Why?

A strong thesis has 3 parts: the What, Where/How, and the Why (a.k.a “So What?”)

- 1) **What** do you see?: This is your insight
- 2) **Where** do you see it? **How** is it being done?: This is where you use specific elements from the work to support your insight
- 3) **Why** is this relevant? **So What?**: This is where you explain *why* your insight is relevant, where you make an argument about *what* the work is saying/doing with and through your insight. This is where you push your insight to larger conclusions about the work as a whole.



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From your blogs — the entry

- SIERRA: This notion is apparent through Raymondin's persistence in trying to get through the door to Melusines (metaphorical and literal) private place. The blade entered [the door] a little, so slowly that he almost began to despair. But he forbade himself to think what he would do next, for he could not, he saw, fully part the adjacent boards. But he might make a crack wide enough to see through! He would soon find out something, no matter how!" (122). The imagery is more explicit in its violent forced entry with the blade opening the entry. ..On that, the blade is a euphemism for penetration, it no longer is an instrument of survival but a tool of destruction. ..In this case, both land and women's bodies are disrespected, pierced, and exposed for knowledge and profit.
- BOMIN: the real danger here is not an outside enemy but his own suspicion. By preparing weapons, Raymondin is treating the situation as if it were a battle.

From your blogs— gossip

- **BRYAN:** But rather the husband, Raymondin, “is not horrified but only saddened” (85). This is where I liked the story, because rather than immediately judge Melusine and her condition, showing that he truly only loved her for her looks, he becomes what I interpreted as relief, because he was egged on by someone else, driven by jealousy. It wasn’t his words that convinced Melusine to ultimately leave, but Geoffroi, to be honest I would kick him in the shins for calling my wife a “snake and odious serpent” (88).

From your blogs— the ramifications

- **ANGIE:** The narrative acknowledges Raymondin's error in not controlling his "cursed curiosity(142)" and breaking the pact of trust with his wife. In this tale, Raymondin's humanity is regarded as fallible, despite not being cursed with hybridity. His jealousy and rage is passed on to his son, and carried on through his lineage, outlined by Melusine's departing words: "After you, my Raymondin, no man will be able to hold this country in peace as we have seen and as it is held at present." By betraying her trust, his lineage is cursed by his actions, rather than her inherent nature and "cursed womb."

From your blogs— allegory

- **KAILA:** He, through his curiosity, she, without it being her fault, by her very nature. And he no doubt threw the fault on her, and she told herself that they would still be happy but for his cursed curiosity” (142). Deep down, Raymondin acknowledges that his actions are his own responsibility, yet he continues to project his guilt onto Melusine’s nature. Melusine acknowledges that curiosity is damaging, but remains hopeful that Raymondin will overcome. The themes of curiosity as destruction and desire for knowledge not only depict the betrayal of a tragic love story, but also a broader metaphor about the way humans treat the natural world.

Take aways?