

Korinna Gonschorek, München: Staging False Truths: The Queen, the Dwarf, and the Marshal in the *Macaire* Tradition

Within the literary tradition of the calumniated queen, the trope of the false marshal who desires the queen and stages her infidelity is widespread. Entrusted with the queen's protection, the marshal abuses his position to defame her and subject her to a series of ordeals. Among the narratives shaped by this motif, the tale of *Macaire* achieved broad circulation across medieval Europe. An early Franco-Italian version in verse from the first half of the fourteenth century is regarded as a close translation of a late twelfth-century Old French *chanson de geste*, now surviving only in fragments. In this version, Charlemagne's advisor Macario plots the queen's downfall after she rejects his advances. Together with a dwarf at court, he fabricates evidence of an affair between the dwarf and the queen, which leads to her banishment.

Later adaptations substantially alter the constellation of marshal, dwarf, and queen. In some versions, both the queen and the dwarf are falsely accused; in others, the dwarf acts independently, without the marshal's instigation. In the latter cases, the marshal instead becomes the driving force behind the queen's punishment after the alleged affair is uncovered. This paper offers a comparative analysis of the early fourteenth-century Franco-Italian *Macario*, Schöndoch's late fourteenth-century Middle High German verse *romance Die Königin von Frankreich*, and two fifteenth-century prose versions: the anonymous Middle French *Macaire* and the Early Modern German *Königin Sibille*, attributed to Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken. It examines how different strategies for staging false truths shape perceptions of guilt, both within the narrative and for its audiences. Although the central scene remains constant – the dwarf discovered in the queen's bed – the changing roles of accuser and instigator significantly affect the construction and reception of guilt.