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HUMOUR IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

A study of visual evidence

Vol. I

Kleio Pethainou

History of Art PhD
The University of Edinburgh
2023
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signature:......Kleio Pethainou.................. Date:......27/02/2023........
ABSTRACT

_Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence_ is an investigation of the development of humour in late medieval France, as expressed in the visual arts. The research identifies and examines comic themes in Valois visual culture through analysis of three case studies. The first is the new iconography for the comedies of Terence, created in the early fifteenth century for the Duke of Berry and the Valois Princes (BnF Lat. 7907A and Arsenal Ms-664 réserve). The second is the manuscript of René d’Anjou’s _Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_ (ÖNB Cod. Vind. 2597). The third is the only extant fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript of the _Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles_ (GUL Ms Hunter 252 [U.4.10]).

The special emphasis on the arts of the book allows for a discussion of the illuminations in relation to the text they intend to illustrate. Each of these works offers a distinct contribution to the topic by presenting a rich variety of material and different shades, types and forms of humour expressed pictorially. Their nature as manuscripts involves a personal dimension, which narrows their intended audience to specific and well researched historic personalities, facilitating the reconstruction of their tastes, pleasures and sense of humour. Thus, these works permit insights into how humour was expressed, understood and appreciated, and they allow for a nuanced discussion on the comedic and the nature of visuality in late medieval France.

Each of the investigated manuscripts has been studied previously, yet their visual humour has not been addressed as an independent and intentional artistic creation with the specific function of provoking amusement and laughter. This thesis is the first such investigation of humour in visual culture for this period, addressing the lacuna in scholarship and showing that there is a rich diversity of visual material that merits analysis. It argues that pictorial expressions of humour became an important focus for leading creative artists in France through the course of the fifteenth century, and it contextualises this art historical phenomenon within the intellectual, social and political history that surrounded it. The reconstruction of the circumstances in which works of art were made, displayed and understood highlights the changes in the prospective audiences for these works, and the ways different viewers engaged and appreciated humour expressed visually. As well as providing new insights into the patrons, this thesis discusses the artists’ approach towards their text of reference, their inventions, innovations and creative impulses. In doing so, the investigation highlights a close connection with theatre and performance, and it identifies the printing industry as a contributing factor for the diffusion of comic iconography.

Studying humour is important because it determines social boundaries and functions as a barometer of social, political, sexual and ethical sensibilities. _Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence_ addresses a variety of media and permits a closer reading of the role of humour and its functions in Valois France and in Western Europe in the later Middle Ages, expanding our understanding of late medieval concepts of visuality and appreciation of the image.
Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence is an investigation of the ways humour was expressed visually in illuminated manuscripts and printed books of fifteenth-century France. It is the first study of humour in visual arts for this period that does not focus on marginalia, but in main illuminations.

The thesis uses three case studies to examine a variety of comic themes. The first case study is the early fifteenth century iconography for the comedies of Terence, (BnF Lat. 7907A and Arsenal Ms-664 réserve). The second is the manuscript of René d’Anjou’s Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris (ÖNB Cod. Vind. 2597). The third is the only extant fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles (GUL Ms Hunter 252 [U.4.10]).

All case studies are painted texts, and the artists were creating new, original images to decorate them. This thesis addresses a variety of media and examines the approaches, innovations and creative inventions of the illuminators that intended to represent humour in pictures. It argues that leading creative artists in France at the time were exploring different ways to represent humour, were offered unprecedented creative licence to do so. The analysis permits a closer reading of the role of humour in the development of the visual arts in fifteenth-century France.

Some art historians have denied the existence of humour in medieval art, and others have identified it but did not investigate it in detail. By studying humour, this thesis recreates the social, political, sexual and ethical sensibilities of its audience. The case studies were created in specific circumstances, and they were destined for important personalities of the fifteenth century. Throughout their history, these works were exposed to a variety of audiences: some were printed, they changed owners, and they were displayed and appreciated differently. The thesis reconstructs the historic personalities of the original owners and the subsequent audiences for these works. In doing so, it contributes to understanding the ways different viewers engaged and appreciated humour expressed visually.

Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence expands our knowledge of how images were appreciated, and how visuality and humour were defined in late medieval France. Thus, it is a major contribution to understanding humour and its functions in Western Europe in the later Middle Ages.
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<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arsenal</td>
<td>Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAV</td>
<td>Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Bibliothèque de Genève (Geneva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Bibliothèque municipale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BnF</td>
<td>Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BodL</td>
<td>Bodleian Library (Oxford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Royale (Brussels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cod. Vind.</td>
<td>Codex Vindobonensis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMB</td>
<td>Fondation Martin Bodmer (Cologny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUL</td>
<td>Glasgow University Library (Glasgow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPCM</td>
<td>The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KB</td>
<td>Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Royal Library of the Netherlands (The Hague)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Musée Condé (Chantilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMA</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLR</td>
<td>National Library of Russia (St Petersburg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYPL</td>
<td>New York Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÖNB</td>
<td>Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMA</td>
<td>Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PML</td>
<td>Pierpont Morgan Library (New York)</td>
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Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. A list of consulted translations is presented in the Bibliography.
‘Cueur, si plus ne voulons farser
nostre ennui ne savrons passer.’
Heart, if we no longer wish to joke,
we shall not endure our sorrow.

_Livre du Coeur d'Amour Épris_, 114,1 : 44v
INTRODUCTION

_Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence_ is an investigation of humour expressed in word and image in Late Medieval France, with a focus on the ways in which humour translates between the two media. The thesis is the first large-scale investigation to examine non-marginal manuscript illuminations and early printed images with a view to understanding their visual humour. It argues that leading creative artists of the fifteenth century had the unprecedented opportunity to explore visual expressions of the comic with the intention to entertain the intended patrons, and their humorous representations and creative solutions had lasting consequences for humour and its uses in Western visual culture.

Humour, visual or otherwise, is a vast and complicated topic. This thesis restricts its period of interest to fifteenth-century France, a period less researched by scholars of humour and visuality, who so far have largely focused either on the visual arts of the sixteenth century or on manuscript marginalia. The topic is investigated through the analysis of three case studies: the early fifteenth-century pictorial cycles for the comedies of Terence (BnF Lat. 7907A and Arsenal Ms-664 réserve), the manuscript of René d’Anjou’s _Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_ (ÖNB Cod. Vind. 2597), and the only extant fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript of the _Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles_ (GUL Ms Hunter 252 [U.4.10]).

The thesis takes into consideration the patrons, the artists and the range of audiences of these humorous visualisations. Since they coexist with a text they purport to illustrate, the images are studied in conjunction with humour expressed verbally in the text.

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1 The research of the two manuscripts of Terence and the _Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_ was carried out through high-resolution scans, since all manuscripts in question have been digitised. The BnF very helpfully provided high-quality images for BnF Lat. 7907A and instructions on existing bibliography, but for conservation reasons they did not allow access to already digitised material. The Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal provided high-quality digitised material for consultation and cited similar conservation concerns, combined with staffing issues throughout the pandemic that restricted their access options. My request to check with UV light for research purposes was denied for the same reasons. The ÓNB refused access to the _Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_ on conservation grounds and pointed to published, high-quality facsimiles and digital images. The Glasgow University Library allowed access and consultation of the _Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles_, and gave me permission to photograph the manuscript, that had not yet been digitised at the time. The _Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles_ was digitised subsequently, and scans from the digitisation replaced my own photographs of it when they were of better quality. My extensive experience in working with manuscripts and artworks, both through my studies and as a professional in the National Galleries of Scotland Art Store, supported me in this research.
By addressing the creation, reception and diffusion of the humorous illuminations of these case studies, the thesis examines the definitions and types of humour present in fifteenth-century France and the types of humour that were expressed in manuscript painting at the time.

The three case studies have not been examined systematically by art historians with a specific focus on visual humour, despite the wealth of evidence in each visual cycle. They cover the chronological extent of the fifteenth century and they are discussed in chronological sequence as a mapping of a phenomenon, rather than a continuous arc: they represent samples from different periods of the fifteenth century that cover as many different shades, types and forms of humour and its audiences as may reasonably be included in an investigation of this kind.

All three allow for a detailed discussion on humour in text and image: in the cases of the comedies of Terence and the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, the artists were working with humorous material that indisputably intends to entertain. In the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris visual humour exists in contrast to the tone of the text, yet the connection between this incongruity and the specific circumstances around the manuscript’s creation has been unexplored. Each case study represents a different style of humour: it is casual and situational in the comedies of Terence, nuanced and intimate in the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris, and bawdy in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.

All three case studies represented novelties in the field of manuscript illumination at the time each one was created. The artists were working with unfamiliar but comic literary material and, for different reasons each time, they were offered unprecedented freedom to create original iconographic cycles for the attention of some of the most illustrious patrons of their time. The analysis explores their creative impulses as they approached the new texts, and their inventions and innovations as they strived to represent different types of humour visually with the desire and intention to entertain their patrons and other book users. Finally, each manuscript is connected to a specific patron and a known socio-cultural environment, which allows for a reliable reconstruction of each intended audience and for a nuanced discussion on issues of patronage and artistic production of the time.
Case studies and rationale

The three case studies were selected to cover chronologically the entirety of the fifteenth century, and they are discussed as representative of the specific cultural shifts regarding humour and visuality that were taking place during their time of creation. Early in the fifteenth century, French Humanism generated different ways of seeing, while enthusiastically rediscovering and reengaging with classical literature. The comedies of Terence are an eloquent example of a classical text reconsidered, and the fact that this was a comic text by definition reveals the shifting attitudes towards humour in humanist circles at the time. The Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris is an excellent example of storytelling new stories, inspired by old themes but this time quintessentially French. The studied manuscript is representative of the patron whose own artistic personality bridged humanist and creative thought. It is also indicative of the ways he connected and worked with the people in his court, where the rich theatrical tradition he created demanded greater visuality and the desire for audience immersion. Finally, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles is an excellent example of storytelling that started in a courtly setting and was quickly diffused outside the French court, to other layers of society, when it was printed 1486 by Antoine Vérard in Paris.²

The new pictorial cycle for the comedies of Terence was created for members of the French royal family in the first two decades of the fifteenth century. The text dates from classical antiquity, and its inherently comic function allows for an in-depth discussion on the translation of humour from text to image. The comedies of Terence had been illustrated throughout the Middle Ages, and the visualisations followed an established visual cycle that was repeated consistently.³ The beautifully illuminated manuscript that was gifted to the Duke of Berry in 1408 (BnF Lat. 7907A) constitutes the first attempt in a radical revision of Terence’s pictorial cycle since late antiquity.⁴ It was soon followed by a second manuscript,

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³ David H. Wright, The Last Late Antique Illustrated Terence (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 1-3.
lavishly illuminated by prominent Parisian artists, that also entered the collection of Jean de Berry by 1416 (Arsenal Ms-664 réserve).\(^5\)

Millard Meiss tentatively identified the illuminating teams that worked on both manuscripts, and he discussed these works as original additions to the Duke of Berry’s library.\(^6\) Carla Bozzolo discussed the Berry manuscript in detail and identified Laurent de Premierfait, the humanist and scholar in the Duke’s service at the time of the manuscripts’ creation, as the author of the new commentary that accompanied Terence’s text, written in Latin.\(^7\) Bozzolo argued convincingly that Premierfait was also involved in the visual cycle.\(^8\) Anne Hedeman accepted that suggestion in her extensive publications on the fifteenth-century manuscripts of Terence.\(^9\) Treating them as a manifestation of early French humanism, she discussed the concepts of visual and cultural translations achieved in the illuminations through character dress and setting.\(^10\) She connected visual translations to the concept of ‘visual rhetoric’, a rhetoric of the image that she identified in Premierfait’s works.\(^11\)

Despite the obvious comic character of the text, the comic character of the illuminations has not been studied in detail. Meiss tentatively suggested the possibility of

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5 Jules Guiffrey, Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry (1401-1416) (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), n° 1248, 335.
8 Bozzolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 94; Ezio Ornato and Carla Bozzolo, Prélieux à la Renaissance: Aspects de la vie intellectuelle en France au XVe siècle (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1992), 52; Carla Bozzolo and Ezio Ornato, Un traducteur et un humaniste de l’époque de Charles VI, Laurent de Premierfait (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), 74 and 160. Châtelet was the first art historian to propose that Premierfait was involved in the creation of the iconography of the manuscript’s frontispiece, in Albert Châtelet, L’âge d’or du manuscrit à peintures en France au temps de Charles VI et les Heures Du Maréchal Boucicaut (Paris: Institut de France, 2000), 123.
visual puns but did not elaborate. Hedeman did not consider humour as a rhetorical device in her discussions on visual rhetoric. Yet it is specifically the visual puns that Meiss hinted at that make these manuscripts ideal candidates for the present study, because of their connection to a comic text and their coexistence alongside verbal puns and other types of humour.

The thesis investigates the ways the text’s humour was expressed in the updated visual cycle, and the reasons that prompted a visual update of an older and known text of this type. Moreover, the manuscripts of Terence are studied here because of the personalities involved in their production. The visual update was carried out by Laurent de Premierfait, one of the most erudite humanists of the time, who was also the author of the Latin commentary. The visual translation of the text’s humour took place alongside a contextual translation that connected visually the Latin commentary and the text. Premierfait was also the translator of Boccaccio’s works in French. His translation of the Decameron, a text with equally comic subject matter, was carried out in close chronological proximity to the Terence manuscripts, for the same patron, and even using the same artists for the respective visual cycle. The illuminations are eloquent visual translations of the text’s humour, which would make the translated Decameron a natural choice for a study on visual humour; however, the Decameron lacks the connection to classical antiquity that is a characteristic of the comedies of Terence. Thus, it is discussed here in comparison to the case studies, but it is not investigated individually. Instead, the Terence comedies provide specific insights into French Early Humanism, its reconsideration of the past and its reception of the comic. Premierfait’s involvement in both projects allows for a broader discussion on these topics, and it is indicative of a changing attitude towards humour. The implications and repercussions of this are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

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12 Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 43.
13 Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 37-38
16 The identities of the artists are discussed in the first chapter and in Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 43.
The personality of the patron, Jean de Berry, also merits consideration. His tastes and patronage have been studied extensively, and a sense of humour has been highlighted. However, a connection between his sense of humour and the visual update of the classical comic text, the ownership of which Meiss deemed unusual, has not been considered.

Finally, the comedies of Terence are discussed here because the text and illuminations represent simple, casual and situational humour. The stories were taken from everyday life, and they were illuminated for an audience that belonged in a social class much higher than the one the protagonists belong to. It was, however, the social class the illuminators belonged to. Investigating the production and reception of these works provides valuable information on the illuminators and their sense of humour, as well as important insights into cross-class humour, and the influence and impact of the Duke of Berry’s patronage in the visual arts of his time.

The second case study is the sixteen illuminations of a copy of René d’Anjou’s text, the Livre du Cœur d’Amour Épris (ÖNB Cod. Vind. 2597). The Vienna manuscript was probably René d’Anjou’s personal copy. Art historians have debated extensively the identity of the artist. Conventionally named at first ‘Cueur Master’ or ‘Maître du roi René’ as well as Barthélémy de Clerc, he was discussed by Durrieu and Unterkircher as the painter of the Aix Annunciation. He was identified as King René himself by Otto Pächt, whose insightful analysis revealed the organic connections between the text and its visual cycle. In a series of publications by Sterling, Avril and later by Reynaud, the ‘Cueur Master’, the ‘Master of King René’ and the ‘Master of the Aix Annunciation’ were identified as the same

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person, René’s court artist, Barthélémy d’Eyck.\textsuperscript{21} The attribution has been largely uncontested.\textsuperscript{22} He has been tentatively but convincingly identified with the Intermediate Master, or the Master of Shadows, of the Très Riches Heures.\textsuperscript{23} Recently, scholars have attributed to him a comprehensive catalogue and advanced compelling suggestions that he also worked in other media, such as textiles and wall painting.\textsuperscript{24} Barthélemy was René’s court artist, his \textit{valet de chambre}, and evidence suggests he was also his close friend, sharing his living space and working beside him.\textsuperscript{25}

The Vienna \textit{Livre du Cœur d’Amour Épris} is included in this study because although some comic streak has been tentatively identified in the illuminations, the evidence of visual humour has not been the subject of individual study.\textsuperscript{26} Contrary to Terence’s comedies and to the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, the Vienna \textit{Livre du Cœur d’Amour Épris} is not a humorous text, yet visual evidence suggests that it was illuminated with a humorous intention. More importantly, although the identity of the artist has been established, the exact implications of his identity in the interpretation of the Vienna cycle have not been fully understood. This thesis investigates in detail the particularly close relationship between author and artist and the creative interaction between them. By re-examining the evidence under this


\textsuperscript{23} Villela-Petit provides extensive and convincing evidence that the Intermediate Master and Barthélemy d’Eyck were the same artist. Inès Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire: Barthélemy d’Eyck’, in \textit{Les Très Riches Heures. Das Meisterwerk für den Herzog von Berry}, by Patricia Stirnemann et al. (Luzern: Quaternio-Verlag, 2013), 134.


\textsuperscript{25} Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’, 134. Detailed discussion on the friendship between the two men follows in the relevant chapter.

perspective, the thesis argues that Barthélemy personalised the Vienna manuscript for his
patron through personal references, humorous visualisations and expressive liberties that
sometimes interact teasingly and humorously with the text of reference. Thus, the
investigation focuses into the personal dimension of this work, the connections between
patron and artist, and the complex artistic and creative interactions that were taking place
in René d’Anjou’s court, where the rich theatrical tradition of theatre and farce created a
fertile ground for parody and humour.27 The analysis reveals some particularly inspired
creative innovations of the artist, that could be briefly summarised as exaggerated—and
sometimes parodic—recontextualizations of established iconographical motifs, used in the
illuminations to achieve the desired humorous effect.

The third case study is the only known illuminated copy of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (GUL MS Hunter 252 [U.4.10]). The text is a collection of a hundred comic tales from Burgundy in the tradition of the *Decameron*. The subject matter is colloquial, and the humour of the stories is bawdy and often explicit. The illuminations follow the tone of the text, making the manuscript infamous for its visual cycle: the entire manuscript has been presented as ‘a museum of fifteenth century obscenities’.28

Critical editions of the text have been published by Pierre Champion, Franklin Sweetser and Roger Dubois.29 Edgar de Blieck’s investigation of the historical circumstances around the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the manuscript’s codicology and the historical background of the text addressed several essential for issues of dating, that are revisited in this thesis alongside some tentative suggestions for the location of the artist.30 The linguistic aspect of the manuscript has been addressed by Geoffrey Roger.31 Comic elements of the

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text have been discussed by Dubois, Beauchamp and Merlin, yet all of them largely ignored the manuscript’s visual humour. Despite their provocative subject matter, or perhaps because of it, the one hundred original illuminations have only been discussed selectively and individually by art historians, with a focus on nudity, sexuality, obscenity and vulgarity. Most recently, an article by Velissariou discussed ‘space and play’ in some of the illuminations, focusing on the theatricality of some of the representations.

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is included in this study because the ways that its humour was translated from text to image have not received specific scholarly attention, even though at the time of creation it was an original comic text illuminated with an original visual cycle. The explicit subject matter of many of the illuminations allows for a nuanced discussion on many different types of humour that often touch sensitive topics: there are several examples of sexual humour, there is slapstick humour of particular violence, and on many occasions the jokes include misogyny, sexual assault, domestic violence and different types of humiliation. Exploring how these are expressed visually is fundamental for understanding the mechanics of visual humour in the period of reference.

In addition, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* offers an excellent opportunity to study how humour was treated for two different audiences: the manuscript’s patron and the wider public. The text was printed in 1486 by Antoine Vérard in Paris to a considerable success. The printed edition is illustrated with woodcuts that are noticeably different than the manuscript illuminations. An investigation of visual humour in both media provides unique insights on the changing social attitudes towards humour. Moreover, through visual

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analysis this thesis suggests a more precise dating of the Glasgow manuscript, reveals important information regarding its place of creation, and proposes a tentative suggestion for the illuminator’s identity.

**Researching medieval (visual) humour**

The shadow of Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World* falls heavy on any discussion on medieval humour after its publication and subsequent translation in English, from the original Russian, in the late 1960s.\(^{36}\) In this seminal work, Bakhtin contributed a periodisation of laughter and connected it with the city and the public sphere, creating the concept of a ‘culture of laughter’, and discussing humour’s effects and function in this social context. He described a society divided between two culture groups: the learned, serious culture of the literate, and its opposite, the popular culture of the illiterate, which was one of carnival and laughter. He understood humour and laughter as a liberating, rebellious manifestation of the less learned social class, one that the official Church was generally opposed to.

Although this was an undeniable breakthrough in medieval humour studies at the time of publication, many of Bakhtin’s arguments do not stand to scrutiny. Firstly, the assumption of a division between learned and unlearned cultures and the pernicious influence of the Church can be dismissed.\(^{37}\) Popular and humanist culture were not as separated: although there were obvious differences and some undeniable feelings of superiority by some groups over others, the collective experience was determined by largely similar activities, many of which were determined by the common denominator of religion.\(^{38}\) Moreover, there is enough evidence against the Bakhtinian notion that the Middle Ages were a sombre and sad time, and that Renaissance was liberated by laughter. Among the medievalists who argued the opposite was Jacques Le Goff, who presented


several examples of medieval laughter across the social spectrum. Further in opposition, Aaron Gurevich correctly pointed out that carnival developed within medieval cities in the later Middle Ages, and that Church was not opposed to humour and laughter, as it was using it extensively in exempla and sermons.

It is now widely accepted that ‘when actual historical contexts are addressed, Bakhtin’s abstract conception of social structure can break down’. Bakhtin’s insightful understanding of humour as a culturally specific and community specific topic is indisputable, yet his work should be read in context. It was written within a specific political and social environment and Bakhtin may have projected his own social reality to his analysis of the past. Writing in Stalinist Russia, he was obviously influenced by the political and social reality he was experiencing. However, his work initiated a scholarly discussion on medieval humour, and the criticism of his contribution highlighted a series of issues that emerge when researching humour historically.

The most prominent of these emerging issues is the lack of a universally accepted definition of humour, and its culturally specific character. In A Cultural History of Humour, Jan N. Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg attempted to address these questions by presenting an account of humour and laughter from antiquity to the present day, exploring the ways humour changed from culture to culture and providing important insights on the social changes of each period. The authors defined humour as ‘as any message […] intended to produce a smile or a laugh’, a definition which allows investigations across time and across cultures. They then highlight humour’s culturally specific nature, discussing ‘national styles of humour’, and rejecting the idea of an ‘ontology of humour’, insisting that it is culturally determined.

42 Vivienne Westbrook and Shun-liang Chao, eds., Humour in the Arts: New Perspectives (New York: Routledge, 2018), ix-x.
This definition is particularly successful in the context of this thesis. The three case studies were created by specific artists for specific patrons, and the representational choices were arguably made consciously, keeping in mind the particular and well-known tastes, preferences and predilections of their intended audience. It is proposed here that two conditions were met at the same time. First, that the artists intended to amuse their audience, and therefore painted humour; and second, that the artists had some awareness of what the patrons liked and targeted their humour accordingly. Therefore, for the purposes of this investigation humour can be defined as any visual representation that intended to produce a smile or a laugh to the specific person or cultural milieu that constituted its target audience.

The same problems of definition, function, and historical attitudes towards humour and humour research dominated subsequent scholarship. Moreover, the importance of humour’s cultural context has been a crucial issue: it determines whether humour will be perceived as such, and it allows us to better understand its reception historically. The essays included in *Risus Mediaevalis*, that specifically addresses medieval laughter, offer valuable insight on the social conventions, the mechanics and functions of laughter in medieval society, as well as the different attitudes and scholarly positions on humour, and discussion will return to these issues later in this analysis.45 Le Goff’s contribution on the laughter of Kings and laughter in monastic settings is a valuable contribution in our understanding of illicit laughter, and the topic is treated in greater detail in his *Le rire dans la société médiévale*, where he explores the Church’s attitudes towards the same topic.46 Referring to a slightly later historical timeframe, Bowen’s *Enter Rabelais, Laughing* presents different types of laughter in late medieval and early Renaissance France, giving examples of different types of humour and the ways it was encountered in different social settings.47 In her *Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance*, the same author discusses how changes in culture affected humorous expression and the appreciation of humour, presenting examples

of salacious humour that were popular among the erudite of the period.\textsuperscript{48} Similar topics are considered in \textit{Parody and Festivity in Early Modern Art: Essays on Comedy as Social Vision}, that brings together parody and festivity as concepts deeply embedded and interconnected in the early modern experience: David Smith highlights the connection between holy days and the boundaries of the relevant festivities, a topic in which this thesis will return in detail.\textsuperscript{49} Several examples in the case studies confirm this connection. In \textit{Laughter, Humor, and the (Un)Making of Gender: Historical and Cultural Perspectives}, humour is approached historically and within the cultural descriptions of gender, since both humour and gender are performative and both depend on external ‘recognition and affirmation’.\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Humour in the Arts: New Perspectives} reiterates that any humorous experience, verbal or visual, is closely linked to its cultural context, emphasising the importance of background, creator and original audience.\textsuperscript{51} The individual essays examine how humour functions in different cultural and historical contexts, and investigate humour as a phenomenon that stemmed from each culture and engaged with every aspect of social life, as well as with ethical ideas and practices.\textsuperscript{52} In the most recent \textit{Palgrave Handbook of Humour, History, and Methodology}, the focus is more on the methodology of researching humour historically, and the mechanics and functions of humour in different cultural contexts.\textsuperscript{53} The methodology section of this thesis returns to these issues in the context of the period and cultural background of reference.

As several of these titles reveal, much scholarly ink has been spilled discussing humour in the works of Castiglione, Joubert, Rabelais and Erasmus, and presenting them as the starting point in discussions of early Renaissance humour.\textsuperscript{54} All these personalities were

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Barbara C. Bowen, \textit{Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), especially the section ‘Humanist Wit’, Ch. I-VII.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Anna Foka and Jonas Liliequist, \textit{Laughter, Humor, and the (Un)Making of Gender: Historical and Cultural Perspectives} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Westbrook and Chao, \textit{Humour in the Arts: New Perspectives}, i-ii.
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Westbrook and Chao, \textit{Humour in the Arts: New Perspectives}, 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{53} Derrin and Burrows, \textit{The Palgrave Handbook of Humour}, 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Bowen, \textit{Enter Rabelais, Laughing}, 70 and 83-86; Marie-Madeleine Fontaine, ed., \textit{Rire à la Renaissance} (Genève: Libr. Droz, 20100, 1); Daniel Ménager, ‘Les plaisirs du rire dans la litterature de la renaissance’ , in Diane H. Bodart and Francesca Alberti, eds., \textit{Rire en images à la Renaissance} (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 5 as
\end{itemize}
active in the sixteenth century. It is argued here that their production was, in many ways, the outcome of the intellectual and creative processes taking place in the fifteenth century in France and in Europe in general. Their contribution and attitudes towards humour will be discussed later in this thesis, to highlight how the issues described in this analysis informed the formation of their ideas.

Although scholars have been tentatively discussing humour in the visual arts of the time since the 1970s, we still do not easily associate humour with non-marginal painting.55 Research on the specific field of humour in the visual arts in the Middle Ages has generally focused on marginalia. Lilian Randall’s seminal *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* provided an extensive collection of images and a valuable index of themes.56 Michael Camille’s *Image on the Edge* presented a wide variety of humorous visual evidence and suggested that their positioning in the marginalia is a reflection of humour’s cultural marginality at the time of reference, as well as the social marginality of some of the represented characters.57 Debra Strickland’s *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* discussed humour and derision in representations of the ‘monstrous races’, those social groups that were rejected by Christian societies, and thus represented pejoratively, intending to mock or ridicule.58 Benton’s *Medieval Mischief: Wit and Humour in the Art of the Middle Ages* focused on visual humour on relief sculpture, woodcarving and architectural elements, highlighting similarities with marginalia and discussing the instructional and moralistic function of these representations.59 In *Risus Mediaevalis*, Herman Braet presented the *drôleries* of a fourteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* as an organic part of the manuscript and proposed that the introduction of ludic elements does not necessarily mean the

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manifestation of an anti-culture or the questioning of social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{60} In the same collection Philippe Ménard presents the marginalia of the Roman d’Alexandre as ordinary entertainment that fitted the illuminators’ taste, and was part of a greater artistic liberty that allowed the painters to joke at the expense of the great hero.\textsuperscript{61} Paul Barolsky’s \textit{Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art} refers to the ‘ingenious drolleries of medieval manuscript illuminations’ and the ‘playful wit of Renaissance grotesques’, and comments on the lack of attention that has been paid to humour in art, compared to comic literature.\textsuperscript{62} He rejects older art historical approaches that treated humour in the visual arts as unworthy of attention, and he reviews a wide range of material from the Italian Renaissance, connecting it to the notion of wit and play.\textsuperscript{63}

In later publications, Barolsky explores the connections between illusion, play, and \textit{inganno}, deception, in Italian Renaissance painting, musing on the hesitant scholarly approaches to humorous representations.\textsuperscript{64} Writing in praise of ‘folly’, he concludes that ‘[w]hat we as modern art historians often lack is the artist’s or poet’s playful, self-conscious, and ironic appreciation of imagination and its illusions, as if we could or should free ourselves of our own imagination or explain it away with that current god or idol, theory—our presumed salvation’.\textsuperscript{65} Missing that ‘playful element that comes with inspiration’ occurs at the detriment of the art historian’s understanding and interpretation of the analysed work.\textsuperscript{66} Barolsky’s ‘playfulness’ is relevant to what this thesis researches as ‘visual humour’.

Remarkably, outside the context of marginalia—or otherwise marginal representations—most discussions on visual humour of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance only engage with larger-scale painting. Focusing on Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Antwerp of his day, Walter Gibson explores the subject of laughter in the Southern

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Barolsky1985}Barolsky, \textit{Infinite Jest}, 3.
\bibitem{Barolsky2001b}Barolsky, ‘In Praise of Folly’, 12.
\bibitem{Barolsky2001c}Barolsky, ‘In Praise of Folly’, 5.
\end{thebibliography}
Netherlands of the sixteenth century. Rosalind Brown-Grant discusses the work of the Wavrin Master and demonstrates that the artist employed visual humour as an invitation to the reader to laugh with the text, treating humour as an educational device to help the communication of the text’s didactic message. The comprehensive *Rire en images à la Renaissance* discusses laughter in and with images at a time where iconography was still relatively codified. The authors reiterate that although scholarly discussions have been engaging with wit and humour in Renaissance art since the 1970s, art historians still approach the subject with caution. In the afterword of *Rire en images à la Renaissance*, Paul Barolsky repeats once more that ‘a richer and fuller history of the various manifestations of play in the visual imagery of the Renaissance eludes us and still remains to be written’.

Most scholars of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance will admit to having encountered humour in the course of their research. The need to study visual humour has been highlighted, the presence of humour has been identified in visual analyses, yet scholarly engagement with it has been cautious and tentative. Moreover, between the discussions on marginalia and those on large-scale painting, the non-marginal manuscript illuminations appear to have been overlooked.

The three case studies of this thesis contribute to filling this gap in knowledge, focusing on the main illuminations of the manuscripts in question. Alongside the visual analysis, the thesis explores the patronage of Jean de Berry and René d’Anjou. Both are well-researched historical personalities, yet the humorous aspect of their patronage has been neglected. Alongside them, the thesis explores the cultural shift that took place during the fifteenth century and led to the dramatically different attitudes towards humour and wit expressed in the works of Rabelais, Erasmus and other sixteenth-century thinkers.

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Methodology

Although, as it is commonly reputed, the worst course of action for humour practice is explaining the joke, dissecting it is exactly what humour scholars are required to do. Most humour theories have been formulated for verbal humour, leaving ‘pictorial humor in its peculiarity for fields that are underdeveloped scientifically, or simply do not care for this peculiarity of their material, but only for the contents, like the field of cultural studies’.73 Despite the polysemous nature of images, a comprehensive theory for visual humour has yet to be formulated.

This thesis proposes a methodology created specifically to study humour expressed visually. The methodology was created on the basis of previous research and experience, combining the most recent theories of verbal humour with rigorous art historical analytical tools. It is informed by the most recent research in humour and translation studies, since most of the humour encountered in the case studies will be either translated linguistically, or translated between two media. It is further supported by the most recent research on contemporary cartoons, that by definition combine text and image.74 Although these refer to contemporary works, they offer a set of interpretative tools for researchers ‘interested in examining such works beyond the obvious analysis of subject matter, or the reductive understanding of images as text’.75 The proposed methodology also takes into consideration the different and changing audiences of the discussed humour, and proposes ways for scholarly examination that allow meticulous analysis of historical humour while addressing the problems that arise due to chronological and cultural distance.

Twentieth-century scholars have labelled the most popular theories of humour as Superiority, Relief and Incongruity Theory.76 The most recent research has remarked that

76 For an overall discussion on theories of humour, see Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillian, 1913); John Morreall,
these labels function better as explanations, rather than theories of humour.\footnote{Derrin and Burrows, \textit{The Palgrave Handbook of Humour}, 12.} Instead, one of the most prominent humour theories is the General Theory of Verbal Humour, which understands humour based on the core idea of script opposition: the joke in question is compatible with two distinct scripts, and the two scripts are in opposition to each other in a special way.\footnote{Salvatore Attardo, ‘The General Theory of Verbal Humor’, in \textit{The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor}, ed. Salvatore Attardo (New York: Routledge, 2017), 126–42.} Getting the joke means understanding both of the opposing scripts and the relation between them, which happens through the ‘Logical Mechanism’ by which the joke text puts forward the opposing scripts.

The more psychologically-oriented Benign Violations Theory proposes that the concept of humour consists of ‘benign violations’, suggesting that ‘three conditions are jointly necessary and sufficient for eliciting humor: A situation must be appraised as a violation, a situation must be appraised as benign, and these two appraisals must occur together’.\footnote{A. Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren, ‘Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny’, \textit{Psychological Science} 21, no. 8 (2010): 1142.} A violation is benign when it is not perceived by the audience as dangerous or threatening, and this can be due to a number of reasons, the most frequent of which is probably emotional distance: the violation happens to someone else, it happened a long time ago, or it is so absurd that it does not threaten the audience’s reality.\footnote{McGraw and Warren, ‘Benign Violations’, 1146.} Alternatively, in the event when the violation is against a norm, a belief or a conviction, then it can be benign if the audience is not particularly committed to that conviction: gender humour will not offend people living in a misogynist society.\footnote{McGraw and Warren, ‘Benign Violations’, 1145.} Alternative interpretations of events can also account for the absence of threat. In this case, reality counteracts the violation and re-

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  \bibitem{DerrinANDBurrows} Derrin and Burrows, \textit{The Palgrave Handbook of Humour}, 12.
\end{thebibliography}
establishes the expected order of things.\textsuperscript{82} Once the violation is perceived as Benign, the audience is amused instead of frustrated.

Originally developed for marketing purposes and advertising, the Benign Violations Theory can be applied to analyse a variety of types of humour. Most importantly, it is not confined to verbal humour, as the violation can be verbal or visual. Visual humour can be much more nuanced and operates differently, as images are polysemous and can include several interpretative layers. The Benign Violations Theory has already been used to research the diffusion of memes in contemporary internet culture, indicating that it is particularly useful in analysing humour that is expressed visually and interacting with a text of reference.\textsuperscript{83} It is, therefore, uniquely appropriate for the purposes of the present thesis. Moreover, the Benign Violations Theory places great emphasis on the audience of humour, suggesting that it is the audience’s perception of the violation as benign that will determine whether they will be amused or not. Thus, it explains why some things are humorous to some, and not others. The implication is that laughing together both suggests and builds community: it means that the people who partake on the humorous experience share both the same values in order to understand the violation, and the same sense that the violation was benign.

This last implication is key for the present research, as the above discussion on the cultural specificity of humour suggests. In all three case studies, the humour’s cultural background and its intended audiences can be historically reconstructed with considerable accuracy: the works were created within a specific cultural setting and they were destined to specific patrons, therefore the intended audience can be reliably described.

The focus of this thesis is humour expressed visually, and its representation coexists with a text. It is therefore important to ask what images are achieving differently than the text, in terms of creating a humorous experience. The polysemous nature of visual representations makes them particularly successful media for humorous expression. An


\textsuperscript{83} Bobbie Foster, ‘It’s All in a Meme: A Content Analysis of Memes Posted to 2012 Presidential Election Facebook Pages’ (MA Thesis, Faytetteville, University of Arkansas, 2014).
image allows for a second script, superimposed to the textual. Sometimes it is the same script as the text, expressed visually. Sometimes the image’s script is different, and in these cases—expanding on the General Theory of Verbal Humour—the script opposition creates a different humorous experience. Moreover, visual representations are available to non-reading audiences, and the ramifications of this attribute will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

Alongside humour analysis, the methodology of this thesis needs to include rigorous visual analysis. In an article discussing humour in the visual arts, Anne Gérin proposes a combination between the General Theory of Verbal Humour and Erwin Panofsky’s iconology as an efficient method to discuss humorous pictures.\(^8^4\) Since the present thesis considers the Benign Violations Theory to be more adequate for historic humour research, it is proposed that combining it with traditional art historical methods of analysis allows the art historian to uncover Panofsky’s ‘intrinsic meaning’, synthesising information of ‘as many documents of civilization historically related to that work or group of works, as he can master: of documents bearing witness to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation’.\(^8^5\)

Images can be complex and multi-layered, yet in the three case studies they are connected to a text. Here, the findings of Samson and Huber on cartoons are particularly relevant: the authors define cartoons as ‘a joke told in a picture’.\(^8^6\) This is the case in many of the illuminations studied in this thesis, especially those closely connected to humorous texts. Samson and Huber summarise three ways that humour can be expressed visually.\(^8^7\) The first is when the picture is an illustration of the verbal joke, without interfering in the humorous effect in any other way, a simple representation of the humour of the text. The second is when the picture provides supporting information not contained in the humorous text: in that case, both text and image contribute to the humorous effect. The third is when the picture is essential for the production of humour: in that case humour is based only on

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the picture, not in the text, which may not be humorous at all. All these expressions of pictorial humour will be encountered in the case studies.

Returning to the question of method, the proposed combination of traditional visual analysis with the Benign Violations Theory can work as follows: the iconographic analysis, including pre-iconographic descriptions and addressing issues of composition and materials, is followed by the identification of incongruities, of the violations that are essential for humour production. In cases where the picture is an illustration of the verbal joke, these are provided by the text; if this is not the case, there may be incongruities between text and image, or incongruities existing in the image alone. These are identified and set against the ‘norm’ they appear to violate. The target of the joke, the intended audience, the context of creation, the identity of the artist, are all taken into consideration to establish the cultural background that is essential to create an effective humorous experience. The audience and context analysis defines the parameters that make each violation benign, and the synthesis of the above analysis leads to a full, nuanced and complete image interpretation.

The proposed methodology combines elements from broader humour research, which in its interdisciplinarity includes psychology, linguistics, semiotics and other approaches, with traditional art historical methods. By combining art history and humour studies in a ‘heteroclite combination of methodologies’, this thesis contributes to both disciplinary fields, as well as in the broader field of medieval studies. 88 By reconstructing the cultural background that created the studied works, and by understanding the humour as it was manifested in that context, the thesis also echoes Baxandall’s methodology of contextual analysis defined as ‘period eye’. 89 Baxandall emphasised how vision is culturally constructed and set the viewing norms that conditioned artistic production. It is the violation of some of these norms, among other things, that this thesis addresses as intentionally humorous.

An additional issue that needs to be addressed is humour in translation. The issue of visual translation of verbal humour is a key concept that this thesis develops, and the

88 Camille, Image on the Edge, 9.
methodological framework was discussed above. Additionally, the case studies were illuminated in the language they were originally written: Terence’s comedies are in Latin, and both the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris and the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles are in Middle French. However, the analysis is written in English, and there are cases where the textual jokes need to be translated for the reader. Finally, the fact that these case studies and the jokes they contain belong to another cultural reality suggests that there is an element of cultural translation of humour that needs to be addressed: not all jokes in the case studies will be perceived as such by contemporary audiences.

As is usually the case with humour, the lack of a precise definition makes it notoriously hard to translate through languages, mediums and cultures. The concept of translation is equally complicated. Writing in 1959, Roman Jakobson distinguishes three types: intralingual translation, when the subject is reworded in the same language, for example when someone translates a text from a dialect to the formal language; interlingual, which Jakobson calls ‘translation proper’, when the text is being translated into a different language; and intersemiotic translation, when a text is interpreted in non-verbal sign systems. Visual translations of verbal humour belong to the third category.

Jakobson’s classification has been reiterated by subsequent translation scholars. Researchers also highlight the importance of ‘equivalence of function’ in translation: the translated text should aim to create the same response to the reader. This equivalence of function is especially important when translating humour and experts highlight this explicitly. In an article about linguistic translations of humour, Jeroen Vandaele proposes a cognitive approach and suggests that the translator should prioritise translating the humorous effect. The author cautions that the translator’s sense of humour can affect both their perception of humour in the original text, and its recreation in another

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language.\(^4\) On the same topic, Yus offers three parameters for successful humour translation.\(^5\) Firstly, the translating of humour is relevant to a number of cultural assumptions that are shared between source and target language: this is the case of humour on stereotypes belonging to a mutual cultural environment, for instance marital problems in Western societies. Secondly, there are cases when humour is directly translatable between languages due to similar linguistic mechanisms.\(^6\) Thirdly, there is what he calls the ‘pragmatic scenario’, where inferential strategies lead to ‘a relevant interpretation of the joke and the derivation of humorous effects, and also with the eventual balance of cognitive effects and mental effort as intended by the communicator of the source-language joke’.\(^7\) This creates three types of jokes: the transferrable ones, that are reproduced easily; the replaceable ones, that do not translate in the same way but the cultural context allows the translator to produce something similar; and the challenging ones.\(^8\) The concept of challenging or even impossible translations, both for linguistic and cultural reasons, is familiar to translation studies.\(^9\)

This thesis generally uses established translations of the discussed texts. There are cases where the original text is presented to the reader with specific explanations that refer to the text and the way it connects to the image, and there are few instances of original translations. Wherever this occurs, every effort is made to stay as faithful as possible to the source text, sometimes to the detriment of the joke, or of linguistic elegance. When the words of the original text are important for humorous effect, they are presented in their original form.

Addressing the issue of contemporary reception of historic humour is more complicated. The case studies often feature humour that contemporary audiences will frown upon: it is usually based on outdated stereotypes of genders and gender roles, and there is also gender-based and general violence, as well as sexual assault, misgendering,

\(^{94}\) Vandaele, ‘Introduction: (Re-)Constructing Humour’, 150.
\(^{96}\) Yus, ‘Relevance, Humour and Translation’, 125.
\(^{97}\) Yus, ‘Relevance, Humour and Translation’, 125.
\(^{98}\) Yus, ‘Relevance, Humour and Translation’, 127.
\(^{99}\) Boase-Beier, A Critical Introduction to Translation Studies, 29.
humiliation of disabilities and other physical or mental attributes. The comedies of Terence feature tricksters, con artists, eavesdroppers and cross-dressers, and the plot is usually related to illicit love affairs and their management. The *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris* introduces fantastic and monstrous tricksters, anthropomorphic animals and scatological representations. The painted humour of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is usually very physical: the manuscript contains scenes of male and female nudity, sexual intercourse, defecation and toilet humour, sickness and medical humour, as well as bleeding bodies in representations of slapstick humour.

It is important to acknowledge the seriousness of this issue. Humour of this type demeans and humiliates its victims, and can have significant and potentially harmful consequences.\(^\text{100}\) Despite the Bakhtinian notions of laughter as an act of rebellion, humour can be—and often is—used to perpetuate oppressive and cruel stereotypes and it rarely challenges the status quo.\(^\text{101}\) Arguably, these jokes served the same function at the time of creation, since they may have allowed for the release of some social tension but at the same time confined that release in the context of humorous discourse.\(^\text{102}\)

This thesis is not presenting humour for purposes of entertainment, but for scholarly dissection that will ultimately result in a deeper understanding of our cultural past. As Giovannì Pontano wrote in his *De sermone*, one of the first treatises on joking, after presenting an obscene story: ‘[…], although it was grossly done and obscenely replied and narrated, still for the time and the hearers, it was not disagreeable’.\(^\text{103}\) Similarly, the humour in the case studies is presented here as something that was considered entertaining ‘for the time and the hearers’, as well as the viewers. These audiences belonged to the specific cultural environment that produced the case studies, which will be recreated and described in detail in each case.

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\(^\text{103}\) Quote presented as found in Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, 86.
To achieve this, this thesis is indebted to the work of Madeline Caviness and Diane Wolfthal, and their approaches on gender in medieval visual arts. Caviness’ research on representations of the female body and on obscenity, sadism and eroticism in these representations, offers a valuable interpretative vocabulary. The connections she makes between obscenity and derision, between offence and offensive laughter, are valuable when discussing difficult types of humour like the ones described above. Wolfthal’s research on representations of female nudity, sexuality, gender roles and sexual violence is fundamental for our understanding of some illuminations in the case studies, providing an interpretative framework that allows the contemporary reader to understand problematic humour rendered incomprehensible by chronological distance. On the topic of gendered humour, of essential importance is research on the topos of Power of Women, in which women are considered to have sexual power over men. As a social inversion par excellence within a hierarchical and patriarchal society, this was a rife area for sexual and gendered humour and several such examples can be found in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. Judith Butler’s work on gender performativity frames the discourse of gender inversion, especially when that happens through cross-dressing, as is the case in Terence and in Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.

An important note about obscenity: the word only started being used in its current definition in the seventeenth century. Instead of ‘obscenity’, phrases like ‘reputez vilz du corps’ were more common, yet according to scholars like Nelly Labère and Helen Swift, it

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108 Davis, ‘Women on Top’, 152.
was with pre-renaissance France that the French definition of the obscene started taking shape.\textsuperscript{111} Once avoided as a subject of systematic study for reasons that Nicola McDonald describes as ‘academic prudery’, it has recently been the topic of enthusiastic and nuanced discussion.\textsuperscript{112} Eloquent examples of obscenity can be found in the \textit{fabliaux}, discussed in further detail in the first chapter, alongside other examples of late medieval French humour.

Another issue that arises from the cultural difference between contemporary and historic audiences is one of terminology.\textsuperscript{113} The authors and illuminators of these manuscripts used the terminology available to them, and because language is an essential part of the humour in question, that problematic terminology is essential for our understanding of the joke. In this analysis, all terms are used in their historic context that is highlighted and described specifically, allowing the contemporary reader to follow the discussion even if the intended humour of the scene is no longer appreciated. Despite all difficulties presented by the topic and the diligent efforts for scholarly dissection, it is still hoped that some of the case studies will cause a mirth to the contemporary reader.

An examination of visual humour in late medieval manuscript illumination is timely, as it is ‘key to the cultural codes and sensibilities of the past’.\textsuperscript{114} The next chapter reconstructs the cultural landscape of the period of reference and explores the Late Medieval and Early Renaissance engagement with humour and laughter, in France and beyond.

\textsuperscript{111} Nelly Labère and Helen Swift, ‘Préliminaires à l’'obscène : le Moyen Age “gaulois”’, in Roberts, Peureux, and Wajeman, \textit{Obscénités Renaissantes}, 64.
\textsuperscript{112} Nicola McDonald, ed., \textit{Medieval Obscenities} (York Medieval Press, 2014), 9.
\textsuperscript{114} Bremmer and Roodenburg, \textit{A Cultural History of Humour}, x.
Perhaps the most successful description of the attitudes towards humour among medieval ecclesiastic authorities and writers can be found in Umberto Eco’s bestseller *Il Nome della Rosa*. In the story, set in an Italian monastery in the fourteenth century, William of Baskerville investigates a series of deaths in an abbey and discovers a unique copy of Aristotle’s Second Book of *Poetics* on Comedy in the abbey’s library. The austere Venerable Jorge had poisoned the pages of the manuscript, causing the death of all who turned them, in a desperate attempt to ensure that the dangerous message of the book will not spread. The dangerous message, of course, was humour. The two conflicting attitudes towards humour represented by the two protagonists of *Il Nome della Rosa* existed simultaneously in France since at least the thirteenth century, if not earlier.¹

The first was the less tolerant traditional position, that viewed humour with disapproval. Since Biblical laughter is usually connected to derision or foolishness, early Christian scholars and Church fathers were quick to condemn it.² St Paul in his *Epistles* forbade silly talk and buffoonery to Christians, and St John Chrysostom pointed out that Christ was never known to laugh.³ Potentially the most influential Christian thinker for most of the Middle Ages, St Augustine, discussed the topic of joy in his *City of God*, determining that contentment should replace joy in a wise man’s life.⁴

This official rejection did not result in a direct rejection of all humorous practices. St Augustine was guilty of humorous witticisms in his own works, when in his *Confessions* he prayed: ‘Lord, give me chastity and continence… only not just yet!’⁵ Monastic orders were expected to live under a strict rule which forbade frivolousness, and St Benedict expressed explicit condemnation of ‘coarse, idle words, or such as move to laughter’.⁶ The

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¹ Le Goff, ‘Laughter in the Middle Ages’, 44.
condemnations did not stop the illicit *risus monasticus*, the forbidden monastic laughter, which existed and was even put in writing: collections of written jokes, the *joca monacorum*, appear as early as the eighth century.\(^7\) Moreover, religious laughter was not always transgressive. *Risus paschalis* was the expression of the belief that the Resurrection should be celebrated with laughter.\(^8\) The desired effect was achieved through more or less bawdy stories and continued well into the sixteenth century.\(^9\)

A second and more explicitly tolerant position towards humour emerged with the writings of St Thomas Aquinas, who introduced an influential and positive approach to humour and laughter. In his *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas cited St John the Evangelist, who compared man to a bow that will break if it is drawn indefinitely. Understanding the need for release from the tensions of life, Aquinas affirmed:

\[
\text{[...]} \text{just as weariness of the body is dispelled by resting the body, so weariness of the soul must needs be remedied by resting the soul: and the soul's rest is pleasure [...]}\]

Consequently, the remedy for weariness of soul must needs consist in the application of some pleasure, by slackening the tension of the reason's study.\(^10\)

He then defined:

\[
\text{[...]} \text{such like words or deeds wherein nothing further is sought than the soul's delight, are called playful or humorous. Hence it is necessary at times to make use of them, in order to give rest, as it were, to the soul.}\]

He cautioned against ‘indecent or injurious deeds or words’, and he advised for moderation, so that ‘one loose not the balance of one's mind altogether’. Finally, he recommended that humour must conform to ‘persons, time, and place’ and one should ‘take due account of other circumstance, so that our fun befit the hour and the man’. Quoting Aristotle, he assigned virtue to humour, since it operates according to reason, as long as it is exercised according to modesty.\(^12\)

\[^7\] Le Goff, ‘Laughter in the Middle Ages’, 49.
\[^12\] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II.168.2.
The words of Aquinas reflected his effort to translate the opinions expressed by Aristotle into Christianity.\(^\text{13}\) Aristotle’s thoughts on humour reflect what current research defines as Superiority Theory.\(^\text{14}\) In his Poetics, in Nicomachean Ethics and in Rhetoric, he suggested that we laugh because we feel superior to the subject that is being made fun of. In Poetics, he described comedy as an inferior genre to tragedy, because it is ‘a representation of inferior people, not indeed in the full sense of the word bad, but the laughable is a species of the base or ugly’.\(^\text{15}\) In Nicomachean Ethics he explicitly connected humour to wit, but he warned against its excessive use: those who resort to humour excessively, only do so to be amusing and to avoid speaking painful truths, thus becoming ‘vulgar buffoons’. Conversely, those who are incapable of it appear boorish; but if a man can joke in a tasteful and measured way, he will be considered ready-witted. In the same chapter he referred to the quality of one’s humour, pointing out that an educated person will joke differently than a vulgar one. Going further, he recognised the importance of the audience and the fact that not everyone laughs with the same jokes.\(^\text{16}\)

Aristotle thus connected humour to someone’s intelligence, their education, their manners and their character, and he differentiated between a sense of humour, which is collected and witty, and ridiculousness. Any recreation should maintain a connection with didacticism, since it is pointed out that humour must contribute something to social intercourse. The feeling of superiority that humour implies, since ‘a jest is a sort of abuse’, needs to be focused and not generic.\(^\text{17}\)

Aquinas accepted this framework and built on it. His defence of balanced, measured humour that maintains decorum constitutes an important turning point in the history of humour. In Summa Theologiae he claimed that a person who never laughs, or who stops the laughter and amusement of others, keeps burdensome company. In addition, this person is


\(^{14}\) See Introduction, 14.


\(^{17}\) Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, text in Appendix A.
acting against reason, and acting against reason is a sin.\textsuperscript{18} Thus Aquinas absolved humour and laughter, while acknowledging its social dimension. His works were read and discussed widely among writers, scholars and thinkers both within the Church and in wider academic settings, and it will be seen that his influence can be identified in early humanist perceptions on humour and laughter.

1.1 Humour and early humanists

A certain man, very like Augustus Caesar in appearance, came to Rome. When Augustus saw the young man, he asked him: ‘was your mother ever in Rome?’

‘No’, replied the young man, ‘but my father was, frequently’\textsuperscript{19}

This joke, sometimes considered as the most consistently popular classical anecdote, appeared in Petrarch’s less known \textit{Rerum Memorandum Libri}, written around 1343-45.\textsuperscript{20} Petrarch lived in France and was surrounded by people of considerable authority across different sections of society. His influence on early humanist thought in France is indisputable, and it is of particular interest for this thesis that part of this influence involved humour and the comic. The \textit{Rerum Memorandum Libri} is a collection of anecdotes divided chronologically, and the joke above appears in the section on wit, preceded by an introduction in which Petrarch acknowledges his debt to Cicero and his theories on the comic.\textsuperscript{21} Alongside witticisms from classical antiquity, the \textit{Rerum Memorandum Libri} presented more recent jokes by prominent contemporary figures, like Dante, who had a reputation for his sense of humour, and Pope Boniface VIII.\textsuperscript{22}

In \textit{De oratore}, Cicero made a distinction between \textit{cavillatio}, or humour permeating one’s speech, and \textit{dicacitas}, one-liner witticisms; he also differentiated between joking verbally and discussing a humorous subject matter.\textsuperscript{23} Through Petrarch, these classifications remained popular in the following centuries alongside Cicero’s \textit{facetiae}, and the word itself

\textsuperscript{18} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica} II-II.168.2. Text in Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{20} Bowen, \textit{One Hundred Renaissance Jokes}, 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Bowen, ‘Roman Jokes and the Renaissance Prince’, in Bowen, \textit{Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance}, 139. See also Bowen, \textit{One Hundred Renaissance Jokes}, No 4 and 98.
\textsuperscript{23} Bowen, \textit{Enter Rabelais, Laughing}, 81.
only disappeared from French humanist writings after the 1470s. Until that time, humanist collections of *facetiae* kept circulating, alongside written defences of the value of laughter.

The first printed collection was published by Poggio Bracciolini in 1470, and it has been consistently considered the most popular jokebook of the Renaissance since then. Poggio’s jokes included known sermon *exempla* and they were written in Latin. Although it was titled *Facetiae*, the collection did not contain jokes from antiquity: several of the stories can be traced to other authors, and some of them already appear in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. The same style and type of humour permeates both the stories Poggio recycled, and the ones suspected to be his own. Interestingly, this humour is focused on the social groups traditionally used for comic purposes at the time, and the same groups that are often the butt of the joke in French comic tradition: corrupted clergy, hypersexual women and silly peasants. One example is the story of a friar who was preaching against adultery in Tivoli and went so far as to say that he would rather take ten virgins than one married woman. Poggio’s remark in the end, ‘many of those present would have shared his preference’, serves as the punchline.

It is most interesting that Poggio published his collection in Italy, but a significant portion of his material is French in origin—the stories from the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* are just one example. It is also especially relevant to the context of this thesis that although—as will be seen in the relevant chapter—the printed editions of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* were illustrated for their French audience, the Italian publication of Poggios’ *Facetiae* was not illustrated. This did not retract from the popularity of the work but may be an indication about the different appreciation of visual humour between the two countries’ audiences.

Between Petrarch and Poggio several other collections of stories appeared, many of them in Italy. Panormita’s *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonum* appeared in the

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28 For a thorough catalogue of these collections see Barbara Bowen, ‘Renaissance Collections of *facetiae*, 1344-1490: A New Listing’, 1-15; and ‘Renaissance Collections of *facetiae*, 1499-1528: A New Listing’, 263-275, both in Bowen, *Humour and Humanism in the Renaissance*. 31
1450s, and immortalised Alfonso of Aragon’s sense of humour. Piccolomini’s *facete dicta* is a commentary on Panormita’s work, with additions of jokes by Alfonso and other people. Again, these collections were not illustrated.

Significantly, these two last works suggest another change in attitude: for the first time since antiquity the requirement for a serious and humourless leader disappeared, and humour was considered a valued attribute of a King. The early Middle Ages had required a King to be a serious keeper of the faith. This could become an important point of contention when the King was a person with a sense of humour, like in the case of Saint Louis, a King who is documented to have been prone to laughter; following advice from his Dominican and Franciscan consultants, the King managed to consolidate this conflict by resolving to not laugh on Fridays. This is an attitude much different than the later rex facetus, the Jesting King, who was expected to have a sense of humour and display it accordingly.

The change of perspective occurred during the period of reference of this thesis, and it came alongside changes several other aspects of society: from religious practice and theories of belief, to changes in political power and to a social structure that was influenced by distribution of wealth, warfare and identity. Before delving further into these debates, it is worth examining what types of humour were popular at the time in France.

### 1.2 Types of humour

Perhaps the most prominent examples of what made audiences laugh in medieval France can be found in the *fabliaux*, the short comic tales written in verse that appeared and flourished as a genre during the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth century. Serving as an example for many subsequent collections, they deal with the same themes
that appear in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, as well as in later collections like Poggio’s *Facetiae*, Margueritte de Navarre’s *Heptameron* and the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.  

The protagonists of the *fabliaux* are stock, socially stereotypical characters: cuckolded husbands, adulterous wives, foolish peasants, greedy and lustful clergy, knights without honour, beggars, handicaps, thieves. The stories involve people from all social classes who engage in different adventures, most of them provocative in some way. The texts contain obscene language and great doses of sexual, slapstick and scatological humour. They also include a rare manifestation of visuality. Alongside the many tricksters there are characters, usually but not exclusively males, who assume the role of Peeping Tom and watch on others, usually spying on the sexual acts of another couple.

In *La Dolente qui fu fotue sur la tombe*, the voyeur is an errant knight, who together with his squire observes a grieving widow mourning on the grave of her husband. The knight attempts to show compassion, only to be called naïve by the squire, who bets that he can seduce her on the spot. The knight hides, and the squire approaches the widow and tells her that he feels her pain, since he is also in mourning: he recently lost his love, and he is responsible for her death. The widow is shocked:

‘Unlucky man! You killed her? How?’
‘By fucking, my dear, sweet lady. Now life has become hateful to me.’
‘You noble man, come here and free the world of me! Kill me, release me too, I beg if you can! Please, with all your strength, and all your force, do me as you did her, or worse!’

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36 The first story of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, discussed in the relevant chapter, is taken from the older fabliau *Les ii. changeors*, ‘The two moneychangers’, in which the two male characters share the same woman. For the most recent translation see Nathaniel Dubin, *The Fabliaux: A New Verse Translation* (New York: Liveright, 2013), No 21, 244-261. For the connections between the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the *fabliaux*, Boccaccio, Poggio and other authors see the notes in Robert Bruce Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie and Delightsome Stories Right Pleasaunte to Relate in All Goodly Companie by Way of Joyance and Jollity* (Paris: Charles Carrington, 1899), 339-348.

37 Nykrog suggests that the 150 fabliaux that have survived are the biggest part, if not the whole, of the production. For further discussion see Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt, eds., *The Humor of the Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974); Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1973).


The knight thus lost the bet and watched as the lady kept encouraging the squire, telling him to try harder because there is no way that she will die at this rate. The fabliau ends with the reminder that women should not be trusted: ‘Qui fame croit, si est dervez’.  

*Fabliaux* voyeurs are not presented as sinful figures, though they are certainly bawdy. At times they are identical to tricksters, as they use deception to achieve their goal; other times they are the victims of trickery or circumstance, unwilling or unwitting witnesses of private moments of others. Regardless of circumstance, a voyeur is a figure connected to the pleasure of looking. This is particularly interesting because despite the importance several *fabliaux* place in transgressive visuality, they were never illuminated in their original form. Some marginalia illuminations can be traced back to individual stories, and some *fabliaux* served as inspiration for later stories that received visual treatment much later in time, like the ones that appear in the *Decameron* or the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. However, to this day we have not encountered an illuminated manuscript of *fabliaux*.

Although not visually represented, the *fabliaux* were not created to be read in silence, but to be read aloud or dramatically enacted in front of an audience that was as varied as their protagonists.  

They were performed in public spaces like the market or the main square, as well as within the privacy of a castle. Their performative character allows them to transcend the boundaries of literature and connects them to other types of humorous theatre and performance in France, most notably the farce. Yet before we move on to discussing the farce, the comic theatre genre *par excellence*, it is essential to understand the performances that were its cultural precedent: the liturgical and mystery plays, city festivals and street theatre.

Performance and performativity benefitted greatly by the fact that Aquinas defended actors and jesters in his *Summa Theologiae*, absolving them of the permanent mark of sin traditionally assigned to them:

Further, comedians especially would seem to exceed in play, since they direct their whole life to playing. Therefore, if excess of play were a sin, all actors would be in a

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state of sin; moreover all those who employ them, as well as those who make them any payment, would sin as accomplices of their sin. But this would seem untrue; for it is related in the Lives of the Fathers (ii. 16; viii. 63) that it was revealed to the Blessed Paphnutius that a certain jester would be with him in the life to come. Absolved by the stigma, actors, jesters and others were allowed to perform without sin, which perhaps accounts for the appearance of a large number of plays after the late thirteenth century. From religious theatre to city festivals to royal feasts, more or less scripted plays were performed on the streets and inside the churches.

Were these comic plays? In the case of religious drama, mystery and liturgical plays, the function was clearly didactical, yet humour was present. Such is the case of one of the oldest surviving liturgical plays, the thirteenth-century Play of Daniel. In it, all roles, male and female, were performed by male deacons, as was the custom at the time. However, intertextual evidence suggests that the deacons exaggerated in their acting, taking advantage of the gender inversion and intentionally provoking laughter and amusement to their audience. Such a moment occurs when the deacon who plays the role of the Queen is greeted on stage as a ‘virago’, a ‘mighty woman’, who should ‘be accompanied with applause’. The Latin virago translates as ‘a man-like woman’, a woman with male qualities. Although it can refer to attributes like heroism and courage, the word can assume a different meaning when it is used to introduce on stage a deacon dressed as a Queen. Later, when the deacon-Queen is lauded as the model of the ideal wife, she is

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44 Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II.168.2, Objection 3. He cites Lives of the Fathers ii. 16; viii. 63.
45 For a chronological list of plays and related events see Nadia Thérèse Van Pelt, Drama in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Playmakers and Their Strategies (London: Routledge, 2019), xv-xvii.
47 Harris, Sacred Folly, 118; Fassler, ‘The Feast of Fools and Danielis ludus’, 87-89. It is not clear if the play was performed with musical instruments accompanying the songs.
49 Medieval Latin dictionaries define virago as a loud overbearing woman or a shrew, or a woman who possesses male qualities such as great stature, strength or courage, therefore not conforming with the stereotypes for the female gender, physical or otherwise. David Wulstan’s translation of the Play of Daniel translates the word as ‘mighty woman’, again emphasising physical strength. See also Wulstan, The Play of Daniel (Ludus Danielis). The definition of ‘virago’ is also discussed in Jody Enders, A Cultural History of Theatre in the Middle Ages (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 70-71; and Wolfthal, Images of Rape, 138.
celebrated by saying that ‘she is valued like a strong man’.\textsuperscript{50} This repeated emphasis on gendered phrases when an obvious gender inversion is taking place on stage indicates that despite the sacred character of the play, there was space for humour between the participants during the performance. This is not the only instance of gender inversion humour in liturgical plays: in the twelfth-century \textit{Office of Joseph}, traditionally performed on the Epiphany, the deacons got to play not a wife, but a seductress. Gender inversion was not the only type of humour in liturgical plays: the twelfth-century \textit{Office of the Prophets} ends with a scene between Balaam and his ass, where Balaam beats the ass with a stick and the ass talks back.\textsuperscript{51}

Both the \textit{Play of Daniel} and the \textit{Office of Joseph} were performed over the twelve days of Christmas, during the period conventionally known as \textit{festum stultorum, fatuorum} or \textit{follorum}, or the Feast of Fools.\textsuperscript{52} Festivities by that name, or variations of it, emerge in France in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{53} Alongside the lack of a consistent name around France, the Feast of Fools also did not have a fixed date, taking place on different days over the twelve days of Christmas.\textsuperscript{54} It was mainly a feast of inversion—of roles, of order and of hierarchy.

A popular topos in the Middle Ages and prominently present in the case studies of this thesis, an inversion can be transformative, when something is turned into its opposite,
or functional, when something is used for a different purpose. Wise men and fools, men and women, men and animals swapping roles all represent transformative inversions; bringing a sponge in a fight instead of a weapon, as one of the characters does in the comedies of Terence, represents functional inversion. Inversion is also closely connected to folly, and especially to proverbial folly, when people dedicate time and energy to impossible tasks.

In the Feast of Fools, the inversion was manifold, and it usually started inside the church. Sometimes the Feast had a leader called dominus festi, or King, Bishop or Pope of Fools, who was carrying a baculus, a staff that probably mirrored the one held by bishops or a royal sceptre. The festivities started when members of the lower clergy ritually took over the church and liturgy, by deposing their superiors in hierarchy. The dominus festi and his congregation then sung an inverted version of the usual Mass: a version of this inverted mass, called the Office of the Circumcision, survives in a thirteenth-century manuscript from Beauvais. Incidentally, the same manuscript also contains the Play of Daniel, discussed above (BL Ms Egerton 2615).

Similarly to the liturgical plays that were often part of the Feast of Fools, the purpose of the inverted Mass was not entertainment, even if the proceedings of the Feast of Fools were entertaining at times. It was an important community festival, and by the fifteenth century it was being organised by dioceses and it was attended by nobility: Jean, Duke of Berry was documented in Nimes on 29 December 1360, Louis of Anjou and his wife attended the Christmas festivities in the same city in 1373 and the Valois Dukes of Burgundy also took an interest: Philip the Bold is known to have donated funds to its organisers for the Fête des Trois Rois, an alternative name for the same festivities, on 1393. In Dijon in 1454, the feast was carried out under command of Duke Philip the Good, who confirmed

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57 Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, 237.
58 Extensive quotes in Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage Vol II, 237 and Harris, Sacred Folly, 68.
59 Harris, Sacred Folly, 79.
the privileges of the festivities, though he reiterated the need to maintain propriety. The noble presence and sponsorship of the Feast indicates that it was such an important part of a town’s culture that it enjoyed some political approval.

One incident in particular suggests that the Feast of Fools had become the means to exercise political criticism to authorities in the cities that organised it. In 1444, the new bishop of Troyes tried to ban the Feast taking place in his diocese, and wrote a letter urging:

Stop making bishops and archbishops in the churches at the Feast of Fools. This year, under cover of the Feast of Fools, some clerics of this town have committed several great acts of mockery, derision, and foolishness against the honour and reverence of God and in great contempt and abusive censure of the clergy and of the whole ecclesiastical state. And they have observed the feast with greater excess that has been customary in times past [...] for four whole days.

It seems that some elements of the Feast of Fools have been already considered ‘customary’ in fifteenth-century Troyes, and the 1444 celebrations went beyond that custom. However, according to the narrative recreated by Harris, the bishop’s complaints did not have the desired outcome: out of the two dioceses that were organising the Feast, only one complied. The second decided instead to consecrate their own Archbishop of Fools, who performed his duties inside the church and then went in a procession around town. The festivities lasted four days and culminated with a play staged on the city square, called le jeu du sacre de leur arcevesque. It was a parody of the bishop’s consecration, with Hypocrisy, Falseness and False Pretence leading characters that served as parodic representations of the bishop and the two canons who openly opposed the Feast of Fools.

The Troyes Church authorities had to bring the matter to the attention of King Charles VII, who wrote a long letter urging the town authorities to conform with the advice of the Theologians of Paris, as they were circulated in the letter by the Faculty of Theology.

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61 The declaration reads: ‘Que cette Fete celebre/ Soit a jamais un jour l’annee/ Le premier du mois de Janvier/ Et que joyeux Fous sans dangier/ De l’habit de notre Chapelle/ Fassent la Fete bonne et belle/ Sans outrage ni derision’ . Published in Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage Vol II, 312.
63 Harris, Sacred Folly, 213.
64 Harris, Sacred Folly, 213
in 1445. In their introduction, the Theologians reiterated Aquinas’s example in defence of humour, laughter and the need for relief, defending the Feast’s function for the communities and individuals.

Do not old wineskins and barrels burst if their bungs are not loosened once in a while? Even so, we are old wineskins and worn barrels; the wine of wisdom fermenting within us, which we hold in tightly all year in the service of God, might flow out uselessly if we did not discharge it ourselves now and then with games and foolishness.

The Troyes incident demonstrates how the Feast of Fools was, in many ways, the vehicle through which social criticism was expressed through satire. The *le jeu du sacre de leur arcevesque* was performed in the city square and its function was not moralising, but expressing community disapproval. Although not strictly religious, the theme was still connected to religious themes, since it challenged ecclesiastic authority through humour.

What about secular theatre? The first evidence of completely secular plays emerges around the thirteenth century. The brutal *Garçon et l’aveugle*, in which a blind man has a hoard of coins and a boy deceives, robs and beats him, may be the first known play that is not directly associated with religion. Often understood to be if not the first farce then certainly its predecessor, the *Garçon et l’aveugle* differs from liturgical and morality plays in its function: the former aims to entertain, while the latter aim to teach and may entertain in the process. In the *Garçon et l’aveugle* humour is violent, and it is based on quick dialogue, slapstick, and the concepts of deception, trickery and the desire to make a quick profit.

Performances of secular street theatre for entertainment are first documented in Paris for the Feast of the Pentecost of 1313, when the King’s sons were knighted and several...

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66 Harris, *Sacred Folly*, 223. Published by Defnile as H. Denifle et al., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, IV (Parisii: ex typis fratrum Delalain, 1897), vol. iv. 652; L. ccvii. 1 169.


nobles and royals took the Cross. The festivities involved the entire city and the proceedings were recorded in a chronicle that was bound in a manuscript, next to lyric compositions by Jehannot de Lescurel, Guillaume de Machaut and others, and a very peculiar composition called the *Roman de Fauvel* (BnF Fr. 146). Both the chronicle and the *Roman de Fauvel* deserve particular attention for the ways they employ and present humour.

The chronicle describes in detail how the citizens of Paris contributed to the Feast. The festivities are also mentioned in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, which describes ‘joyful and festive sounds and staging [of] beautiful scenes’, and they lasted for days. Nancy Freeman Regalado reconstructed the events and describes that the streets were decorated, there were actors dressed as wild men, ephemeral constructions of castles and drawbridges, there were children’s tournaments, dancing and feasting of every sort and even a wine fountain. Fifty-three verses of the chronicle are dedicated to the *faerie* that were organised by the bourgeois of Paris. These were staged street plays, and this chronicle is both the earliest and the most detailed known account of such theatre performances, taking place on the streets and sponsored by the citizens and guilds. Part of the staging were large *tableaux* with representations of twelve religious scenes, and at least six scenes with characters from the *Roman de Renart*, a collection of stories that narrate the adventures of Renart the Fox.

Perhaps the most recognisable anthropomorphic animal of French culture, Renart is an archetypically trickster character. His adventures are presented next to those of popular characters in courtly literature, as part of the same epic and courtly tradition and

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69 For a detailed discussion on the day’s events, see Nancy Freeman Regalado, ‘La grant feste: Philip the Fair’s Celebration of the Knighting of his sons in Paris at Pentecost of 1313’, in Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Reyerson, *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 56-88.
72 Regalado, ‘Staging of the *Roman de Renart*’, 113.
74 A list of the street tableaux and entertainments is given in Regalado, ‘La grant feste’, 68.
The stories may have had elite origins, but soon they became integral parts of minstrel repertoire and were widely diffused. The humour in the *Roman de Renart* is satirical and mischievous, targeting social groups and casts rather than individuals: Renart is presented as a commoner, and other anthropomorphic animals assume different social roles, directing most puns to aristocracy and clergy (Fig. 1.1). This type of general social satire, instead of personal attacks to an individual, is consistent with the standards and premises of satire of the period: contemporary etiquette dictated that one should not offend another directly, but rather direct their criticism generally, and avoid blaming a person. The purpose was to provoke laughter, and this is explicitly stated in the text:

I now have something to tell you that should make you laugh; for the truth is, as I know well, that you have no wish for a sermon or to hear the life of some holy saint. What you want is not that at all, but something to amuse you. Now let everyone be sure to keep quiet, for I am about to tell you a good story, and am well prepared.

In 1313, the street plays taking place in Paris used painted *tableaux* as backdrops for actors, changing them according to the needs of the performance or re-enactment. In these *tableaux*, the scenes and characters from the *Roman de Renart* were interpolated with religious ones: Herod and Caiaphas, wearing his mitre, were seen next to Renart

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75 The first verses of the *Roman* reveal the connection with courtly literature: ‘Seigneurs, oï avez maint conte, / Que maint conterre vous raconte/Comment Paris ravi Elaine,/Le mal qu’il en ot et la paine,/De Tristan que la Chievre fist,/Qui assez bellement en dist/ Et fabliaux et chançons de geste,/Romanz d’Yvain et de sa beste/Maint autre conte par la terre,/Mais onques n’oïstes la guerre,/Qui tant fu dure de grant fin,/Entre Renart et Ysengrin,/Qui mourt dura et mout fu dure’. English translation: ‘My lords, you have heard many a tale from many a storyteller; how Paris carried off Helen to his great trouble and woe, La Chèvre’s splendid story of Tristan, various fabliaux and chansons de geste; and many another goes around the country telling the romance of Yvain and his beast. But you have never heard of the great, grim war between Reynard and Isengrin that they waged so long and bitterly.’ Original text in Jean Dufournet, ed., *Le roman de Renart*, 418 (Paris: Flammarion, 1996). I, 208, lines 1–22. Translated in English by D. D. R. Owen, ed., *Romance of Reynard the Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 53.

76 Regalado, ‘Staging of the *Roman de Renart*’, 127.

77 This is consistent with the ideas of the time on satire. In *Beaudous*, a thirteenth- century manual of knightly and courtly behaviour by Robert de Blois, the writer advises that ‘[…] if someone wants to admonish a person, but in such a way that he will not take offence, let him lay blame generally on all who are like him, without naming any one person’: ‘et qui veut aucun chastoier/si k’il ne se puist courrusier/communement doit toz blasmer/ceulx qui tel sont, sans nul nomer’. Regalado, ‘Staging of the *Roman de Renart*’, 141.

78 ‘Or me convient tel chose dire/ Dont je vos puisse fere rire;/Qar je sai bien, ce est la pure,/Que de sarmon n’avès vos cure/Ne de cors saint oïr la vie,/De ce ne vos prent nule envie,/Mes de tel chose qui vos plese./Or gart chascun que il se tese,/Que de bien dire sui envoie/ Et bien garniz’. Text in Dufournet, *Le roman de Renart*, I, 308, lines 1–5, 8–10; English translation by Owen, *Romance of Reynard the Fox*, 81.

79 Regalado, ‘Staging of the *Roman de Renart*’, 114.
singing an Epistle, and later Renart appeared as Bishop, as an Archbishop and even as the Pope.\textsuperscript{80} According to Nancy Regalado, the descriptions of the Pentecost chronicle are among the first testimonies that the adventures of Renart were publicly staged, or otherwise visually represented: although the stories were popular in literature, their characters were rarely visualised before that period and there is no record of them being performed elsewhere outside France.\textsuperscript{81} Illuminations of the \textit{Roman de Renart} date from the same period. At least two manuscripts today in the BnF, Fr. 1581 and Fr. 12584, reveal entertaining illuminations of animals in different roles: they are dressed as medieval knights that go to battle, they engage in warfare in land and sea and they participate in banquets, as well as in many farcical scenes.\textsuperscript{82}

By merging religious and folk themes, the street plays transferred the same symbols that were used for religious criticism into the contemporary political arena. The detailed character of this chronicle reveals the political aspect of the staging in the streets of Paris. Why, then, is this chronicle included in the same manuscript as the \textit{Roman de Fauvel}? It could well be for similar, political reasons.

The \textit{Roman de Fauvel} is a political allegory connected to some events that occurred close to the Feast of the Pentecost of 1313.\textsuperscript{83} The protagonist is Fauvel, an ambiguous equine generally considered to be an ass. The name is an acronym for the first letters of the six Vices, making it thus immediately clear that the lead character is a sinful and vain creature: Flattery, Avarice, Viliness, Variability, Envy and Laxity.\textsuperscript{84} Fauvel wins the favour of Dame Good Fortune, who invites him to move out of the stables and go live in the palace. After abusing his position and imposing his authority to Kings and Bishops, whom he invites

\textsuperscript{80} For a list of the staged street tableaux and the entertainment presented in the faerie, see Regalado, ‘La grant feste’, 66.
\textsuperscript{81} Regalado, ‘Staging of the \textit{Roman de Renart}’, 131-2.
\textsuperscript{82} Patricia M. Gathercole, ‘Illustrations of the \textit{Roman de Renart}: Manuscripts BN Fr. 1581 and BN Fr. 12584’, \textit{Gesta} 10, no. 1 (January 1971): 39.
\textsuperscript{83} For a thorough analysis of the manuscript see Margaret Bent and Andrew Wathey, \textit{Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 146} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). A summary is given in the Introduction by Margaret Bent.
to curry his fur and clean his latrine, Fauvel marries Lady Vainglory and is greeted as a herald of the Antichrist.

The political allegory becomes clearer if the work is connected to the historical personality of Enguerrand de Marigny, Baron Le Portier, who rose to power due to the favour of King Philip IV. Also favoured by Fortune, Marigny rose to power quickly, only to fall hard when the King died. He was subsequently accused of several offences, until he was convicted of financial mismanagement and necromancy and promptly executed on 1315. The people of Paris walked him to Vincennes, where he was executed, all the way singing makeshift mocking songs to him, calling him a ‘trickster’ and ‘Renart’, which was particularly pertinent since Marigny was red-haired like a fox.

This is a unique instance where court and folk culture themes were summoned and reused to create sharp political satire, in verse, music and image, using once more the *topos* of inversion. The protagonist is an anthropomorphic animal, in the example of the *Roman de Renart*. Animal anthropomorphism constitutes an inversion, and it is swiftly followed by Fauvel’s inversion of status. What was expressed in the chants of the public that walked Marigny to his execution, was also expressed in the manuscript that allegorised his existence.

A most interesting inversion takes place in the manuscript itself, in the connection between text and image and the way these two elements interact in the *mise en page*: instead of the marginal decorations framing the text, it is the text that frames the images, that are placed centrally in the page (Fig. 1.2). The musical part is also inverted: monophony is placed where polyphonic pieces would conventionally be sung, and deliberate cacophony replaces melodic chanting. Inversion is present conceptually, intertextually, musically and visually, making the *Roman de Fauvel* a unique example of satire in text, sound and image.

The illuminations constitute another layer of subversive interaction between text and visual cycle. The artists took advantage of established visual representations, sometimes borrowing directly from religious iconography and reconstructing scenes that

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86 Regalado, ‘Staging of the *Roman de Renart*’, 130.
parodically refer to religious episodes like the Last Supper (Fig. 1.3). Fauvel himself is represented either as an animal-man hybrid, with the legs of a beast and the face of a man or as an anthropomorphic animal (Fig. 1.3 and 1.4). The iconography of the enthronement is heavily borrowing from formal illuminations of coronations of Kings, and there are direct visual parallels to the Coronation of Hugh Capet as it is found in the contemporary Grandes Chroniques manuscript, which the Fauvel artist could have been familiar with (Fig. 1.5 and 1.6). An image of an ass enthroned as king is arguably a strong political statement and it constitutes one of the first visual examples of social satire painted in such a prominent position on the page.

The interaction with folk culture themes does not end there. The Roman de Fauvel is the first instance that a charivari is part of the main illumination and not the marginia.\textsuperscript{88} Charivaris were folk rituals performed either for social control through public shaming, or before a marriage. In the latter case, which was the most usual, people accompanied the marrying couple while shouting or banging together utensils, and teased them with explicit sexual humour, particularly when there was significant age difference between the bride and groom.\textsuperscript{89} The etymology of the word is unclear, but it has been suggested that it is connected to loud noise.\textsuperscript{90} In the Roman de Fauvel charivari, the crowd is armed with kitchen utensils instead of formal instruments (Fig. 1.7). The illumination probably reflects actual practice and emphasises the idea of loud noise instead of music, thus participating in the creation of a sonorous effect expressed visually.

The Roman de Fauvel is a product of courtly patronage that expertly blends different satirical folk themes to exercise social and political criticism. Its inclusion in the same manuscript as the Pentecost 1313 chronicle means that the entire work could be read as the composition of a charivari against Marigny. Its transgressive character perhaps justified the allowances and artistic liberties taken throughout, that resulted in its nuanced humour. For

\textsuperscript{88} Huglo, ‘Le contexte folklorique et musical du charivari dans le Roman de Fauvel’, 277.


\textsuperscript{90} Johnson, ‘Charivari/Shivaree’, 373.
its designated audience, the visual aspect of the *Roman de Fauvel* would have been easy to interpret and unmistakeably humorous, both intending and succeeding in making its readers and viewers laugh. In that sense, it is a precursor to the case studies of this thesis.

The examples discussed so far are from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and they are the foundations that allow the full blossoming of humour, visual or otherwise, in the fifteenth century. Through this culture of performative folk festivals and of religious and secular plays, the farce was born, the most valuable resource regarding performed humour in France in our period of interest. Continuing on the same track as some of the examples described above, farces joked about law, politics, religion, money and the ever-popular battle of the sexes.91 Their audience ranged from common townsfolk to royalty: the *Farce of the Fart*, probably composed around 1476, was performed Lyon that year for the entertainment—it is presumed—of René d’Anjou.92 As the title implies, its humour is scatological: a woman pollutes the air of the house with her farts, and when her husband complains, she drags him to court. A lawyer is more than happy to represent both parties, and the woman soon defends herself by saying that she had to rush to prepare the table and the fart escaped as she was squatting. The husband reiterates his right to clean air in his home. The judge proclaims that when the two were married, the husband married all of her. 

The lawyer protests:

**LAWYER:** But here is what he offers in his own defence. He says that there is no proof whatsoever that he ever married his wife’s asshole. He further alleges that, if an asshole produces filth, then it’s all perfectly clear: it follows that he is to assume no role or responsibility in that whatsoever.93

The woman vehemently denies this, professing that he did indeed marry all her parts, since he sodomised her on their wedding night. The man’s defence, that it was too dark and he could not see what he was doing, does not convince the judge, who decides that since he married all of her, he is equally responsible for the farts she produces. He then proclaims:

**JUDGE:** To all married couples who henceforth, shall have occasion to fart:

Suck it up, folks! Drink up! Share and share alike in the duly apportioned

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93 Enders, *The Farce of the Fart* and Other Ribaldries, 81.
stench. If one turns downwind, the other shall simply say, ‘Excuse you!’

Although the heyday of the farce was later in the fifteenth century, payments made to three performing troupes 1388, 1409 and 1415 by King Charles VI and Queen Isabeau suggest that they have been performed and enjoyed by townsfolk and nobility much earlier. Not all sovereigns were as keen: King Charles VIII was not approving of farces and morality plays that portrayed him or France in an unflattering way, and had the relevant clerks arrested.

This brief and by no means extensive overview of humorous expressions in late medieval France has hopefully given some indication about what audiences were laughing with. Although the humour is largely the same as in the case studies, the examples discussed above were either not illuminated at all—save some marginalia or marginal-type decorations or only visually represented in ephemeral ways, in *tableaux* or in performance. The *Roman de Fauvel*’s inverted visual cycle is an exception, but it was seen that the manuscript was unusual in many ways, and the illuminations were part of the inversion, they were part of the satirical intention. However, there is still a remarkable contrast between these earlier examples and the three case studies, where humour is immortalised with great care and expense, and it invites viewers to laugh with and at the images at a time where visual representations were still considerably standardised. To understand how that shift occurred, we need to return to the early humanists and the debates that shaped French thought and culture at the time.

1.3 Image and rhetoric

Shortly after Petrarch’s *Rerum Memorandum Libri*, King Charles V commissioned a series of translations of important works by classical and Christian authors in French, intending to make them available to posterity and to his court officials. Priority was given

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94 Enders, *The Farce of the Fart* and Other Ribaldries, 85.
95 Enders, *The Farce of the Fart* and Other Ribaldries, 15.
to works on politics, jurisprudence and didactic works on good government and ethics.\footnote{Olivier Bertrand, ‘La constitution d’une bibliothèque royale: La librairie de Charles V’, in \textit{Bibliothèques d’écrivains : lecture et création, histoire et transmission}, ed. Olivier Belin, Catherine Mayaux, and Anne Verdure-Mary (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2019), 7.}

There were also exemplary texts, \textit{Mirrors of Princes} and works of historical interest, to ensure a complete education for current and prospective rulers.\footnote{Claire Richter Sherman, \textit{Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 9.} Among the first texts to be translated were the works of Aristotle in the 1370s.\footnote{Sherman, \textit{Imaging Aristotle}, xxi.} They were translated and curated by Nicole Oresme, who was also Master of Texts and an Aristotelian himself.\footnote{Sherman, \textit{Imaging Aristotle}, 304.}

The Crown’s translation initiative was one of the most important cultural achievements of the fourteenth century for France and it had an immediate and resonant impact. Soon, Aristotelian and Augustinian principles were being debated openly and extensively by early humanists and classical authors were considered essential for the formation of the Dauphin. Jean Gerson, the Dauphin’s tutor, compiled a reading list for him around 1417.\footnote{Jean Gerson, \textit{Oeuvres complètes}, trans. Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée, 1960), II, 203. For more on Gerson’s views on princely views and education see Yelena Mazour-Matushevich and István P. Bejczy, ‘Jean Gerson on virtues and princely education’, in István Bejczy, ed., \textit{Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages, 1200-1500}, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 219-236.} It included titles ranging from Aristotle to St Augustine, as well as Gerson’s own works, which he modestly described as ‘some little works in French recently put out’.\footnote{Eleanor P. Spencer, ‘Gerson, Ciboule and the Bedford Master’s Shop’, \textit{Scriptorium} 19, no. 1 (1965): 104.} For Gerson, it is through ‘lectio studiosa’ in combination with ‘profunda meditatio’ or ‘attenta consideratio’ that the prince can capitalise on the virtues discussed in these books.\footnote{Mazour-Matushevich and Bejczy, ‘Jean Gerson on virtues and princely education’, 230.} Gerson was canon of Notre Dame and Chancellor of the University of Paris during its apogee and it is clear from his writings that he was inspired by Aristotle, more so than by Augustine, who was most popular among other fractions of the University of Paris.\footnote{G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, \textit{Jean Gerson, Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology}, (Leiden; Boston, Mass: Brill, 1999), 274; Daniel Hobbins, ‘The Schoolman as Public Intellectual: Jean Gerson and the Late Medieval Tract’, in \textit{Authorship and Publicity Before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 140.} In his advice to the Dauphin, and elsewhere in his writings, he advocated that ‘poetry, rhetoric and philosophy can very well get on with theology and the holy books’ and without the
works of the ancients, Church fathers like Aquinas would not have written 'in such a beautiful style and with keen judgement'.

It is true that early humanists read Cicero, Aristotle and other classical authors, for their advice on rhetoric rather than for their sense of humour. However, the greatest orators from classical antiquity presented humour as a powerful rhetorical device: alongside Aristotle, Cicero in *de Officiis* discussed jesting and wit, *jocus* and *facetiae*, as components of decorous speech and advised that ‘the manner of jesting itself ought not to be extravagant or immoderate, but refined and witty’. Both Cicero and Aristotle presented humour that is ‘ingenuum’ and ‘facetum’ as a successful means to induce the desired feelings to an audience through compelling discourse. Following Petrarch’s rediscovery of Cicero and his defence of humour, early humanists also started collecting jokes and, in their turn, defending humour, even if they were not humorous writers themselves. Some of the jokes from antiquity survived through translations, either translated directly or contaminated with more contemporary jokes. Soon, other groups of intellectuals read and commented on classical Roman writers and connected rhetoric, art and poetry. Early modern rhetoricians argued that art should both instruct and delight and echoed Horace when they coined the phrase *castigat ridendo mores*, that one can correct customs through laughter.

Early humanists like Gontier Gol, Jean de Montreuil, Nicolas des Clamanges and Laurent de Premierfait shared a fascination for classical literature and a close friendship. Their correspondence often mentions Terence, Cicero, Virgil and other classical writers,

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110 Bowen, ‘Ciceronian Wit and Renaissance Rhetoric’, 419.
112 Rayfield, ‘Rewriting Laughter in Early Modern Europe’, 76.
113 Their friendship was close enough to cause domestic issues to them: in one of his letters, Jean de Montreuil mentions the complaints of Gontier Col’s wife, who considered Premierfait a bad influence on her husband. See Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 31.
whom they treated as models for rhetoric and exemplary texts. They were joined in their appreciation by Jean Gerson, who quoted directly from Terence: ‘Nihil est jam dictum quod non sit dictum prius’, ‘I will say nothing that has not already been said’, he wrote to his audience, taking the phrase directly from the prologue of *Eunuch*. It is noteworthy that some of the personalities forming this milieu were members of the clergy, as well as humanist thinkers of great influence. One of these men is of particular interest for this thesis: Laurent de Premierfait, translator of Boccaccio’s works in French and overseer of the manuscripts of Terence that form the first case study.

1.4 Laurent de Premierfait and humour in translation

Premierfait entered the entourage of the most illustrious of his patrons, the Duke of Berry, before 1409, probably through the intermediation of his friend Gontier Col, who was secretary to the Duke. He was originally from a socially modest background, and the fact that he chose not to sign with his own surname but with his place of birth may suggest that he did not want to emphasise his humble origins; he entered the Church early in his life, he spent a period studying in Troyes and he is documented working in Paris in 1400. Despite his humble origins, Premierfait’s education and erudition allowed him to socialise with some of the most illustrious patrons and influential personalities of his time. In addition to his services to the Duke of Berry, he also worked as papal and imperial notary around 1410, which probably brought him in contact with one of the richest notaries in Paris, Bureau de Dampmartin, a merchant and a money lender of noble birth who sponsored the translation of the *Decameron* in French. This social background is fundamental for understanding Premierfait’s humanism and his perspective, as it was expressed in his works.

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Premierfait was fluent enough in Latin to compose his own works in this language. This choice went against his reputation as a poet outside humanist circles, and also against his finances, because his works of this type were not appreciated by noble patrons. He was, however, very sought after as a translator, as he was considered an authority in the Latin language notwithstanding his personal resentment of the French language, which he considered vulgar. His most influential works were translations from Latin to French: he worked on texts by Cicero, whose translated *De Amicitia* bears a dedication to the Duke of Bourbon, and he revised Oresme’s translation of Aristotle’s *Economics*. Perhaps his most popular translations were the works of Boccaccio, that established Boccaccio as moralising author in France. These translations made the works popular first in princely circles, with the illuminated manuscripts presented to the Valois, and then in the wider public, when the translated texts were printed by Antoine Vérard in Paris towards the end of the fifteenth century. In the prologue of the *Cent Nouvelles*, the translated *Decameron*, Premierfait introduced the works of Boccaccio as parts of a moralising trilogy consisting of Terence’s comedies, Boccaccio’s *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes* and the *Cent Nouvelles*. In ascending order of importance, Terence’s comedies were the starting point, since they deal with the lives of commoners and lower social classes. *Les Cent Nouvelles*—the *Decameron*—followed, narrating stories of noble characters, and the *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes* was considered the most important of the three, focusing on exceptionally special characters of history and myth. The translations were bound in two copies, created almost simultaneously for the two Valois Dukes. The *Des Claires et Nobles Femmes* for Philippe the Bold was completed in 1403 (BnF Fr. 12420); the one for Duke of Berry was donated to him...

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119 Patrons like Duke of Bourbon were not fluent in Latin and favoured instead works in French that celebrated the chivalric past. See Famiglietti, ‘Laurent de Premierfait’, 25-34.
120 Famiglietti, ‘Laurent de Premierfait’ 35-37.
121 Famiglietti, ‘Laurent de Premierfait’, 37.
122 Earlier translations of parts of Boccaccio’s works existed: Petrarch had already translated the story of Griselda from the *Decameron* into Latin, contributing to the elevation of the work into the status of moral philosophy, and fragments of some stories appear in the works of Christine de Pizan. Premierfait first attempted to translate *De cassibus* in 1400 while he was still in Avignon, for Jean de Chanteprime, chancellor to the King Charles V. See also Giuseppe Di Stefano, ‘Il Trecento,’ in Carlo Pellegrini, ed. *Il Boccaccio nella cultura francese* (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1971), 3-4; and Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 112.
by Jean de la Barre in 1404 (BnF Fr. 598). In 1411, Premierfait oversaw the production of two copies of *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes*. The first one was for the Duke of Berry at the request of Martin Gouge (BG Ms Fr. 190/1) and it was quickly copied for John the Fearless of Burgundy (Arsenal Ms-5193 réserve).

In his prologue for the Duke of Berry’s copy, Premierfait demonstrated remarkable social awareness. He urged the Duke of Berry to take care of his subjects and he praised the work of the common folk, whose offer to the social fabric is irreplaceable. This petition is revealing of Premierfait’s humanism, especially considering his own modest social background and therefore his personal perspective on the virtues of the social class he was defending. It is also significant that he addressed the plea to the Duke of Berry, who was notoriously indifferent for the well-being of his subjects: his taxation was so heavy that in 1388 the people of Languedoc rioted against him and King Charles VI had to interfere and administer justice. It is possible that Premierfait’s didactic intention was aiming specifically at this side of the Duke of Berry, whom he may have considered in need of instruction. However, the inclusion of this plea arguably transforms the entire translated text into an *exemplum* for good government.

The humanist interest in the lower classes reflected a change in the social structure that had started manifesting in manuscript art since the fourteenth century. An early presentation of the social classes appears in Nicole Oresme’s translation of Aristotle’s *Politics*. In the illumination four social classes can be identified: from top left and moving clockwise, there is the *gens sacerdotal* or members of the clergy, *cultivateurs de terre* or those who cultivate the earth, *gens de mestier* or craftsmen, and *marchans*, the merchants (Fig. 1.8). In the immediately preceding folio the illumination introduced the *gens darmes*, the fighters, and *gens de conseil*, the councillors (Fig. 1.9). The presence of merchants, craftsmen and councillors in the social web indicates the existence of a new social class,

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which was emerging steadily and was becoming a fundamental part of the economy. They were not connected to feudal aristocracy, but by the fifteenth century they were a significant part of the social fabric and wielded considerable power.\textsuperscript{129} Thus, traders and craftsmen started to appear in manuscript illumination as they did in society, and their contribution, according to Premierfait, needed to be appreciated.

Immediately after \textit{Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes}, Premierfait started translating the \textit{Decameron} for the Duke of Berry, sponsored by Bureau de Dampmartin. The original manuscript does not exist, but a copy that was created immediately afterwards survives. It was made for John the Fearless of Burgundy under the new title \textit{Les Cent Nouvelles}, and was illuminated by the artist conventionally known as the Cité des Dames Master, to whom we will return as he was also involved in the Terence manuscripts (BAV Pal. Lat. 1989).\textsuperscript{130} Created around 1416-18, this copy could indicate what the original visual cycle looked like, since it was likely a twin manuscript to the one offered at Jean de Berry.\textsuperscript{131}

Two important points need to be highlighted about this project. The first is that in Italy the \textit{Decameron} was considered bourgeois literature, a collection of stories for rich merchants. Being himself a noble Parisian merchant, Bureau de Dampmartin was arguably the designated audience.\textsuperscript{132} The same could not be said for the Duke of Berry, who belonged to the highest rank of the social hierarchy. Secondly, the \textit{Decameron} is a text that appears incompatible with Premierfait’s other projects. It is intended to entertain and humour permeates the stories, yet Premierfait was not a humorous writer and all his other projects were secular literature of serious, academic nature. Even the comedies of Terence were considered a scholarly text, and it will be seen later in this thesis that it was appreciated for its rhetoric qualities rather than its humour.

It is then perhaps not surprising that Premierfait’s translation completely changed both the tone of the \textit{Decameron} and its reception in fifteenth-century France. His prologue clarifies that his aim was to bring the text closer to the reader, sacrificing brevity for clarity

\textsuperscript{129} Sherman, \textit{Imaging Aristotle}, 266-267.
\textsuperscript{130} Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 112.
\textsuperscript{131} This conclusion is drawn because it was Premierfait’s practice to present the Valois Dukes with twin manuscripts of the same work, like the ones discussed earlier. See Callu and Avril, \textit{Boccace en France}, 53 and 56; and Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 112.
of meaning.\textsuperscript{133} His translations were not literal, but cultural: instead of translating the text verbatim, they included extensive translator’s comments and expansions that made the classical text accessible to their contemporary audience.\textsuperscript{134} By translating the text culturally as well as linguistically, Premierfait included explanatory details that were not part of the original but were essential to contextualise the story geographically, historically and culturally. This approach altered the function of the original, since Premierfait imposed a moral on each story and emphasised a didactic tone that is missing from the prototype.\textsuperscript{135}

Interestingly, although he consciously tried to moralise the text, Premierfait still felt the need to defend its humorous character and attempted to contextualise its humour. To him, Boccaccio’s aim was to amuse his readers in the same way that the protagonists amuse themselves in his story, by trying to take their minds off the fact that they are hiding to avoid the plague.\textsuperscript{136} The setting must have resonated with Premierfait and his Parisian audience: in the early fifteenth century, there were recorded outbreaks of the Black Death in 1400-1401, 1412 and 1416-18 in Paris.\textsuperscript{137} With an outbreak frequency of almost once in every decade, the presentation of the Cent Nouvelles arrived at a very opportune moment. It is bitterly ironic that the intended recipient, Jean de Berry, also died in a plague outbreak in Paris.\textsuperscript{138}

The style and the stories presented a very familiar setting to the audience: a group of people sharing stories to pass the time was a quite common image, as it was a frequent pastime at court.\textsuperscript{139} Since the protagonists of the stories were not heroes or role models but everyday people, it would be easier for the readers to identify with them. Premierfait picked up on that trait of the text and he praised it in his prologue, saying that the variety of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}

\bibitem{132}Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 113.
\bibitem{133}By ‘cultural translation’ it is intended that the original text is translated liberally, to reflect its meaning in a manner accessible to the audience. Often, this included comments, explanations and clarifications. See also Nancy Freeman Regalado, ‘Le porcher au palais: Kalila et Dimma, le Roman de Fauvel, Machaut et Boccace’, \textit{Études littéraires} 31, no. 2 (1999): 106.
\bibitem{134}Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 115.
\bibitem{135}Cucchi, ‘The First French Decameron’, 126.
\bibitem{137}Meiss, \textit{The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke}, 35.
\end{thebibliography}
characters means that there is an example for everyone in these stories. He then compared it to works of Terence, whose characters are ‘mirrors of human life’. In further defence of humour, he provided an example from the classroom. Teachers, he posited, allow their students to be occasionally distracted by humour, to refresh their understanding and then engage more enthusiastically with their studies.

Apart from recognising humour and distraction as necessary and beneficial to learning, Premierfait assigned to it additional, intellectual properties by admitting that humour will refresh someone’s understanding. His position was in accordance with Aristotle’s suggestion that humour is the product of wit and that it takes intelligence to partake in a joke. Humour, therefore, was being presented as a fundamentally human attribute that can be used for learning and for rhetoric purposes, both in verbal and in non-verbal communication.

For the visual cycle of the Cent Nouvelles the Cité des Dames Master was recruited, possibly by Premierfait directly, since—as will be seen in the next chapter—they had already collaborated in the Terence manuscripts. As was the case with several other translated works at the time, the illuminators had to work with new material and did not have a codified iconography to follow. The illuminations of Boccaccio will be discussed in further detail later, when they will be compared to the Terence visual cycle; for now, it suffices to say that the artists created scenes of everyday life and bourgeois interiors, with an evident desire to represent the stories’ humour visually (Fig. 1.10).

1.5 Illuminating humour

So far, the discussion on humour in our period of interest has focused on its verbal expressions, mainly through written texts and performance. Admittedly there is some visuality in performance, however the question of representing humour visually is much more complex—even more so, when the visual representations accompany the written text. To better understand the topic it is essential to understand how books were being used.

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Petrarch seems to have abided by the perception, commonly held at his time, that the act of reading is a particular experience. It is often particularly hard to differentiate between reading and what we would today call a performance for most of the Middle Ages: most works were read aloud by a designated reader, instead of being read silently and privately. Reading was a communal experience, and the reader often interpolated his own interpretation and commentary within the text.

Starting in the eleventh century, the reading population progressively increased, which also resulted in an increase in manuscript production. From the twelfth century onwards university scholars were forming a new larger group of readers, and university lectures were still an oral practice. At the same time, the rise of the universities had created an environment where students had to read in private and quietly, in order to assimilate the curriculum through meditatio. Silent reading was a different practice, but not a new one: Augustine recognises and describes both types or reading, and so does Aquinas.

While universities were creating more new readers, the social changes described earlier had another significant impact: merchants, gentry and middle class citizens were becoming gradually more literate, driven by their need to conduct business effectively, manage their affairs and defend themselves at court. The increased administrative demands of a state that was becoming progressively bigger contributed to the same direction, and resulted in demand for books in the vernacular, since a larger percentage of the population was literate and was consuming secular literature.

147 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 199.
149 Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 212 and 216.
How did this impact manuscript illumination? In academic circles, visual representations were useful aide-memoirs that helped the students remember the material. In secular circles, the impact of King Charles V’s translation project was exceptional. Although there was already a preference among patrons for illuminated manuscripts, Charles V was personally involved in the manuscripts created for him and favoured greatly those that were visually appealing. For Oresme, his translator, illuminations in the translated text supported him in conveying and clarifying some concepts of the source language, and therefore supported the understanding of the text. Although this was not necessarily the case for Charles V, his project encouraged that move towards visuality, and consequently visualisations got progressively more detailed and specific.

Moreover, reading was increasingly becoming a private practice in secular circles. As there were more secular texts in circulation, there was need for secular iconography: manuscript artists started working for new patrons, and images progressively became independent artistic creations that required the reader to look attentively, engage, interpret and appreciate. The third case study of this thesis, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, has been cited as an example of a manuscript intended to be read privately, as an ‘exercise de lecture et d’estude’. Aristotle’s works were illuminated because there was a move towards visuality, yet these were not comic works. The comic inversions of the Roman de Fauvel were the outcome of this larger reading audience: the text and context needed to be understood more widely. As the illuminated page was becoming one, organic unit of text and images, seeing and reading was becoming synonymous, a joint experience of the senses.

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157 Saenger, ‘Silent Reading’, 412.
158 Michael Camille, ‘Before the gaze: the internal senses and late medieval practices of seeing’, in Nelson, Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Sow, 216. This shift towards visuality allowed for comparisons between fifteenth-century manuscript reading and contemporary ‘cinematic’ experiences. See Desmond and Sheingorn, Myth, Montage & Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture, 2-3.
time of the first case study, a book’s visual cycle was an essential attribute that contributed
to its value. Through his prolific patronage, the Duke of Berry expected and encouraged
new illuminations. It is in this cultural context that the first case study was created, and
humour expressed visually started claiming the centre of the pictorial stage.

2 THE MANUSCRIPTS OF TERENCE

Early in the fifteenth century, two manuscripts of the comedies of Terence were created in close chronological proximity for members of the Valois family. Our study on visual humour begins with the two visual cycles for this comic text.

The first manuscript was offered to the Duke of Berry in January 1408 by Martin Gouge, bishop of Chartres and the Duke’s treasurer.1 Robinet d’Étampes, the Duke’s garde des joyaux, described it in his catalogue entry as a ‘very beautifully historiated and illuminated’ manuscript containing the six comedies of Terence; aside from the date and provenance, his entry reveals that the manuscript was a gift, possibly offered during the étrennes, the ritual exchange of gifts taking place on the first days of January.2 The manuscript, henceforth called the Berry Terence, consists of 159 parchment leaves measuring 200 x 130 mm and is now in the BnF (Lat. 7907A). Scholars have concluded that two illuminating teams were involved: the principal illuminator is conventionally known as the Orosius Master and the second hand has been identified as the Flavius Josephus Master.3

The comedies of Terence were written in the second century BCE and the visual cycle that accompanied them was solidified after the fourth century and copied throughout the Carolingian period.4 The Berry Terence revisited an established iconography of the classical text. What was the cultural setting that prompted this revisiting of Terence? More pertinently to this research, how was the text’s humour translated into image for the Duke of Berry, and how does the new visual cycle compare to previous ones?

2 For more on the étrennes see Buettner, ‘Past Presents’, 598-625. Further discussion follows later in this chapter.
3 The identification of the artists was first discussed in detail by Meiss, The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries, 41-54 and 336-9. See also Beatrice Radden Keefe, ‘Illustrating the Manuscripts of Terence’, in Giulia Hill and Andrew Turner, eds., Terence between Late Antiquity and the Age of Printing: Illustration, Commentary and Performance (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 51-52.
4 Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 28; for the late antique prototype see Wright, The Lost Late Antique Illustrated Terence, 1-3.
Shortly after the Berry Terence was offered to the Duke of Berry, a second manuscript of the text appeared. It is possible that the first manuscript stirred some competition in Valois circles, which may have resulted in the commission of a second Terence manuscript, conventionally named *Terence des Ducs* to indicate the uncertainty regarding its provenance (Arsenal Ms-664 réserve). The earliest information we have about it is Robinet d'Étampes' inventory description. Robinet specifies that the bindings bore the arms of Louis de Guyenne, dauphin of France, but the motto 'de bien en mieux' that is written on the marginal decoration of the presentation page cannot be connected to any known heraldic device, and the arms in the first page are the arms of France, not of the Dauphin. It may have entered the collection of Louis de Guyenne sometime between 1413 and his death in 1415, after which the bishop of Chalon, Jean d' Arsonval, brought the manuscript to the Duke of Berry and Robinet inventoried it. The manuscript, today in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, measures 337×240mm and contains 237 parchment leaves. The impressive visual cycle is a collective work of some of the most popular workshops of Paris at the time. The illuminators have been identified as the Bedford Master, the Luçon Master, the Cité des Dames Master, the Adelphoe Master and the Orosius Master.

The two works were created in close chronological proximity for patrons of a similar social milieu. Although the same people were involved, the visual outcome was different.

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5 The manuscript was first called *Térence des Ducs* by Martin, who assigned it to the Valois Dukes but could not determine its intended owner. Henry Martin, *Le Térence des Ducs* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1908), 15.


7 It is possible that the manuscript was intended for King Charles VI, who passed it on to Louis de Guyenne at an unfinished stage. It is also possible that it was intended for an entirely different person in the royal family. It does not appear in the royal inventories of 1411 or 1413, but it may not have been finished by that date. Martin, *Le Térence des Ducs*, 14-15. Hedeman dates the decoration between 1411-12. Hedeman, *Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio’s De Casibus*, 57.


11 The identification of the artists is discussed in detail by Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 41-54 and 336-9. It has been uncontested by scholars so far. See also Keefe, ‘Illustrating the Manuscripts of Terence’, 51-52.
The analysis below addresses those differences, and the different ways the text’s humour was expressed in each manuscript’s visual cycle.

2.1 The Berry Terence

The Berry Terence presents the six plays in the traditional order: *Andria, Eunuch, Heautontimorumenos, Adelphoe, Phormio and Hecura*. The colophon includes the name of Calliopus, the scribe who copied them in late antiquity. They are preceded by the *periochae* and the *prologi*, summaries and prologues respectively. Terence’s Epitaph, titled *Terencii Epitaphium*, follows. An original, long commentary in Latin starts after the Epitaph. This added commentary is presented as ‘opus breve et scholasticum’ and it develops in three parts: a short biography of Terence, a note that indicates that the *argumenta* and *prologi* summarise the content of each comedy and a long passage that connects each scene to the next and gives a summary of all scenes of each comedy.

The commentary has been reliably attributed to Laurent de Premierfait and it appears for the first time in the Berry Terence, in its most brief version; in the *Terence des Ducs*, it was amplified and its location within the manuscript changed. Only the classical text of the Berry Terence is illuminated, covering f. 2v to 141v. Premierfait’s commentary is not decorated.

It is argued here that Premierfait’s addition of the commentary reflected the way Terence was read and understood at the time by scholars. Had the plays been translated in French, such an addition would have been included in the translation as explanatory text to contextualise the classical work, in a manner similar to other translated works of the

12 Calliopus is understood to have copied a manuscript of the comedies around the year 400, and this late antique manuscript served as model for Carolingian copies of the work. Wright, *The Lost Late Antique Illustrated Terence*, 1 and 4.
15 For the identification of the author with Premierfait see Bozolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 94-98; Bozolo and Ornato, *Préludes à la Renaissance*, 52; Bozolo and Ornato, Un traducteur et un humaniste de l’époque de Charles VI, 74 and 160. Discussion on the *Terence des Ducs* follows later in this chapter.
16 For a description of the contents of both manuscripts see Bozolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 93 – 129.
period. Instead, both the text and the commentary are written in Latin, and the implications of the language of the commentary are discussed further later. Moreover, by visually isolating the illustrated texts of Terence’s plays from the additional materials included in the manuscript, it is proposed that Premierfait sought to improve and update the way Terence was read and presented. To achieve this, he structured the comedies as one uniform text followed by his own comments.

It has been argued convincingly that Premierfait was also involved in the visual cycle. The visual analysis discusses visual evidence in further support of this suggestion, proposing that visual humour was an instrument that Premierfait used consciously, to enhance the manuscript’s visual rhetoric and to support his efforts at cultural appropriation. The Berry Terence’s iconography is discussed here in conjunction with established Carolingian illustrations, using as reference BnF Lat. 7899, a ninth-century Terence manuscript from Reims. The reference manuscript was chosen because it follows the established, late antique iconography of the comedies, and had been in the collection at the library of the Abbey of Saint-Denis outside Paris at our period of interest. It is therefore possible that Premierfait had access to it, and perhaps he used it as a starting point for his new visual cycle.

The Berry Terence was offered as a gift. Therefore, it was presumably commissioned with the specific intention to please the intended owner. Martin Gouge, the donor, was a frequent gift-giver: before offering Terence, he had already contributed to the ducal library by offering an illuminated copy of the Roman de la Rose and a Histoire de Thebes et de Troie on July 1403. Some years later, on January 1411, he offered to his patron the French Des Cas

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18 Quite often, commentaries on translations at the time systematically paraphrased the text, in an attempt to both contextualise it and summarise it. The goal was not a literal translation but rather a cultural assimilation. See Rita Copeland, Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. chapter 4, Translation and interlingual commentary: Notker of St. Gall and the Ovide moralisé, 87-126.

19 Châtelet was the first art historian to propose that Premierfait was involved in the creation of the iconography of the manuscript’s frontispiece, in Châtelet, L’âge d’or du manuscrit à peintures en France, 123. Hedeman built on this argument by identifying Premierfait’s involvement in the ‘cultural translation’ of the text into images, in Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 117-118.

20 See also relevant comments of Hedeman, ‘Illuminating Boccaccio’, 122.
de Nobles Hommes et Femmes, translated by Laurent de Premierfait and lavishly illuminated as well (BG Ms Fr. 190/1).\(^{21}\)

Compared to these works of literature, the comedies of Terence appear out of place. Far from being of a heroic subject matter, the six plays are written in clear, conversational Latin, and they narrate the adventures of some citizens of Athens. The characters are ordinary people who found themselves in comic circumstances. The humour is situational, the action develops in the town streets, and lust, adultery, trickery and cheating are recurring themes. Such subject matter appears more relevant to the fabliaux and to street plays than Gouge’s other manuscript gifts. Perhaps Gouge was responding to Duke of Berry’s taste for folk spectacles and common life—discussion will return to these in detail later. Considering the frequent gift exchanges between the two men, it is likely that Gouge was well aware of the patron’s preferences and pandered to them.

Gouge may have also been prompted by the text’s popularity in academic circles at the time. Despite St Augustine’s disapproval on grounds of morality, Terence’s works have been traditionally connected to learning and were copied extensively.\(^ {22}\) Terence was one of the four Latin authors that formed the essential Latin curriculum and he was read alongside Virgil, Cicero and Sallust.\(^ {23}\) In the thirteenth century, Pietro Alighieri, son of Dante, named Terence as an inspiration for the title of his father’s *Divine Comedy*:

The title of the book is the *Comedy of Dante Alighieri*: and that is as if to say, take note. In antiquity in the theatre was a semicircular area in which was a pulpit, into which climbed the poet or the cantor, in order to recite his song or sing it, outside of which where miming actors, who, as the song was pronounced, adapted the gestures of their bodies to it at will, according to the person concerning whom the poet was speaking [...] and into such a pulpit or little edifice the poet ascended from which he sang of common things, therefore such a song was said to be a comedy [...] 

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\(^{21}\) For a list see Hedeman, *Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio’s De Casibus*, appendix 4.

\(^{22}\) No less than 741 Latin manuscripts of his six plays are now known, and at least 122 of them can be dated to the period 800–1200 CE. For the complete catalogue see Claudia Villa, *La ‘Lectura Terentii’, Da Ildemaro a Francesco Petrarca* (Padova: Antenore, 1984), 295–454, as well as the appendix of Claudia Villa, *‘Terence’s Audience and Readership in the Ninth to Eleventh Centuries’*, in Hill and Turner, *Terence Between Late Antiquity and the Age of Printing*, 249. Augustine was familiar with the comedies of Terence, which he cited, yet ultimately condemned for morality reasons: see Augustine, *City of God*, II.7, and II.12.

\(^{23}\) Hill and Turner, *Terence Between Late Antiquity and the Age of Printing*, 1.
Thus the poet in comedy ought to speak of low things and not high, as Terence in his
comedies did.\textsuperscript{24} Later, Boccaccio copied the comedies personally and he used the text as inspiration for his
Decameron.\textsuperscript{25} By the time the Berry Terence was created, eminent scholars in the
environment of Jean de Berry, like Jean de Montreuil, Gontier Col, Nicolas des Clamanges
and Laurent de Premierfait admired the rhetoric potential of the comedies and held
enthusiastic discussions about the text.\textsuperscript{26} Gouge also possessed a copy of the text, although
his was much older and it was not illuminated.\textsuperscript{27}

Terence also had the appreciation of the Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean
Gerson. Gerson quoted directly from the comedies in his ecclesiological treatises and he
defended the text in his treatise on the education of the dauphin.\textsuperscript{28} To him, classical texts
should be understood as \textit{exempla}, as moralising texts essential to princely formation. The
objective of education and the function of the \textit{exempla} was to unite past and present,
allowing the audience to contemplate between \textit{exemplum} and everyday life.\textsuperscript{29} For this,
Terence’s comedies would be particularly important, since their subject matter is the lives of
ordinary people. Moreover, the comedies do not mention the pagan Gods: nowhere in the
plays is dramatic action resolved through a \textit{deus ex machina}. All circumstances are created
and managed by human protagonists, making the text compatible with a Christian reader
and easily relatable, while not threatening to the Christian faith.

\textsuperscript{24} ‘Libri titulus est: Comoedia Dantis Allegherii: et quare sic vocetur, adverte. Antiquitus in theatro, quod erat
area semicircularis, et in ejus medio erat domuncula, quae scena dicebatur, in qua erat pulpitum, et super id
ascendebat poeta ut cantor, et sua carmina ut cantiones recitabat, extra vero erant mimi joculatores,
carminum pronuntiationem gestu corporis effigiantes per adaptionem ad quem libet, ex cujus persona ipse
poeta loquebatur [...] et si tale pulpitum seu domunculam, ascendebat poeta, qui de more villico caneret, talis
cantus dicebantur comoedia [...] Item quod poeta in comoedia debet loqui remisse et non alte, ut Terentius in
suis comoedis fecit [...]. Translated in Alighieri, Petri Allegherii super Dantis ipsius genitoris Comœdia
Commentarium, 9.

\textsuperscript{25} Boccaccio’s autographed manuscript of Terence is today in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut.
38. 17.

\textsuperscript{26} See discussion in previous chapter, p. 48-49.

\textsuperscript{27} This manuscript is today in BnF, Ms. Lat. 7902. Hedeman, \textit{Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and
Boccaccio’s De Casibus}, 56.

\textsuperscript{28} Donal Byrne, ‘An Early French Humanist and Sallust: Jean Lebègue and the Iconographical Programme for

\textsuperscript{29} Hedeman, \textit{Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio’s De Casibus}, 4-5.
There was, therefore, a cultural environment around the Duke of Berry, within which Terence was appreciated as a classical text that merited analysis and discussion. Jean de Berry had a taste for the classics, as attested by his library, that included translated works of Sallust, Seneca, Valerius Maximus, Lucan, Josephus and Virgil.\(^{30}\) His collection of cameos, medals and coins further indicates an interest for classical antiquity.\(^{31}\)

It was probably a combination of all the above elements that made the Berry Terence a special present for Jean de Berry. Gouge most likely entrusted Premierfait, an authority in Latin texts, with the creation of a new Terence manuscript for his patron. The added commentary provided a contemporary scholarly perspective, and the new manuscript reflected the patron’s humanist aspirations and his interest in classical antiquity. Moreover, the text was not particularly popular in royal and in noble libraries.\(^{32}\) This perhaps gave the manuscript the added advantage of originality, highlighting its owner’s status as a leading patron and collector.

The visual analysis demonstrates that the manuscript’s new visual cycle included masterfully executed scenes from everyday life, that arguably pandered to the patron’s expressed taste. Within these scenes there are elements of humour expressed pictorially, with an emphasis in the content’s theatricality and in the subject matter’s comic character.

2.1.1 The Berry Terence visual cycle

2.1.1.1 Perceptions of ancient theatre

The manuscript opens with a densely populated presentation page, representing a theatre scene (Fig. 2.1). Acanthus leaves decorate the margin and a dragon sits on the top left of the page. Inside the frame, the entire upper register is occupied by a theatre scene, where masked actors dance in front of a pulpit. Inside the pulpit there is the seated figure of Calliopus, the signing scribe, who is reading from a book that he is holding. His name is


\(^{32}\) For example, the Visconti library, one of the greatest in Europe, did not include the works of Terence. Meiss, *The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke*, 288-9 and 303.
written in gold on the pulpit’s marble. At the edifice’s bottom, the word *gesticulatores* serves as an identification for the dancing actors in the foreground. The audience, described as *romani*, is watching the performance around the pulpit, and the entire stage is enclosed. Actors and audience are dressed in a fifteenth-century French fashion. They are not interacting or conversing, and their pantomiming and dancing resemble earlier representations of *charivaris*. At the bottom half of the page, Terence is represented giving the book to the senator Terentius Lucanus in the city of Rome.

It is immediately apparent to the modern scholar that the representation of the performance on the top part of the illumination is not historically accurate. It is, however, consistent with the description given by Pietro Alighieri, Dante Alighieri’s son, regarding how ancient theatre was thought to have been performed: actors wearing masks would occupy the stage, acting out their parts in a version of pantomime. The narrator would be seated in a pulpit and he would read aloud the text which the actors enacted. In this description, Alighieri echoes the words of Isidore of Seville, who describes a similar performance which involves a narrator, actors, singers and musicians:

The stage building [scena] was a place in the lower part of a theatre built like a house, with a platform [pulpitus] which was called the orchestra, where the comic and tragic performers would sing and where the actors and mimes would perform. The *scena* is named after a Greek word (i.e. σκηνή, ‘tent’) because it was built to look like a house. Hence also in Hebrew the Feast of the Tabernacles was called σκενοπήγια from their similarity to domiciles.

