There Was No Joking

Satire in the *Lais* of Marie de France
Detail of a manuscript in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris
Sir Lanval’s Lady Appeals to the Judges
by Byam Shaw (British, 20th Century)
Lanval by Jean-Sebastien Rossbach
(French, Contemporary)
The Fairy Queen’s Beauty

Her Horse:

was well proportioned in the neck and head, no finer beast in all the world

The Queen:

neck whiter than snow on a branch... and an elegant forehead

(emphasis added)
Eugene Mason's translation
Originally published in 1911
Mason’s Fairy Queen

Mason’s word choice “shrouds the nakedness of the lady in words touched with sanctity and innocence.”

-Peggy Maddox

She is whiter than any altar lily; she is like the newborn rose; she wears a vesture of spotless linen; the rondure of her bosom is more untouched than hawthorn.

(emphasis added)
The Critical Final Scene

Marie de France:
Lanval jumps on the palfrey behind the fairy queen

Mason:
The fairy queen “seated herself on the palfrey, behind her friend”
Detail of a manuscript in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris