

« DICITUR LUPUS, QUIA IN DIE
COMEDIT UNAM GALLINAM »:
BEYOND THE METAPHOR: LUPUS DISEASE
BETWEEN THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD^{*}

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Abstract

In the Middle Ages, a severe ulcerative lesion of the lower limbs consuming a sick person's flesh was named *lupus* because it was metaphorically associated with the wolf, probably with respect to the feared anthropophagic characteristic of this beast. Thirteenth-century theologians' commentaries on the Bible linked *lupus* with *morbus regius*, a polysemic term that could denote jaundice, *scrophula* or leprosy. Moreover, for reasons of lexical proximity, *lupus* was at times confused with *lupia*, a subcutaneous swelling. The aim of this article is to present an inquiry of the earliest appearance of *lupus* as nosographic name and its exact meaning(s) and possible synonyms found in different sources, as well as a study on the competition among these different diseases names. The investigation will serve as a significant heuristic example for the purpose of demonstrating the overall complexity of the nosologic lexicon of the past.

Key Words

Lupus; esthiomenus; morbus regius; lupia; medical metaphors



In the surgical treatise written by Rolando da Parma around 1230, an extension of Ruggero Frugardi's *Surgery* probably written at the end of the twelfth century,¹ we read in the chapter on cancer that it could take on different names depending on

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¹ On the relationship between Ruggero and Rolando's works, see MICHAEL MCVAUGH, « Is there a Salernitan Surgical Tradition? », in DANIELLE JACQUART, AGOSTINO PARAVICINI BAGLIANI (eds.), *La Collectio Salernitana di Salvatore de Renzi*, SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2008 (Edizione Nazionale « La scuola medica Salernitana », 3), p. 61-77.

the part of the body that was affected. If it affected the face, the name given to the disease was *noli me tangere*, for the following reason: if the lesion was touched with an unwashed hand, it tended to expand. In the central part of the body, the disease was called *cingulum*, because it « encircled the body ». If in the outer parts, such as the feet, shins and thighs, the disease was defined as *lupus* and was incurable.² Unlike *noli me tangere* and *cingulum*, Rolando does not explain the origin and reasons of the name *lupus*.

The expressions *noli me tangere*³ and *lupus*, which both do not belong to the classical nomenclature of the disease – as also confirmed by Bruno da Longobucco who, in his *Cirurgia magna* (1252), questioned them precisely because they were absent from the oldest authoritative sources⁴ – were included into the current language of medical and surgical treatises starting from the thirteenth century, apparently with Rolando's *Surgery*.⁵

As we shall see, the first to declare that the term *lupus* had its origin in a metaphor seems to have been the fourteenth-century physician and surgeon Guy de Chauliac who wrote that, just as the fierce beast, the disease 'devoured' the lower limbs of the sick persons, and to prevent this from happening, it was commonly believed that it had to be fed on the meat of a chicken.

² ROLANDO DA PARMA, *Cirurgia*, MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palat. Lat. 1318 (13th–14th c.), fol. 18vb–19ra: « Item in facie dicitur noli me tangere [...] si a manu non lota tangeretur augmentabitur eius malitia. In medio autem corporis dicitur cingulum quia corpus cingit. In partibus exterioribus, ut in pedibus cruribus et coxis dicitur lupus et tunc incurabilis est ». This passage was also quoted by Luke Demaitre, who considered the printed edition of 1498; LUKE DEMAITRE, « Medieval Notions of Cancer: Malignancy and Metaphor », *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 72 (1998), p. 616.

³ Although in most texts *noli me tangere* refers to a localized affection of the face, there are some exceptions. The most significant one is the testimony of the physician Jean de Tournemire in the *inquisitio in partibus* of Peter of Luxembourg's canonisation process (Avignon, 1390). The physician appointed this expression to indicate his daughter's breast cancer. See DEMAITRE, « Medieval Notions of Cancer », p. 634–637, and ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, *Ignis sacer. Una storia culturale del 'fuoco sacro' dall'antichità al Settecento*, SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2013 (Micrologus' Library, 51), p. 86–87. Even in others non-medical sources, *noli me tangere* could indicate different kinds of diseases. The subject definitely deserves further study.

⁴ BRUNO DA LONGOBUCCO, *Cirurgia Magna*, in *Ars chirurgica Guidonis Cauliaci [...]*, apud Iuntas, Venezia 1546, fol. 114rb: « Ego autem Brunus Longoburgensis de huiusmodi distinctione non presumo aliquid veritatis: quia non vidi vestigium eius in libro veterum omnino ». For a summary of the content of the most important surgeons' texts of the Middle Ages and a comparison among them, see MICHAEL McVAUGH, *The Rational Surgery of the Middle Ages*, SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2006 (Micrologus' Library, 15).

⁵ This passage dedicated to *lupus* seems to be lacking in Ruggero Frugardi's work. I consulted the edition of Ruggero's *Chirurgia* edited by KARL SUDHOFF, *Beiträge, zur Geschichte der Chirurgie im Mittelalter*, Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, Leipzig 1918, vol. II, p. 156–236.

If, on the one hand, the use of a metaphor has always been usual in the choice of medical terminology since antiquity⁶ – the term cancer itself, mentioned above, is an example⁷ – it is easy to think that the nosographic term *lupus* largely owes its origin to the obsession which developed in the late antiquity and the early Middle Ages with respect to the anthropophagic character of the wolf. An obsession that, as noted by Gherardo Ortalli, does not emerge in the classical literature devoted to this animal.⁸

In the Middle Ages, *lupus*, as a nosographic term, was sometimes associated with cancer, but mainly with *esthiomenus* (or *herpes esthiomenus*), and in medical sources, it conveyed the notion of a severe ulcerative lesion, a gangrene, localized on the lower limbs. This meaning was maintained in the early modern period, as revealed, for example, in the *Epistola* written by the physician and humanist Giovanni Manardo (1462–1536), devoted to the names of diseases occurring in the visible parts of the body (« Lupum appellant ulcus [...] quod [...] inferiores partes, praecipue autem crura, infestat, celerrime depascens, et quasi lupus famelicus proximas sibi carnes exedens »)⁹ or in the well-known *Lexicon medicum* of Stephanus Blancardus (1650–1702), in the various editions of this work: « Lupus est species cancri crura et tibias occupans ».¹⁰

Despite the fact that most medieval and early modern sources have conveyed the concept of *lupus* as a disease referring exclusively to the lower limbs, from the thirteenth century onwards, the moment of the maximum diffusion of the nosographic term in medical treatises, some religious texts use *lupus* with a different meaning by assimilating it to *morbus regius*. The latter expression was considered in antiquity and in the Renaissance as a synonym for ‘jaundice’,¹¹ whereas in the Middle Ages, starting from about the thirteenth century, it was used to indicate the *scrophula* (‘swollen glands usually in the neck’), healed by the ‘touch’ of French and English kings, as is well known from the seminal study of

⁶ On this topic, see the recent article by STEFANIA FORTUNA, « Metafore e traduzioni latine medievali dei testi medici greci », in NICOLETTA PALMIERI (ed.), *Métaphores et images médicales d’Alexandrie à Salerne* (forthcoming). I thank the scholar for giving me the opportunity to read her article before publication. For the metaphor in medical Latin lexicon, see also SILVANO BOSCHERINI, « Parole e cose. Raccolte di scritti minori », in GUY SABBABH (ed.) *Le latin médical. La constitution d’un langage scientifique. Réalités et langage de la médecine dans le monde romain*, Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, Saint-Étienne 1991, p. 187–193.

⁷ See DEMAÏTRE, « Medieval Notions of Cancer », p. 622–623.

⁸ GHERARDO ORTALLI, *Lupi genti culture. Uomo e ambiente nel Medioevo*, Einaudi, Torino 1997, p. 68–83.

⁹ GIOVANNI MANARDO, *Epistola secunda lib.vii. Ad Michelem Sanctannam chirurgum de nominibus morborum in exterioribus corporis partibus evenientium*, in *Epistolarum Medicinalium Tomus Secundus*, Iohannes Baptista Phaellus, Bologna 1531, fol. 26r.

¹⁰ STEPHANUS BLANCARDUS, *Lexicon medicum graeco-latinum*, ex Officina Johannis Ten Hoorn, Amsterdam 1679 (s.v. *lupus*).

¹¹ See PEDRO CONDE PARRADO, MARÍA JESÚS PÉREZ IBÁÑEZ, « De Varrón a Quevedo: sobre los nombres latinos de la ictericia », *Faventia*, 22/2 (2000), p. 51–66.

Marc Bloch.¹² Moreover, in the late antiquity, *morbus regius* could indicate a much more serious disease, sometimes comparable to leprosy, as attested by various non-medical sources.¹³ Related to this, the meaning of *lupus* could also vary depending on the texts considered, whereas the definition of the term transmitted by most medieval and early modern period medical treatises, as well as glossaries, does not take into account this semantic complexity.

As a further complication, for reasons of lexical proximity, *lupus* could also be confused, at least in the early modern period, with *lupia*, a term of medieval origin indicating an excrescence, a subcutaneous swelling. Proof of this is a quotation included in Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano's work on gynaecology, written in the early seventeenth century, while the possibility of such a misunderstanding was highlighted for the first time in a statement of the renowned surgeon Jean Tagault, in his *De chirurgica institutione* first published in 1543. Later, the same statement was transcribed again at least in one of the Petrus van Foreest's books of *Observationes* published posthumously in 1610.¹⁴

Although not subject of the following article, it is also necessary to more deeply specify that *lupus* as a nosographic term still exists and is used to indicate various pathologies. The most common among them is the Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, an autoimmune disease, which is different from the medieval *lupus*.¹⁵

Given these premises, this article aims to present a study of the first appearance of the nosographic name *lupus* and an investigation into its exact meaning(s) and possible synonyms of the term in different sources, as well as an inquiry on the competition among these different disease names. The first part of the article will deal with the history of the term and its metaphorical origin, including an analysis

¹² MARC BLOCH, *Les rois thaumaturges: étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre*, Istra, Paris 1924. There is evidence that the same power was attributed to King Alfonso of Portugal: see FERNANDO SALMÓN, MONTSERRAT CABRÉ, « Fascinating Women: The Evil Eye in Medical Scholasticism », in ROGER FRENCH, JON ARRIZABALAGA, ANDREW CUNNINGHAM, LUIS GARCÍA-BALLESTER (eds.), *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease*, Ashgate, Aldershot 1998, p. 76, fn. 57.

¹³ See FRANK BARLOW, « The King's Evil », *The English Historical Review*, 95 (1980), p. 4–27; ANNE FRAISSE, « *Morbus regius*: les vicissitudes de la 'maladie royale' depuis les textes médicaux jusqu'à la littérature chrétienne », in CLEMENTINE BERNARD-VALETTE, JEREMY DELMULLE, CAMILLE GERZAGUET (eds.), *Nihil veritas erubescit. Mélanges offerts à Paul Mattei par ses élèves, collègues et amis*, Brepols, Turnhout 2017, p. 763–777.

¹⁴ PETRUS VAN FOREEST, *Observationum et curationum chirurgicarum Libri quinque, de tumoribus praeter naturam*, III, VII, ex officina Plantiniana, Leiden 1610, p. 253.

¹⁵ See ELIZABETH E. COOPER, CATHERINE E. PISANO, SAMANTHA C. SHAPIRO, « Cutaneous Manifestations of 'Lupus': Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and Beyond », *International Journal of Rheumatology*, 2021 <<https://dx.doi.org/10.1155%2F2021%2F6610509>> (Accessed March 2022). Changes in the meaning of the term *lupus* and juxtapositions with other disease names emerged in the nineteenth century, leading to today's diseases. It is a subject that deserves to be better studied. For a brief excursus on the subject, see BRIAN POTTER, « The History of the Disease Called Lupus », *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science*, 48 (1993), p. 80–90.

into the first legend explaining the metaphor. The second part will consider the sources in which *lupus* was associated with *morbus regius* and the possible variation in meaning that this entailed. The third will include an excursus on the modes and reasons for the confusion between *lupus* and *lupia*.

Different types of textual sources from the Middle Ages will be considered, in addition to a brief overview of some from the early modern period. The investigation of *lupus* will serve as a significant heuristic example in order to demonstrate the overall complexity of the nosologic lexicon of the past and the consequent difficulty of attributing a clear meaning to each term. Penetrating this complexity goes beyond the study of medical texts and their linguistic analysis: it requires an investigation of different kinds of sources and a comparison between texts of different content apparently unconnected as well.

I. Pars Prima

One of the first sources in which we encounter the term *lupus* as nosographic seems to be a letter from 1170 by Pierre de Blois, in which he tells of the death of Stephan du Perche, chancellor and archbishop of Palermo, in the Holy Land. The death was due to a fatal disease, *herpes esthiomenus*, which, as Pierre de Blois explains, was commonly called *lupus* (« vulgo lupus dicitur ») and had affected the archbishop's femur.¹⁶ The expression *herpes esthiomenus*, frequently used in the Middle Ages, derives from a transliteration from the Greek language,¹⁷ and the first occurrence in an original Latin text – other than a translation and adaptation from a Greek or Arabic source – seems to appear in the *Passionarius* of Gariopontus, in the eleventh century.¹⁸ As pointed out by Stefania Fortuna, *herpes esthiomenus* was

¹⁶ PIERRE DE BLOIS, « Ep. XCIII: Ad M. Willelmum Abbatem (A. D. 1170) », in JACQUES-PAUL MIGNE (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, Paris 1844–1864, [hereinafter PL], vol. CCVII, col. 293: « cum enim herpes esthiomenus, qui vulgo lupus dicitur, femur eius enormiter occupasset, omnia in eo medicorum instrumenta frustrata sunt, tandemque in sancta Dei civitate inter brachia regis [...] spiritum exhalavit ». A brief reference to the letter is included in LUKE DEMAÏTRE, *Medieval Medicine: The Art of Healing, from Head to Toe*, Praeger, Santa Barbara 2013, p. 92.

¹⁷ *Herpes esthiomenus* is the Latin transliteration of ἔρπηξ ἐσθιόμενος. For an analysis of the medical terms, from Greek to Latin, referring to ulcers that 'ate' the body's flesh, see FORTUNA, « Metafore e traduzioni latine ». See also MICHAEL McVAUGH, « Surface Meanings: The Identifications of Apostemes in Medieval Surgery », in WOUTER BRACKE, HERWIG DEUMENS (eds.) *Medical Latin from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century*, Koninklijke Academie voor Geneeskunde van België, Bruxelles 2000, p. 13–29.

¹⁸ This is the explanation given by GERRIT BOS, MICHAEL McVAUGH, JOSEPH SHATZMILLER, « Transmitting a Text through Three Languages: The Future History of Galen's *Peri Anomalou Dyskrasias* », *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 104/5 (2014), monographic number, p. 15, fn. 22. In particular in the footnote, it is explained that Eliza Glaze has identified the passage on *herpes esthiomenus* included in the *Passionarius* (quoted from the Lyon edition of 1526, fol. 74vb) also in

also used in translations of Galen's work from Arabic by Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187), in passages in which in the original Greek texts we find the term *φαγέδαινα*, less frequently used in the Middle Ages than *esthiomenus*, and which indicated the deepest ulcers, those that destroyed, literally 'ate', the patient's flesh.¹⁹ As specified by the scholar, it is significant that Stefano da Messina, in the thirteenth century, in his translation of the Galenic work *De Purgantium medicamentorum facultatibus*, chose to render *φαγέδαινα* with a metaphor instead, namely with the formula *dispositiones lupales*. And it was precisely in the thirteenth century that the term *lupus*, often compared to *herpes esthiomenus*, became common in medical and surgical works and in those of an encyclopedic nature.²⁰ Thus we read in Gilbertus Anglicus's treatise: « Lupus alio nomine herpes esthiomenus vocatur, id est se ipsum corrodens »;²¹ or in Teodorico de Borgognoni's work: « Herpes esthiomenus est apostema, et dicitur quasi se ipsum comedens: et alio nomine dicitur lupus ».²²

However, the association between the two terms was not always accepted. For

the anonymous *antiqua* Latin translation of Galen's *Ad Glauconem* transmitted by MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 160, fol. 69v: « herpes esthiomenus id est qui se comederit et in altum et late pascitur ». This would indicate Gariopontus' dependence on this text. However, we would like to point out that the manuscript is roughly contemporary with the *Passionarius*. It should also be noted that the *Alphita*, a Salernitan medical and botanical glossary, which refers to the lexicon of the eleventh-twelfth centuries, contains a definition of *yomenon* (« interpretatur seipsum comedens »). The term is a corruption of *esthiomenon*, and according to Alejandro García González it would refer to the work of Alexander of Tralle; *Alphita*, ed. ALEJANDRO GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2007 (Edizione Nazionale « La scuola medica Salernitana », 2), p. 317; p. 453). Many thanks to Iolanda Ventura who has brought this last source to my attention.

¹⁹ Regarding classical Latin, the term is included in the works of Pliny and Celsus. Pliny reports a cure for various ailments and for « ulceribus quae phagedaenica vocantur » (*Naturalis Historia*, XXIV, V, 9). Celsus on ulcers wrote: « Quae omnia saepe intenduntur fitque ex his ulcus, quod phagedainam Graeci vocant, quia celeriter serpendo penetrandoque usque ossa corpus vorat » (*De medicina*, V, 28, ed. FRIEDRICH MARX, Leipzig – Berlin 1915 [Corpus Medicorum Latinorum, 1], p. 273). As Stefania Fortuna points out (FORTUNA, « Metafore e traduzioni latine »), the Latin term *phagedaina* (or *fagedena*) was used by Burgundio da Pisa and Niccolò da Reggio, who translated Galen's texts directly from the Greek.

²⁰ BARTHOLOMAEUS ANGLICUS, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VII, apud Wolfgangum Richter, Frankfurt 1601, p. 346: « Inter ista autem corrosiva apostemata talis est ordo, quia noli me tangere cancrum est apostema in facie et corrodit paulatim, sed minus aliis. Cancer vero magis, adhuc magis lupus, maxime vero erisipila ». Regarding the term *erysipelas* and its various meanings, see ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, « Un'analisi semantica del termine *erysipelas*. Le *Centuriae* di Amato Lusitano nella tradizione dei testi dall'Antichità al Rinascimento », in MIGUEL Á. GONZÁLEZ MANJARRÉS (ed.), *Praxi theoremata coniungamus. Amato Lusitano y la medicina de su tiempo*, Guillermo Escolar y Mayo Editor, Madrid 2019, p. 125–143.

²¹ GILBERTUS ANGLICUS, *Compendium medicine*, VII, impressum per Jacobum Saccon, Lyon 1510, fol. 332va.

²² TEODERICO DE BORGOGNONI, *Chirurgia*, III, IX, in *Ars chirurgica Guidonis Cauliaci (...)*, Apud Iuntas, Venezia 1546, fol. 161r.

the physician and surgeon Guy de Chauliac in fact *lupus* corresponded, just like in the aforementioned *Surgery* of Rolando, to cancer in order to distinguish it from *herpes esthiomenuis*, of which he gives a fanciful etymology: « [*Esthiomenuis*] is in fact the death and destruction of the member – which is why it is called *esthiomenuis* as the enemy of man – with putrefaction and mollification, unlike *lupus* and cancer, which dissipate the member with corrosion and induration ».²³

This was, indeed, a subtle distinction and Guy emphasizes the metaphorical origin of the term *lupus*, which, he states, had a popular origin: « Many people reduce its harm and lupine rage [...] by applying chicken meat – and therefore people say it is called *lupus*, because it eats a chicken a day and, if it did not have [the chicken], it [the *lupus* disease] would eat the [sick] person ».²⁴

For ordinary people, the way to fight the disease, that ‘ate’ the flesh of the sick person like the ferocious beast, was to feed it with chicken meat. Confirmation of the use of such a form of therapy, and to my knowledge the earliest evidence of this, comes from a hagiographic source, namely the account of the healing miracle in which the protagonist is the Bishop of Liège. The miracle is included in the twelfth-thirteenth century Pseudo-Hebernus’ collection of *miracula* attributed to the intercession of St Martin.²⁵ Specifically, the miracle has the function of justifying the foundation of a confraternity – dedicated to St Martin in the city of Liège – which was founded by Eraclius (†971), although in the manuscripts that transmitted the account the name of the bishop is Ildricus, when it is specified.²⁶ The collection of *miracula* was also translated into French in the fifteenth century

²³ GUY DE CHAULIAC, *Inventarium sive chirurgia magna*, II, I, 2, ed. MICHAEL McVAUGH, MARGARET S. OGDEN, Brill, Leiden – New York – Köln 1997, vol. I, p. 75: « [*Esthiomenuis*] Est enim mors et dissipatio membri, et propter hoc dicitur esthiomenuis quasi hominis hostis cum putrefactione et mollificatione, ad differentiam lupi et cancri que dissipant membrum cum corrosione et induratione ». In the chapter on ulcerated cancer (« De cancro ulcerato »), Guy makes a specific reference to Ruggero’s work, although it is the one by Rolando: « dicitur quod quidam fit in membris simplicibus, ut in carne, venis, nervis, et ossibus; quidam in compositis, ut in facie, qui communiter noli me tangere vocatur; in coxis, lupus; in medio corporis, cingulus, ut dixit Rogerius » (ibid., IV, I, 6, p. 224). See also the commentary by Michael Mc Vaugh in ibid., vol. II, p. 183.

²⁴ GUY DE CHAULIAC, *Inventarium*, IV, I, 6, vol. I, p. 226: « Multi vero mitigant eius fraudulenciam et lupacitatem [...] cum appositione carniū gallinarum – propter quod dicit populus quod ob hoc dicitur lupus, quia in die comedit unam gallinam et si eam non haberet comederet personam ».

²⁵ [BHL 5654]. See JOSEPH VAN DER STRAETEN, « Le recueil de miracles de S. Martin attribué à Heberne », *Analecta Bollandiana*, 95 (1977), p. 91–100; SHARON FARMER, *Communities of Saint Martin. Legend and Rituals in Medieval Tours*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca – London 1991, p. 268–277.

²⁶ The miracle account is transcribed in *PL*, vol. CXXIX, col. 1035–1036, although a more recent and correct edition can be read in JOSEPH VAN DER STRAETEN, *Les manuscrits Hagiographiques d’Orléans, Tours et Angers*, Bruxelles, Société des Bollandistes, Bruxelles 1982 (Subsidia Hagiographica 64), p. 166.

and Ildius is the name given to the bishop.²⁷ The story tells of the bishop of Liège who, having his buttocks severely affected by the disease commonly called *lupus* (« qui lupus vulgo dicitur ») which raged consuming his flesh (*consumere*, *corrodere*, *devorare*, are the three verbs used to express the action of the disease), found no other relief, and no way to delay his death, than to place two plucked and eviscerated chicks on the affected part, twice a day. These were meant to stem the 'lupine rage' and thus prevent it from being unleashed on the bishop's flesh. Incisively, the author of the French translation writes that of the four chicks only the bones were left each time (« Et des quatre ne demouroit que les os »). The bishop went to Tours to visit the remains of St Martin and then obtained the grace to be healed thanks to a vision of the saint, at night, together with St Britius. The morning after the vision, in fact, the two chicks that had been included in the bandage the night before were found to be still intact, while all that remained of the illness was a thin, reddish scar on the bishop's buttock. The story can be read verbatim, without indication of the source, in the later work of Gilles d'Orval (†1251), the *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*, although the name of the bishop is Heraclius.²⁸ Gilles is very interested in demonstrating the truthfulness of the miracle, since it is the event that led to the foundation, by Heraclius, of the confraternity of thirty canons in his diocese of Liège, and to the construction of a church dedicated to Saint Martin, which, the author explains, would have illustrated the scene of the bishop's healing on its walls.²⁹ Above all, in confirmation of the truthfulness of the miracle story, Gilles transcribes the content of a letter that would have been written by the same bishop (therefore from the tenth century), who recounts in the first person his disease, recovery and miracle. It is indeed the same account of Pseudo-Hebernus, albeit abbreviated, with the additional details of a time reference related to Heraclius' life and the tale of a further vision of St Martin and St Britius, who both approved the confraternity.³⁰ It is rather plausible that the letter is an invention of Gilles himself,³¹ in order to confer an aura of sanctity to the confraternity, increased by the account of the second vision. In the past, Johannes Heller, the editor of the *Gesta* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, pointed out about its spurious character

²⁷ *La vie et miracles de monseigneur saint Martin, translatee de latin en francoys*, in MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Réserve des livres rares, VELINS-1159, fol. l.i.

²⁸ [BHL 5655] GILLES D'ORVAL, *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*, II, ed. JOHANNES HELLER, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. XXV, p. 54-55.

²⁹ GILLES D'ORVAL, *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*, p. 55: « in eadem ecclesia apud Leodium istud miraculum in muro depictum ».

³⁰ GILLES D'ORVAL, *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*, p. 55.

³¹ Regarding the way to consider 'false' documents of the Middle Ages, see GILES CONSTABLE, « Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages », *Archiv für Diplomatik*, 29 (1983), p. 1-41.

due to an inconsistency of the time reference.³² Regarding the bishop's disease, the description in the letter is more concise and the part referring to the treatment with chicken meat is missing. It should be noted that in the past, Du Cange also considered this letter to be the first occurrence of *lupus* as a nosographic term, thus dating its appearance to the tenth century.³³ Actually, according to today's known sources, the term should be dated no earlier than the end of the twelfth century.

The custom of feeding *lupus* must have persisted over time, spreading to different geographical areas. Not only it is attested, as we have seen, in Chauliac's *Chirurgia* (written in southern France in the second half of the fourteenth century), therefore after Gilles, but there is also a trace of it in the later polemical text, the *Speculum Cerretanorum*, written between 1484 and 1486 by Teseo Pini, episcopal vicar of the Italian city of Urbino. This work is part of a series of accounts widespread in Europe in the early modern period, describing and satirizing categories of false beggars.³⁴ What is important to emphasize here is how the author, within a taxonomy and description of false beggars, also includes the so-called *Acapones*, who simulated a serious leg injury, called *ignis beati Anthonii* (fire of blessed Anthony) or *lupae morbus*, by using herbs with ulcerative properties. Their name (*Acapones*) came from the fact that they asked for a capon to be placed on the injured leg every day so that the disease would not consume the person's body.³⁵ The reference to the fire of Blessed Anthony derives from the fact that the

³² GILLES D'ORVAL, *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*, p. 55, fn. 1. He states that the miracle took place in the second year after the return of Martin's remains to Tours, after they had been transferred to Auxerre. According to Johannes Heller, the remains returned to Tours in 887, several years before the beginning of Heraclius' bishopric.

³³ CHARLES DU CANGE *et al.*, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, éd. augm., Favre, Niort 1883–1887, vol. V, col. 155b. It is expressed that the first source quoting *lupus* as a nosographic term is the *Charta foundationis Collegii Canoniorum S. Martini*, written in the year 963 by St Heraclius bishop of Liège and transcribed by Aubert le Mire (1573–1640). See AUBERT LE MIRE, *Opera diplomatica et Historica (editio secunda)*, vol. I, Typis Francisci Foppens, Bruxelles 1723, p. 653. Actually, it is the same text of the letter quoted by Gilles d'Orval. In fact, if Aubert le Mire indicated as his source the *Historia* of the theologian and historian of Liège JEAN CHAPEAUVILLE (1551–1617), *Historia sacra, prophana, nec non politica, tribus tomis comprehensa [...]*, vol. II, Apud Guillelmum Le Sage, Liège 1618, p. 194–195, this last author, in turn, copies openly the account from Gilles d'Orval's *Gesta episcoporum leodiensium*.

³⁴ There is an extensive bibliography on the subject, largely in FOSCATI, *Ignis sacer*, p. 167–174 and in the English translation of the volume: ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, *Saint Anthony's Fire from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2020 (Premodern Health, Disease, and Disability), p. 178–184.

³⁵ TESEO PINI, *Speculum Cerretanorum*, ed. PIERO CAMPORESI, in ID., *Il libro dei vagabondi. Lo « Speculum cerretanorum » di Teseo Pini, « Il vagabondo » di Rafaele Frianoro e altri testi di « furfanteria »*, Garzanti, Milano 2003, p. 206: « *Acapones*, a caponibus nominati, qui vitibus albis et cantilenis, aut aliis venenosis herbis crura sauciant sua, clamitantque ignem esse Beati Antonii, aut lupae morbum, cui ad resistendum, ne corpus conterat, oportere die qualibet superponere ».

expression *ignis beati (sancti) Anthonii* mostly indicated gangrene, of whatever aetiology.³⁶ In particular, *ignis sancti Anthonii* was synonymous with *herpes esthiomenuus* in texts of various origins (not only medical) and therefore with *lupus*.³⁷ It should be noted that in Pini's text the name of the disease takes on the feminine gender, *lupa*, later vulgarised into « male della lupa » by Giacinto de Nobili (who used the pseudonym of Rafaele Frianoro), who translated Pini's *Speculum* into Italian in his work, first published in 1621, entitled *Il vagabondo ovvero sferza de' bianti e vagabondi*.³⁸

The use of the feminine seems to be characteristic of texts written in the Italian peninsula.³⁹ This can be detected, for example, in the *Chirurgia* (c. 1275) by Guglielmo da Saliceto, at least in several versions of the printed edition of this work. In fact, with regard to *herpes esthiomenuus* Guglielmo wrote that, because of the kind of corrosion it caused in the patient's limbs and its wandering around, it was commonly called *lupa*: « appellatur a laycis ex modo sue corrosionis et deambulationis lupa sive erisipila ».⁴⁰ Other examples can be found in the accounts of miracles performed by the Franciscan Giovanni da Capistrano and recorded in the fifteenth century by Nicolao de Fara and Cristoforo da Varese. The latter wrote: « A widow, named Elisabeth, struck from the waist down by a certain incurable

³⁶ FOSCATI, *Saint Anthony's Fire*, p. 54–109. The origin of the expression *ignis sancti Anthonii* derives from what was commonly understood to be the thaumaturgical 'specialisation' of St Anthony Abbot, for historical and cult-related reasons impossible to summarise in this context.

³⁷ E.g., LANFRANCO DA MILANO: « Herpes esthiomenuus interpretatur seipsum corrodens [...] hanc aegritudinem quidam vocant cancrum, quidam lupum, quidam ut in Francia malum nostrae dominae; quidam vero Lombardorum vocant ignem sancti Antonii » (*Chirurgia magna*, III, II, 2, in *Ars chirurgica Guidonis Cauliaci [...]*, apud Iuntas, Venezia 1546, fol. 230r). Regarding the disease's names that referred to the names of saints and were associated with *herpes esthiomenuus*, as well as their origins in relation to the cults of saints, I refer to FOSCATI, *Saint Anthony's Fire*, p. 54–123. These names include, in addition to the *ignis sancti Anthonii* and the *malum nostrae dominae* (« the evil of Our Lady ») mentioned above, also the *malum sancti Martialis* and the *malum (or ignis) sancti Laurentii*.

³⁸ RAFAELE FRIANORO, *Il vagabondo ovvero sferza de' bianti e vagabondi*, ed. PIERO CAMPORESI, in ID., *Il libro dei vagabondi*, p. 289–290: « (Degli Accapponi). Questi [...] in modo tale ulcerano le gambe, che apparisce abbiano il male detto fuoco di Sant'Antonio, ovvero male della lupa; il che se fosse vero, come dicono, col sovrapporvi un cappone morto si farebbe non mediocre resistenza al male, acciò non divorasse e consumasse le parti sane ».

³⁹ It is worth noting that at least one exception is found in a passage from the *Memoriale* of Guglielmo Ventura (c. 1250–c. 1320), who, on the death of Pope Clement V, wrote: « Clemens papa in Carpentrasio horribili morbo lupi mortuus est » (*Memoriale Guilelmi Venturae civis astensis de gestis civium Astensium et plurium aliorum*, ed. CELESTINO COMBETTI, in *Monumenta Historiae Patriae, Scriptores*, vol. III, Augustae Taurinorum, Torino 1848, col. 738).

⁴⁰ GUGLIELMO DA SALICETO, *Chirurgia*, I, 58, Iohannes Petrus de Ferratis, Piacenza 1476, pages unnumbered. The following editions were also consulted: Venezia 1490, and Venezia 1546. It is worth noting that the feminine gender is also maintained in the first vernacular printed edition in Venezia 1474, in which the disease is called *lova*. See MARIA L. ALTIERI BIAGI, *Guglielmo volgare. Studio sul lessico della medicina medioevale*, Forni Editore, Bologna 1970, p. 91.

sore, called *lupa*, was all corroded by that same sore and stank so badly that no one could approach her ».⁴¹

Considering the testimony of Nicolao de Fara, we also discover that sometimes the animal of reference, in the construction of the metaphor of the disease, could also be the dog. Thus we read in a passage in which the author lists the type of miracles performed by the saint: « Neque tacebimus filium Nicolai Kadasi de Vuilak, ab aegritudine, quam dicunt lupam, seu canem liberatum ». ⁴² More generally, thanks to these miracle accounts we learn that the *lupa* was not always considered as a disease of the legs. In fact, Nicolao mentions the illness of a man having « magnam lupae plagam in ore ». ⁴³

II. Pars Secunda

In the thirteenth century, the French theologian Hugues de Saint-Cher (†1263) wrote, in his Bible commentary on the book of Isaiah, that the fatal disease that had struck Judah's king Hezekiah corresponded to *morbis regius*, also called *lupus*, since it consumed the flesh of the sick person.⁴⁴ Another reference to the book of Isaiah and the king's illness, by the same theologian, can be read in the commentary on *Liber IV Regum*. In this case, the question arises whether the king's recovery, which occurred after the application of figs to the diseased part of the body, as recommended by Isaiah, was really miraculous or due to the benefits of the therapy. In fact, it is explained, depending on the type of disease the king was suffering from – the diagnosis is therefore not established – figs might or might not be suitable. They were not suitable in the case of *morbis regius* or *lupus*:

Some believe it was an *apostema*, which is called ulcer whose pus is drawn to the surface of the skin by dried figs crushed and placed on top of the ulcer. But Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotius say it was the *morbis regius*, which is called *lupus*, to which all sweet things taken as drink, or food, or applied to the body are contrary.

⁴¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., X, p. 543C: « Mulier quaedam vidua, Elisabeth nomine [...] tacta quadam plaga insanabili, lupa nuncupata, a cingulo infra in parte inferiori, tota erat ab ipsa plaga consumpta, foetebatque nimium, nec aliquis ei appropinquare poterat ».

⁴² *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., X, p. 476D.

⁴³ *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct., X, p. 477B.

⁴⁴ HUGUES DE SAINT-CHER, *Liber Isaiae*, XXXVIII, in *Opus admirabile, omnibus concionatoribus ac Sacrae Theologiae professoribus pernecessarium*, Sumptibus Iohannis Antonii Huguetan, Lyon 1669, vol. IV, fol. 83r: « A ulceribus propter ingratitude percussit eum Dominus usque ad mortem, quia morbo regio laborat, qui dicitur lupus carnes consumens. Unde secundum naturam erat aegritudo lethalis ».

If this was the case, it was a miraculous healing, because health was restored by things that were contrary.⁴⁵

Hugues de Saint-Cher's commentary on the passage from Isaiah has a precedent in that of Jerome, who reports a similar diagnostic and therapeutic doubt:

The Hebrews say that the word SIIN, omitted by the Septuagint, means ulcer and not wound. Indeed Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotius translated it ἔλκος, a word by which they wanted to indicate the *morbis regius* to which any sweet things taken as food, or applied to the body, are believed to be contrary. Consequently, for God's power to show itself, health was restored through harmful and contrary things. Others suppose that SIIN was not an ulcer, but an *apostema* [...] and according to the art of physicians all pus is drawn to the surface by crushed dried figs.⁴⁶

We note, however, that Jerome does not use the term *lupus* to define the king's disease, which according to him referred by the Hebrews as *siin*, would then also be identified as ἔλκος (sore, ulcer), a synonym of *morbis regius*. It is conceivable that Jerome does not associate *morbis regius* with *lupus*, which, as a nosographic term, must not have been in use in his time. Later, Thomas Aquinas, probably following the French theologian, associated the two names in his description of the biblical king's illness in his *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram*.⁴⁷ It is therefore necessary to dwell on the expression *morbis regius* and its polysemy in order to interpret the meaning attributed to *lupus* in the two thirteenth-century commentaries on the Bible.

⁴⁵ HUGUES DE SAINT-CHER, *Liber IV Regum*, XX, *Opus admirabile, omnibus concionatoribus ac Sacrae Theologiae Professoribus pernecessarium*, Sumptibus Iohannis Antonii Huguetan, Lyon 1669, vol. I, fol. 303r: « Quidam putant fuisse apostema, quod dicitur ulcus, cuius sanies in cutis superficiem provocatur siccioribus ficibus contusis et apposisis supra ulcus. Sed Aquila et Symmachus et Theodotius dicunt fuisse morbum regium, qui dicitur lupus, cui quaeque dulcia sumpta in potu, vel cibo, vel apposita corpori, contraria sunt. Quod si fuit, miraculosa fuit curatio, quia per contrarias res sanitas restituta est ».

⁴⁶ JEROME, *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, 11, 38,21.22, ed. MARC ADRIAEN, Brepols, Turnhout 1963 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 73), p. 450: « Aiunt Hebraei verbum siin, quod praetermisere LXX, ulcus sonare, non vulnus. Nam et Aquila Symmachusque et Theodotius ἔλκος interpretati sunt, per quod morbum regium intellegi volunt, cui contraria putantur, vel sumpta in cibo, vel apposita corpori quaecumque sunt dulcia. Ergo ut Dei potencia monstraretur, per res noxias et adversas sanitas restituta est. Alii siin non ulcus, sed apostema suspicantur [...]. Et iuxta artem medicorum, omnis sanies siccioribus ficis atque contusis, in cutis superficiem provocatur ». Regarding this passage see FRAISSE, « *Morbis regius* », p. 776.

⁴⁷ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram*, 38, 175–180, in *Opera Omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII. P. M. edita*, vol. XXVIII, Editori di san Tommaso, Rome 1974, p. 165: « dicunt enim quod laborabat morbo regio, qui dicitur lupus, cui nocent ficus et omnia dulcia, ut curatio tota divine potentie attribuetur. Alii dicunt quod erat apostema, quod est ex humoribus intus collectis nondum carne scissa, ad cuius maturationem ficus prosunt ».

Classically, *morbus regius* meant jaundice (*ἰκτερος* in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* and in Galen's texts) in the same way as other expressions such as *aurigo* and *morbus arquatus*.⁴⁸ In Celsus we find the explanation of the use of *morbus regius*, for the fact that it is cured by « a specially good bed and room, also dicing, jesting, play-acting and jollification, whereby the mind may be exhilarated ». ⁴⁹ This concept was then transferred to the Middle Ages, thanks also to the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville: « Regium autem morbum inde aestimant dictum, quod vino bono et regalibus cibis facilius curetur ». ⁵⁰ Later, at least from thirteenth century onwards, as we learned from the seminal study by Marc Bloch, in medical texts the expression *morbus regius* began to refer to the disease cured by the French and English kings' touch, the *scrophula*, and one of the first authors to write about it was the physician Gilbertus Anglicus. ⁵¹ An eloquent statement can be found at the beginning of the fourteenth century in the *practica* of the physician Bernard de Gordon: « kings have been accustomed to cure [the *scrophula*] only by touch, and chiefly the King of the French, wherefore it is called *morbus regius* ». ⁵²

There is therefore a semantic change, also testified by sources other than medical ones, ⁵³ although in the early modern period, the correspondence between *morbus regius* and *scrophula* disappeared from the lexica. Evidence of this can be found in the *Lexicon* of Blancardus and, even earlier, in the above-mentioned letter

⁴⁸ For a comprehensive and well-documented summary of this lexical issue, see CONDE PARRADO, PÉREZ IBAÑEZ, « De Varrón a Quevedo ».

⁴⁹ CELSUS, *De Medicina*, III, 24, ed. FRIEDRICH MARX, Leipzig and Berlin 1915 (*Corpus Medicorum Latinorum* 1), p. 141. English translation by WALTER G. SPENCER; CELSUS, *On medicine*, transl. WALTER G. SPENCER, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1971 (Republication of the 1935 edition), p. 343.

⁵⁰ ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Etymologiae*, IV, VIII, 13. As pointed out by CONDE PARRADO and PÉREZ IBAÑEZ (« De Varrón a Quevedo », p. 55–58), the calque *icteros/icterus*, *-i* is not documented before the fourth-fifth century, although later, together with *ictericia*, it became the term most commonly used in the Middle Ages.

⁵¹ GILBERTUS ANGLICUS, *Compendium medicine*, IV, fol. 174va : « et vocantur scrophule [...] et etiam morbus regius quia reges hunc morbum curat ».

⁵² BERNARD DE GORDON, *Opus, Liliun medicinae*, I, II, Guillaume Rouillé, Lyon 1559, p. 84–85: « reges consueverunt curare [scrophulam] solo tactu, potissime serenissimus Rex Francorum, et ideo morbus regius appellatur ».

⁵³ For example, in a passage of the account of one of the miracles that took place thanks to the intercession of Saint Fiacre, in the city of Dijon, and written between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries [*BHL* 2919], we read: « In parochia beatae Mariae de Divione filia Bartholomaei custurarii habebat in collo scrophulas gravissimas quae infirmitas vocatur malum regis » (*Acta Sanctorum*, Aug., VI, p. 618D).

of Giovanni Manardo:⁵⁴ *morbus regius* was again used mainly as a synonym for jaundice.⁵⁵

Returning to the Middle Ages, Du Cange's glossary reveals a further meaning of the expression, namely that of a disease similar to leprosy (if not leprosy itself), in relation to brief passages extrapolated from the works of certain late antique and early medieval authors, such as Rufinus and Pope Zacharias. With reference to the latter, for example, Du Cange's glossary mentions a letter he wrote to Bishop Boniface in which he tells of a very serious disease that could affect both horses and people, who were forced to live « *extra civitatem* ». ⁵⁶ Anne Fraisse's recent study has demonstrated that in various of Jerome's letters, *morbus regius* could very probably mean leprosy, given the description of a disease that, like leprosy, led to the corruption, even putrefaction, of the flesh of the entire body of the person affected. ⁵⁷ However, a similar juxtaposition was previously made by Ernest Wickersheimer and Frank Barlow, who referred to other significant sources such as an anathema composed in 988 against those who dared to oppose a donation in favour of the abbey of Saint-Père de Chartres, and some passages from the chronicle *De gestis pontificum Anglorum* written in the twelfth century by William of Malmesbury. ⁵⁸ The anathema included a series of misfortunes that would befall the offender, among which damnation in hell with the flesh of the body eternally devoured by worms, and, even earlier in life on earth, blindness and *morbus regius*. ⁵⁹ Given the content of the text, this is certainly a much more serious disorder than jaundice and well known to the entire community, since the purpose of the curse contained in the anathema was to generate fear. ⁶⁰ For his part, William of Malmesbury tells for example about the bishop Hugh of Orival, who, a few years

⁵⁴ GIOVANNI MANARDO, *Epistola secunda*, fol. 22r.

⁵⁵ CONDE PARRADO and PÉREZ IBAÑEZ (« De Varrón a Quevedo », p. 59) have pointed out that in the Renaissance translations of the *Aphorisms* IV, 62 and V, 72 of the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, the expression *morbus regius* is more often used by the translators instead of *icterus*.

⁵⁶ See *Ep. XIII (Zachariae papae ad Bonifacium Archiepiscopum)*, PL, vol. LXXXIX, col. 951.

⁵⁷ FRAISSE, « *Morbus regius* », p. 772–777.

⁵⁸ ERNEST WICKERSHEIMER, « *Morbus Hispanicus*, un mal prétendu Espagnol au XIIIe siècle », *Actas del XV Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Medicina* (Madrid – Alcalá, 22–29 Sept. 1956), Instituto Arnaldo de Vilanova de Historia de la Medicina, Madrid 1958, vol. I, p. 374, fn. 16; BARLOW, « The King's Evil », p. 5–7. See also IRVEN M. RESNICK, *Marks of Distinction. Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2012, p. 96–98.

⁵⁹ *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Saint-Père de Chartres*, ed. BENJAMIN GUÉRARD, De l'imprimerie de Crapelet, Paris 1840, vol. I, p. 85: « Si quis vero contra hanc donationis cartulam insurgere aut ei calumniam inferre voluerit, regio morbo percussus, luminum cecitate multatus, et praesentem vitam miserrimo exitu celerrime finiat, et sempiternam dampnationem cum Zabulo subeat, ubi, igneis constrictus catenis, aeternaliter ingemiscat, vermibus quoque nunquam moriens ipsius carnes conrodatur et ignis qui nescit extinguere pabulum et esca perhenniter existat ».

⁶⁰ On the constant use of curses in documents drawn up within monasteries, see LESTER K. LITTLE, *Benedictine Maledictions. Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca – London 1993.

after his episcopal ordination, was struck down by the disease named *regia valetudo* due to which his body was covered by purulent ulcers. Since no valid remedy was found for the illness, the author writes that the bishop lived as a leper (« et nullum invenit remedium, quoad vixit leprosus »).⁶¹

We could bring other examples from various sources:⁶² it is clear, however, that from late antiquity onwards, *morbis regius* assumed a different meaning from *icterus*, namely a much more serious disease manifesting itself with ulcers and pustules. It is the same disease that, according to the commentators of the Bible, had struck King Hezekiah and that in the eyes of Hugues de Saint-Cher also corresponded to *lupus*. Although it has not been possible for me to trace the source that may have inspired Hugues de Saint-Cher, I would like to point out that a similar association was considered, in the same period and in the north of France, in another religious text, the *Liber de miraculis sanctorum Savigniacensium* (mid-thirteenth century), which relates the accounts of post mortem miracles of five monks at the Norman abbey of Savigny (incorporated into the Order of Cîteaux in 1147) who died with a saintly reputation.⁶³ The *Liber* contains two stories of interest. The first one tells of a man who, in the back part of his neck, had nine hideous-looking holes which let the breathed air out.⁶⁴ Visited by several people – in accordance with the fact that, in the Middle Ages, illness was always a collective event and inside the restricted community of the sick person, the individuals felt entitled to pronounce on the diagnosis and, possibly, the treatment⁶⁵ – the man received some opinions on the nature of his illness. For some it was *morbis sancti eligij* or *ignis sancti laurentij*, while for others the disease « erat morbus regius id est lupus ». ⁶⁶ The second account concerns a woman whose foot was so inflamed following a wound that surgeons advised her to have it amputated. Once again,

⁶¹ WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *De gestis pontificum Anglorum*, II, PL, vol. CLXXIX, col. 1516. Another reference to the *morbis regius* in this source is detectable in *ibid.*, col. 1675.

⁶² Also on a metaphorical level, the *morbis regius* was similar to leprosy: the one affecting the soul. See HONORIUS D' AUTUN, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*, IV, PL, vol. CLXXII, col. 425: « regius morbus, id est lepra animae ».

⁶³ ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, « Malattia, medicina e tecniche di guarigione: il *Liber de miraculis sanctorum Savigniacensium* », *Reti Medievali Rivista*, 14/2 (2013), p. 59–88.

⁶⁴ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 217, fol. 37: « Guillelmus Mansel [...] habebat enim in collo a posteriori parte morbum aspectu horribilem. Ubi apparebant novem foramina ita quod etiam per ea videbatur hanelitus exire ».

⁶⁵ On the subject regarding the relationships among patients, community and healers in the context of hagiographic texts, see ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, « Il ruolo del guaritore profano nell'identificazione del miracolo. I processi di canonizzazione tra XIII e XVI secolo (Italia e Francia) », in LAURA ANDREANI, AGOSTINO PARAVICINI BAGLIANI (eds.), *Miracolo! Emozione, spettacolo e potere nella storia dei secoli XIII-XVI*, SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2019, p. 207–224.

⁶⁶ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 217, fol. 37.

various names for the disease were suggested such as *morbus hispanicus* and « *lupus id est morbus regius* ». ⁶⁷

Leaving aside the names derived from St. Lawrence and St. Eligius' thaumaturgical 'specialization', and the unusual expression *morbus hispanicus* which, as far as I know, is not mentioned in other documentary sources of the Middle Ages – the term was only reconsidered in the sixteenth century as one of the many names used to define syphilis⁶⁸ – we observe that for the author of the *Liber*, the terms *morbus regius* and *lupus*, as synonyms, always indicated ulcers or gangrene regardless of the part of the body affected.⁶⁹

One last annotation: in the treatise *De aegritudinum curatione*, transcribed by Salvatore de Renzi from the so-called Breslauer Codex (twelfth-thirteenth century), now lost, a recipe is transcribed « Ad malum mortuum qui lupus vocatur ». ⁷⁰ According to the opinion of Monica Green, thanks to a paleographical analysis on a few pages that were photographed before the destruction, the manuscript may have been written in the north of France.⁷¹ *Malum mortuum*, a disease constantly described in medical texts, especially in the *practicae* (without being associated with *lupus*), referred to a set of pustules and scabs always originating from melancholia: a disease whose clinical manifestation did not differ too much from that of *morbus regius* as described in the religious sources.

⁶⁷ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 217, fol. 39–40: « *De muliere curata a morbo hispanico. Uxor Guillelmi Tardif [...] casu calcans super quoddam ferramentum acutum vulnerata est graviter in pede sed in brevi prout ei videbatur sanata est. Processu vero temporis pes intumuit, humores ibi accurrerunt, egritudo periculosa insilijt, mulier dolore intolerabili cruciabatur. Quidam dicebant quod hic erat morbus qui dicitur vulgo porfil, alij antrax, alij lupus, id est morbus regius. Consuluit cerurgianos qui dixerunt quod oportebat pedem uri et secari vel omnino abscindi* ».

⁶⁸ On these thaumaturgical 'specializations' and on the *morbus hispanicus*, see FOSCATI, « Malattia, medicina e tecniche di guarigione », p. 68–81.

⁶⁹ As a matter of interest, the link between *morbus regius* and *lupus* tends to persist over time. In a sermon of the Franciscan preacher Michel Menot (†1518), *lupus* and gout, considered as *morbi regii*, are said to have originated from the consumption of rich food: « Et propter crapulam multi perierunt [...]. Cibos regios sequuntur morbi regij ut lupus et gutta qui non libenter quiescunt in hominibus parvis et laboriosis » (*Sermones Quadragesimales reverendi patris F. Michaelis Menoti*, Ex officina Claudii Chevallonii, Paris 1526, fol. 185vb).

⁷⁰ It is the MS Wroclaw (Breslau), Stadtbibliothek 1302, whose content is transcribed in SALVATORE DE RENZI, *Collectio Salernitana*, II, Dalla Tipografia del Filiatre Sebezio, Napoli 1853, p. 81–385 (p. 369).

⁷¹ MONICA GREEN, « Rethinking the Manuscript Basis on Salvatore de Renzi's *Collectio Salernitana*: The Corpus of Medical Writings in the Long Twelfth Century », in DANIELLE JACQUART, AGOSTINO PARAVICINI BAGLIANI (eds.), *La Collectio Salernitana di Salvatore de Renzi*, SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2008 (Edizione Nazionale « La scuola medica Salernitana », 3), p. 32–33.

III. Pars Tertia

In surgical texts, as well as in the *practicae*, the term *lupia* appears frequently and entered the technical language of medicine in the Middle Ages. An early attestation can be found in the glossary *Alphita*, where *lupia* is indicated as the most common expression for *steatema*, a collection of fat: « Stear interpretatur adeps; inde steatema, scilicet apostema multum humorem continens adinstar adipis, vulgari nostro dicitur lupia ». ⁷² Generally, the *lupia* was classified as an *apostema* of the phlegmatic type, to which the *glandula* and *scrophula* also belonged and from which it had to be distinguished. ⁷³

Lupia was also a term known in non-medical contexts, as we can read for example in testimonies collected at the 1318 *inquisitio in partibus*, in Barcelona, transcribed in the dossier of Raimundo de Penyafort's canonisation process. ⁷⁴ Later on, Guy de Chauliac, in order to better describe the *lupia*, referred to the vegetable kingdom through a comparison that seems to be almost his own explanation of the origin of the term itself: « *Lupia*, like *lupulus* plant, soft, round, originates in joints and dry places ». ⁷⁵

Although the terms *lupia* and *lupus* indicated two totally different diseases, it is not difficult to imagine that, given their similarity, they could be confused, especially since, as we have seen, the lemma *lupa* sometimes came into account.

It is in *De universa mulierum medicina*, an early seventeenth-century work by the physician Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano, that we find an example of the association, and perhaps confusion, between *lupus* and *lupia*. In describing the cancer, specifically the one of the uterus, Castro, in accordance with the surgical sources of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, explains the reason why it was also called *lupus*: it was due to the fact that it devoured bird meat when placed on the diseased part (« Quidam scribunt lupum etiam vocari, quia carnes avium si illi apponatur absomit »). Surprisingly, however, he adds immediately afterwards: « I

⁷² *Alphita*, ed. GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, p. 136. On *steatema*, from Greek *στεάτωμα*, see García González's comment at p. 549. See also VICTORIA RECIO MUÑOZ, « La inflamació », in ANA ISABEL MARTÍN FERREIRA (ed.), *Medicina y filología: estudios de léxico médico en la edad media*, Federación Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, Porto 2010, p. 215–216.

⁷³ BERNARD DE GORDON, for instance, explains: « Lupiae sunt quaedam quae generantur in palpebris, et in aliis partibus corporis, de materia phlegmatica et differunt a scrophis et glandulis » (*Opus, Lilium medicinae*, I, 20, p. 82).

⁷⁴ *San Raimundo de Penyafort. Diplomatario. Documentos, Vida antigua, Crónicas, Procesos antiguos*, ed. JOSÉ RIUS SERRA, Universidad de Barcelona, Barcelona 1954, p. 256: « Dominicus Arnaldus [...] habuit [...] in manu dextera, in iunctura, quae est inter manum et brachium, quandam lupiam grossitudinis unius grossioris amygdalae ».

⁷⁵ GUY DE CHAULIAC, *Inventarium sive chirurgia magna*, II, 1, 4, vol. I, p. 88: « Lupia sicut lupulus, mollis, rotunda, in iuncturis et locis siccis suam parit nativitatem ».

find that *lupus* and *lupia* are preferably called *scyrri* by the surgeons of Spain, in the vernacular language *lobillos* or *lovanillos* ». ⁷⁶

If Castro's description of *lupus* was borrowed practically verbatim from the text of gynecology by the Spaniard Luis Mercado (*De mulierum affectionibus*), one of Castro's main sources, the confusion between *lupus* and *lupia* is entirely original. ⁷⁷

The confusion is even more surprising since one of Castro's sources is also the work of the surgeon Jean Tagault. Tagault, indeed, in the chapter on tumours *praeter naturam* of his *De chirurgica institutione*, pointed out that those who believed that *lupia* was the equivalent of the disease called *lupus* by medieval physicians, were seriously mistaken: « Nevertheless, those who consider *lupia* in the same way as the disease that the *recentiores* call *lupus* are gravely mistaken ». ⁷⁸

Tagault borrows the definition of *lupia* from Guy de Chauliac's *Chirurgia*, also taking up the original comparison with the *lupulus* plant: « Lupia (inquit Guido) veluti lupulus, mollis, rotunda, in loci duris et siccis suam sedem praecipue deligit, ut in palpebris et locis nervosis ». ⁷⁹ In addition, Tagault specifies that in the French language, *lupia* was commonly called *loupe* (« vulgus gallicum vocat *une loupe* »). *Lupus*, on the other hand, the French surgeon explains, was a malignant ulcer, which affected the lower parts of the body and, like a ravenous wolf, from which

⁷⁶ RODRIGO DE CASTRO LUSITANO, *De universa mulierum medicina*, pars II, liber II, sectio III, cap. 24, Cum Gratia et Privilegio Caesarea Majestatis, Köln 1603, p. 191: « Ego potius lupum ac lupiam apud Chirurgos Hispaniae vocitari comperio scyrros vernacula lingua *lobillos*, sive *lovanillos* ». See RECIO MUÑOZ, « La inflamación », p. 216.

⁷⁷ LUIS MERCADO, *De mulierum affectionibus, libri quatuor*, apud Thomam Iuntam, Madrid 1594, vol. II, p. 291. Among the gynecological texts which are directly sources of Castro, the term *lupia* seems to be present only in the 1586 Latin translation by Caspar Bauhin of the text, originally written in French in 1581, by François Rousset and referring to the caesarean section on a living woman (CASPAR BAUHIN, *Franc. Rousseti [...] De partu caesareo tractatus*, I, III, in *Gynaeciorum sive De mulierum affectibus commentarii [...]*, II, apud Conradum Vualdkirch, Basel 1586, p. 503). *Lupiae*, together with *scirrhi* and *apostemata*, are considered causes of the uterus narrowing and therefore impediments to the exit of the foetus. The *lupia* in Caspar Bauhin's text translates the word *loupe* from the original French version: FRANÇOIS ROUSSET, *Traité nouveau de l'hysterotomotokie ou enfantement caesarien*, chez Denys du Val, Paris 1581, p. 10. This subject is explored by ALESSANDRA FOSCATI, « *Ignis sancti Anthonii* e *lupus* come malattie ginecologiche? Uno sguardo sull'originalità del lessico della malattia nel *De universa mulierum medicina* di Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano », in CRISTINA PINHEIRO, GABRIEL F. SILVA, RUI C. FONSECA, BERNARDO MOTA, JOAQUIM PINHEIRO (eds.), *Gynecia: Studies on Gynaecology in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern texts*, Edições Afrontamento, Lisboa (forthcoming).

⁷⁸ JEAN TAGAULT, *De chirurgica institutione libri quinque*, I, XIII, apud Christianum Wechelum, Paris 1543, p. 87: « Verum magno errore tenentur, qui eiusmodi lupiam eandem faciunt cum affectu, quem recentiores lupum appellant ».

⁷⁹ TAGAULT, *De chirurgica institutione libri quinque*, p. 86.

it took its name, quickly devoured the immediately surrounding flesh of the sick person.⁸⁰

The French expression *loupe* seems to have been attested, in the medical field, only in the early modern period.⁸¹ In the Middle Ages, in fact, at least in the French translation of Bernard de Gordon's *Lilium medicine*, *lupia* was rendered by the term *lupin*,⁸² the same used to indicate the *lupinus* plant,⁸³ the latter to be distinguished, however, from the *lupulus* plant.⁸⁴ At the same time, skin formations such as furuncles could also be given the Latin name of *lupinus*, probably due to an association based on the appearance, as attested to in a collection of recipes written in Provençal and Latin in the thirteenth century, in which a remedy is prescribed: « Ad forunculum vel lupinum sanare ».⁸⁵

Therefore, orientation was not an easy task among such similar Latin and vernacular lemmas, etymologically derived from *lupus*. The posthumous French translation of Tagault's work is also partly proof of this, since *lupulus* is translated literally as « petit loup » (« Lupia (dit Guido) est comme ung petit loup et est molle et ronde »)⁸⁶ despite the fact that the adjectives 'soft' and 'round' are ill-suited in describing a 'small wolf' rather than the fruit of the *lupulus* plant.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ TAGAULT, *De chirurgica institutione libri quinque*, p. 87: « crura infestans, celerrime depascens, et quasi lupus (a quo nomen accepisse videtur) famelicus, proximas sibi carnes exedens: quod vitium dubio procul de genere est phagedaenarum ». Incidentally, we note that Tagault, at a time when there was a wide availability of translations of Galenic works directly from Greek, prefers to associate *lupus* with *phagedaena*, a term, as specified, less used in the Middle Ages, instead of *esthiomenus*.

⁸¹ The FEW (*Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*) dates it from 1549, appearing in the work of Ambroise Paré. In the same lexicon it is specified that the lemma was previously attested outside the medical area and at least from 1328 to indicate a « pierre précieuse imparfaite dont la transparence n'est pas entiere ».

⁸² E.g., *Lys de médecine*, in MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1327 (1401–1500), fol. 24v: « Le XIX chapitre est de verrues et des porrez et acrocordibus (sic) et lupins »; *La fleur de chirurgie*, Paris 1504: « Lupins ce sont neux qui viennent es paupieres et es aultres parties du corps de matiere fleumatique » (pages unnumbered).

⁸³ See the term in DMF2020: <<http://zeus.atilf.fr/dmf/>> (Accessed March 2022) and in CHROMed: <<https://cormedlex.arts.kuleuven.be/lupin>> (Accessed March 2022).

⁸⁴ On the origins of the lemmas identifying these two plants, see the extensive explanatory footnotes by Iolanda Ventura in Ps. BARTHOLOMAEUS MINI DE SENIS, *Tractatus de herbis* (Ms London, British Library, Egerton 747), ed. IOLANDA VENTURA, SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2009 (Edizione Nazionale « La scuola medica Salernitana », 5), p. 520–521: p. 536.

⁸⁵ MS Cambridge, Trinity College, R 14. 30 in CLAUDE BRUNEL, « Recettes médicales du XIII^e s. en langue de Provence », *Romania*, 83 (1962), p. 145–182.

⁸⁶ *Les institutions chirurgiques de Jean Tagault [...] Nouvellement traduites de Latin en Francoys par ung scavant Medecin*, chez Guillaume Rouille, Lyon 1549, p. 149.

⁸⁷ As a matter of interest, it is worth noting that Laurent Joubert, who translated Guy de Chauliac's work into French in 1578, used the term *houblon* to translate *lupulus* (LAURENT JOUBERT, *La Grande Chirurgie de M. Guy de Chauliac*, E. Michel Imprimeur, Lyon 1579, p. 131). According to the FEW, this

Going back to Castro's sentence (« Ego potius lupum ac lupiam apud Chirurgos Hispaniae vocitari comperio scyrrhos vernacula lingua *lobillos*, sive *lovanillos* »), we have to clarify that the *schirrus*, transliterated from the Greek, normally indicated an *apostema* of solid consistency,⁸⁸ while with regard to the Spanish terms, the *lobillo*, diminutive of the word wolf, does not seem to be attested in medical sources as a nosographic term, unlike the *lobanillo*, which from the fifteenth century was used to indicate a subcutaneous excrescence, namely the *lupia*.⁸⁹ Paradoxically, the Lusitanian physician, while describing the *lupus* of the medieval sources, including the origin of the name by metaphor, associates it with a series of nosographic terms, in Latin and in the vernacular, which usually indicated other kinds of diseases.⁹⁰

IV. Conclusions

The history of the nosographic term *lupus* is representative of the difficulty for historians to attribute a precise meaning to each disease name of the past. Sources of the Middle Ages – the period of origin of the *lupus* disease – reveal nuances in the meaning of the term which are detectable in non-medical sources. In fact, as we have seen, in both medieval and early modern medical and surgical texts, as well as in the best-known lexica such as that of Blancardus, *lupus* indicated a serious ulcerative lesion, a gangrene, strictly localized in the lower limbs. On the other hand, by reading miracle tales, we learn how *lupus* could indicate a disease also located in other parts of the body. Moreover, its meaning is sometimes complicated by its association with *morbus regius*, a polysemic expression whose wealth of meanings is not detectable in medical treatises, as we have seen. However, all the sources converge in classifying *lupus* as a disease that corroded, more precisely ate inexorably the sick person's flesh. It was properly by this action that its name was derived, due to a metaphor that, although derived from a

lemma would be attested from the middle of the sixteenth century. In an earlier translation of the same text, the one included in the MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 24249 (1401–1500), we read instead: « Lupie est ainsi comme lupulus molle rounde et est engendre le plus des fois es jointures et en lieux sects » (fol. 46rb).

⁸⁸ See RECIO MUÑOZ, « La inflamación » p. 216.

⁸⁹ See *Diccionario Español de Textos Médicos Antiguos* (DETEMA), ed. MARÍA TERESA HERRERA, ARCO LIBROS, Madrid 1996, vol. II, s.vv. *lobanillo*, *lobo* and *lupia*. DETEMA records the term *lobo* as a translation of *lupus* but not the term *lobillo*. On the other hand, the diminutive *lobino* is found, but with the same meaning as *lobanillo*. I would like to thank Victoria Recio Muñoz for providing me with the pages of the DETEMA and for the clarifications on the Spanish language.

⁹⁰ Even DETEMA, s.v. *lupia*, quotes a passage from the vulgarization of Teodorico de Borgognoni's *Chirurgia*, in MS San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Escorial h III, 17 (fifteenth century), in which *lupus* and *lupia* seem to be confused: « de los nudos et lupus que se fazen en la coberturas de los ojos et de los nudos uno nasce en las pestañas de los ojos que se llama en vulgar lupia ».

'popular' context, as declared by Guy de Chauliac, was accepted by physicians. By means of the French surgeon himself, but even earlier, by the account of a hagiographic text referable to the end of the twelfth century, and then through literary texts such as that of Teseo Pini, we discover that the meaning commonly attributed to *lupus* went far beyond the metaphor. The disease was actually fed daily with the fresh meat of a chicken, so that it would not turn its 'hunger' towards the sick person's flesh. It is still in a non-medical source that we probably encounter the first attestation of *lupus* assimilated to *herpes esthiomenus*, a term transliterated from the Greek and referring to the act of devouring. The assimilation is considered in most medieval medical treatises, although it was challenged by Guy de Chauliac.

It is those lexical issues, complicated by the process of translation from Latin to the vernacular, that led to the confusion of very different diseases, such as *lupus* and *lupia*. Not only the similarity between the lemmas, but also the aptitude for metaphor and the creation of such similarities between the disease names and those from plant kingdoms, as we have seen, could lead to confusion on the part of the authors of medical texts themselves and, a fortiori, of the scholar who needs to interpret the disease names.

At the end of this analysis, it appears that it is possible to detect the meaning given from time to time to the nosographic term *lupus*, not only through an evaluation of the medical sources by means of a linguistic analysis, but also, and above all, through a comparison of sources of different types. These sources tend to integrate and explain each other, making the history of *lupus* a page of cultural history rather than of medical history.

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