The illumination represents a similar performance, suggesting that Isidore’s and Alighieri’s perceptions on ancient theatre were still accepted in the fifteenth century. In this case the narrator is identified as Calliopius, the same scribe who signs the plays. Interestingly, Calliopius is not presented as a scribe, as he is not writing, but reading out the text. This is directly connected to Premierfait’s commentary: in the summaries before each

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prologue Premierfait suggests that the comedies were written by Terence and Calliopius read the prologues aloud, referring explicitly to the scena in *Heautontimorumenos*.  

The role of the reader that recites the text to the public must have resonated with Premierfait, who followed a similar practice, as his correspondence with Montreuil reveals. Montreuil’s letter describes an academic setting within which the texts were read out loud to the public, by a person educated enough to answer questions from the audience and lead the ensuing discussion.  

The representation of the comedies being performed for the public points towards a renewed appreciation of comedy as a genre and of theatrical performances in general. In a cultural environment that favoured both classical literature and theatrical performance, it is reasonable to expect that some experimentation regarding a revival of classical performances would occur. If not an indication of their performance at court, the illumination arguably expresses a desire to emphasise the performative character of the text.  

Earlier visualisations also emphasise the theatrical character of the text. Carolingian copies of Terence open with a representation of Terence in a medallion, held by two masked actors (Fig. 2.2). Each comedy is preceded by a separate frontispiece of a theatre wall with masks (Fig. 2.3). All figures are masked, to indicate their status as actors and possibly as slaves, or to emphasise the feeling of performing on the stage.  

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36 The scene is mentioned in the summary of the prologue for *Heautontimorumenos*: ‘Prologus autem est & ie cui uri[n]ri. Factus est ut predixi a terencio sed per calliopium recitatus in scena habetur’ (f. 148v). Calliopius is mentioned in the summary of the prologue for *Eunuch and Adelphoe* as a reader: ‘Prologus autem […]. conscriptus est ut premisi per terencium sed per calliopium recitatur’ (f. 146r and 150v); in *Hecyra* ‘Prolog[us] v[er]o p[er] tere[n]tiu[m] script[ur] et p[er] calliopiu[m] recitat[ur]’ (f. 153r); and in *Phormio* ‘Prologus autem Postq[ue] poeta etc conscriptus est ut premisi per terenciu[m] sed] per calliopiu[m] recitatur’ (f. 155r).  

37 Bozzolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 127.  

38 There is evidence of the Terence plays being performed during the Middle Ages, with the *Terentius et delusor* as the most prominent example, dating from the twelfth century. It is a poetic dialogue between Terence and a person delusoris that criticises his plays. William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, C.800-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 26. I have not found yet a reference that they were performed in the French Court in the fifteenth century.  

39 The following illuminated manuscripts of Terence survive: Rome: BAV Vat. Lat. 3868; BAV Vat. Lat. 3226; Paris: BnF Lat. 7900; BnF Lat. 7899; BnF Lat. 7903; Lyon: BM Ms 788; Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana H. 75 inf. These are all copies of the Vatican Terence, BAV Vat. Lat. 3868. In addition, BodL Ms Auct. F. 2.13 follows the same pattern, although the artist took greater liberties. Karl E. Weston, ‘The Illustrated Terence Manuscripts’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 14 (1903): 37–54; and Wright, *The Lost Late Antique Illustrated Terence*, 3-9.
are identified by their names and profession, a practice that carried over to the Berry Terence. In the older work, written identification was necessary, because the masks in the actor’s faces make differentiation between characters difficult. In the Berry Terence the practice had additional functions, discussed further later.

The lack of masks in the Berry Terence allowed the illuminators to individualise the faces of the characters and to experiment with expression and gestuality, as well as clothing and other attributes that were used as identifiers. The characters are additionally identified by writings in a gothic script, consistently and throughout the manuscript. The identifications are usually both inside the image, written in gold, and below the illuminated frame in red (Fig. 2.4 and 2.5). They were there not only to facilitate the reader, but also as guides for the illuminators. Perhaps as homage to the older iconography, they also include descriptions of the character status, profession, or age: ‘adulescens’ for younger characters, ‘Senex’ for older ones and ‘Servus’ for servants and slaves are some examples. Elsewhere, Dorias the servant is also described as ‘chamberie[re]’ (Fig. 2.6). This is an indication of the strong visual function of the manuscript, since these identifications make the characters recognisable beyond doubt.

Each scene is introduced with an illumination, for a total of 143 illuminations. Throughout the manuscript, the *mise-en-page* indicates a clear emphasis on the visual representation. Each illumination takes up its own defined space in the page, roughly thirteen lines of text, covering almost half the page. The visual impact becomes clearer if one considers the modest dimensions of the page and the generally minimal border decoration. The text is written in one block and the first initial of each scene is decorated. Scholars have identified two illuminating hands: the first one is known as the Flavius Josephus Master, responsible for the presentation page in f. 2v and for f. 26v-42r. The main illuminator is the Orosius Master, who is responsible for the rest of the manuscript. To facilitate analysis, a summary of each play is provided in the Appendix, in the sequence that the plays appear in the Berry Terence.

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40 This thesis accepts the identifications proposed in Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 41-45; and in Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 30. Further discussion on the illuminators follows later in this chapter.
2.1.1.2 ‘Look at other men’s lives, as in a mirror’: scenes of everyday life

In one of the most detailed illuminations of *Adelphoe*, a group of servants are preparing a feast. Syrus, the slave-protagonist, is shouting orders at them, while simultaneously talking to Demea, the other protagonist, who is standing on his left (Fig. 2.7). The external wall of the building is missing, allowing us to see the kitchen interior and the servants at work. Instruments, tools and food ingredients are recruited to represent a scene where servants are performing their household chores. It is a scene of everyday life showing common folk at work and one of the protagonists is a slave.

This is one of the most comic moments of the text, where Syrus openly parodies Demea, his master. Demea is talking about his son and boasting about his own parenting skills. The more he talks, the more Syrus is mocking him; simultaneously, he is giving orders and instructions to the slaves about the feast. The succession of serious dialogue and slave management continues, until Demea prides himself of the advice he gave to his son:

I’m always telling him to look at other men’s lives as in a mirror, and choose from them an example for himself.\(^\text{41}\)

Terence uses the word ‘mirror’ and ‘example’, which relate directly to the *Mirror of Princes* and *exempla* that were considered fundamental for Princely formation in fifteenth-century France. Syrus parodies that phrase immediately, using it in a metaphor for cooking and servant work:

[...] I end up by telling them to look in the pans like a mirror, sir, while I tell them what they ought to do.\(^\text{42}\)

In two lines of text, *exemplum* and its parody are present in sequence, in an excellent use of humour and mock philosophy. How was that translated into visual terms? The vivid, busy, active illumination gives precedence not to the main characters of the play, but to the tertiary characters of the slaves and their food preparations. The artist focused on the slaves and their work, the kitchen interior, the food preparations, every element that draws

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\(^{42}\) Terence, *The Comedies*, 359.
attention not to the words of the main protagonist, Demea, but to Syrus and his parodic mockery.

Let us compare this image to its Carolingian counterpart (Fig. 2.8). Dromo is sitting on the floor, gutting fish and eels. Syrus is pointing at him and Demea is bringing his hands to his face in reaction to the spectacle. This is a very expressive illustration, especially in terms of physicality, since all characters are wearing masks and their body movements and postures are their only expressive means.

The Berry Terence illumination appears to have a different focus. Here, the emphasis is on the kitchen environment, the utensils, the men at work that can be spied on from the missing wall. Through them, the illumination draws attention to the parodied quote. The polished pan on the top shelf is positioned strategically and could resemble a mirror: the reader can look into the polished pan, as Syrus suggests, and partake in the joke. The image emphasises the parodic phrase, while taking advantage of the opportunity to present a domestic scene by presenting a vivid household filled with servants performing their chores. The illumination summarises, in one frame, the entire Terence project for the Duke of Berry: a fusion between exemplum, humour and everyday life.

The importance of representations of everyday life in the Berry Terence is highlighted by the fact that the manuscript opens with one of them. In the opening scene from Andria, the characters are shown planning a mock wedding (Fig. 2.9). Servants are carrying provisions and heavy loads towards the house, while the two main characters, are talking in the foreground. Simo, the master, waves the servants towards the house and gestures at Sosia to stay put and talk to him. The house interior is visible through a missing wall that allows the viewer a look into the kitchen. Instruments, cooking tools, pots, pans and a fireplace complete the representation of the space.

Again, a comparison with Carolingian examples is revealing (Fig. 2.10). The same scene is represented without any care for background or setting. Masked men, recognisable by their names inscribed above their heads, walk towards what is assumed to be a door but looks distinctively like a theatre exit. One of them carries fish and the other a jug, presumably of wine. The masks do not allow them an expression, but their bodily expressivity is taken to extremes for that same reason.
In the Berry Terence the two interacting characters are separated from the group and placed in the front section of the image. Behind them pass the servants, carrying their loads. The missing wall reveals part of the kitchen interior, but this is irrelevant to any action. The kitchen is not the setting of the scene, which takes place on the street; it is only there because the illuminators chose to represent a bourgeois interior.

The Terence illumination is not very different to some of the illuminations that the Limbourg brothers created for the Duke of Berry. Typical examples are the Calendar pages of the Très Riches Heures, famous for their depictions of common folk, at work or at home (Fig. 2.11). Missing walls allow the viewer’s gaze to rest on these illuminated figures, caught in the act of working, resting, or engaging in any other everyday activity. Since at the time of creation of the Berry Terence the Limbourg brothers were also working at the Duke’s court, creating a tradition in genre illuminations, it is likely that some competition for the Duke’s favour was present. The evident emphasis on lay people and their comings and goings could indicate an effort by both Premierfait and the artists to indulge their patron and to cater to his tastes.

2.1.1.3 ‘Play the rogue with greater impunity’: the tricksters

The tricksters, and their cognate characters the voyeurs and eavesdroppers, are characters who have access to information that other characters ignore. They use their knowledge to manipulate or otherwise outwit their antagonists and their trickery is based on their control on the flow of information. Traditionally, eavesdropping has been placed next to gossiping in the cultural collective consciousness. It is not considered an act of nobility or wisdom, but it is not completely socially unacceptable either. It is usually understood as a rather harmless breach of etiquette due to curiosity, which leads people to behaviours beneath their station. Consequently, the comic effect is enhanced according to the identity of the eavesdropper: if a slave is doing it, it is funny. If a citizen or a nobleman is doing it, it is funnier. The lack of propriety constitutes a violation, but usually not a threatening one; therefore, both comic archetypes fit perfectly under the definition of a

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43 Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 297.
Benign Violation.\footnote{See Introduction and McGraw and Warren, ‘Benign Violations’, 1141-1149.} This probably explains their popularity through time: they are safe and, usually, relatable tropes.

An illumination from Andria, showing an old man eavesdropping on what looks like a couple fighting over a baby, translates this comic trope visually (Fig. 2.12). The old man is Chremes, who is an old Athenian citizen, and the couple are two servants. In the text, the servants are tricking Chremes. Davus, the male servant, is staging his own and the woman’s actions to make Chremes believe that he is eavesdropping into their conversation. In reality, their conversation is fake: Davus is making sure that Chremes will hear what he wants him to hear. It is a smart plan, but Davus embarks on his deception without informing Mysis, his female accomplice. Unaware of her role in the trickery, at first Mysis gets frustrated because she does not understand what is happening. It takes some lines of dialogue before she catches up and starts responding in the appropriate manner, contributing in the deception.

Part of the scene’s humour is verbal and therefore not easy to visualise, so the illuminators chose instead to exaggerate the representation of the old man in the act of eavesdropping. In addition, they included a visual representation of Davus’ mock dialogue with Mysis, the unwitting accomplice. Since they could not visualise the dialogue, the illuminators represented the emotions that emerged during the couple’s interaction: the frustration of Mysis, who is gesturing aggressively towards Davus because she does not understand what he is talking about, and the exaggerated waving of Davus, who is acting like he does not know that he is being watched by Chremes. This is probably an accurate visualisation of the exaggerated gestuality that actors on stage would adopt.

The result is a comic image, that represents the text’s humour accurately by referring to known comedy themes. What is significant in this case is that the type of visual humour is different than the one in the text, suggesting that there was an intention to create a humorous image. A couple fighting, especially over a child, is a familiar part of the human experience and it would be easy for most audiences to relate to the situation. Without any context, a viewer sees an old man spying on a couple fighting over a baby. This suggests a specific intention to represent humour visually, even when the text could not be
translated successfully into image. The audience would understand the humorous intention, even without a text of reference.

This humorous intention becomes clearer if the illumination is compared to Carolingian iconography (Fig. 2.13). The characters here are all shown together and Chremes is not obviously eavesdropping; this was greatly enhanced in the later version. The masks that the characters are wearing hide their expressions and constrain them to result to bodily positions to show their emotions. Although gestuality remains important in the later manuscript, the fifteenth-century illumination is much more detailed and evidently more visual. While in the older manuscript the intention was to sketch a representation to compliment the text, in the Berry Terence the intention was to create a fully-fledged and independent comic picture that is as eloquent as the text.

Continuing on the theme of trickery, an illumination from *Heautontimorumenos* illustrates a moment in the text when a trickster is being tricked on stage, in one of the oldest plot developments of comedies where the character gets a taste of their own medicine (Fig. 2.14). In the text, Syrus and Chremes, the main protagonists, are discussing. Chremes asks Syrus to play the trickster on his behalf. What he does not know—but the audience knows already—is that Syrus is already plotting against him. Instead of acting as a trickster for Chremes, Syrus will direct his trickery against him, while Chremes will foolishly believe him to be on his side. Thus, Syrus becomes the master trickster and Chremes is put in the position of the trickster - tricked. Syrus comments with astounding self-awareness, in the end of the scene:

Never in my life have I heard my master speak more to the point! Nor could I have believed I’d be allowed to make trouble without paying for it!45

As discussed earlier, trickster humour is based largely on control over the flow of information, and this is exactly the case here. Chremes has just put himself in a position that he will not be able to get out of. Syrus proceeds with his plan, and later in the story, in a moment of self-admiration he comments:

That’s my prize plan, the one I’m really proud of! It reveals in me such a power and force of ingenuity that I can deceive the pair of them simply by telling the truth!46

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This attitude is perfectly consistent with the type of humour that would be appreciated in the Valois courts: high wit, efficient rhetoric and elegant manipulation. People falling victims of their own self-justice can also function as moralising figures, confirming the reason why *Heautontimorumenos* would appeal to a French erudite audience with a preference for moral *exempla*.

In the older illumination, Syrus accepts the task by putting a hand on his chest in a gesture of acceptance, as Chremes stands pointing to the ground, perhaps to emphasise his side of the trickery (Fig. 2.15). In the Berry Terence, too, Syrus places a hand on his chest, but here the lack of mask allows him a facial expression (Fig. 2.14). The trickster is looking sneakily towards the reader, sharing with him the metaplot that Chremes is unaware of. His side glance reveals that there is more to this discussion than meets the eye.

This is an excellent example of how physicality and gestuality were translated from one visualisation to the other, to maximise comic effect. The illuminator could not represent the dialogue, but he obviously intended to represent the deception. Syrus is communicating with the viewer, he shares a sneaky glance with the audience, in a similar manner that an actor would act towards the knowing audience if the play were performed on a stage. The joke is shared with the viewer, it jumps outside the confines of the painted page. The posture and gestures are highly theatrical and the illuminated page looks like a still image from a performance. The illumination thus becomes an important part of the reading experience, which in its turn becomes visual and theatrical. Through Syrus’ gaze, the audience is becoming a participant in the trickery, experiencing fully the comedic value of the text.

2.1.1.4 Slapstick humour

Alongside the trickster tricked, a recurring theme and plot resolution device is the trickster’s revelation and punishment. This inspires a sense of justice to the audience and allows for slapstick humour, which takes place either on stage or backstage. In the latter case, other characters will narrate to the audience the delivery of heavy physical punishment. One such example is an illumination from *Andria*, where the servant Dromo is taken away by the guards into custody, on his master’s order. It is known that he will be
physically punished and he is looking over his shoulder, perhaps terrified, as he is pushed into the house (Fig. 2.16). The beating takes place off stage. Some rough handling is represented in the illumination, but the emphasis is on the awareness of his punishment, and the audience’s anticipation of it, instead of the actual beating.

The last illumination of the manuscript is a slapstick example from *Phormio* (Fig. 2.17). In the text, Phormio the Parasite, a character of dubious morals, has caused a scene outside the protagonist’s home. Nausistrata, the protagonist’s wife, arrives on stage, curious to learn the reason for all the commotion. Phormio reveals to her the truth about her husband’s secret second family, her son’s relationship with a music girl his family does not approve of and his dealings with the girl’s procurer.

In the illumination Nausistrata is standing at the door with a frown, pointing her finger to the three men, who try to contain Phormio to stop him from speaking. Phormio is a comedy figure throughout the play: he is a Parasite who dresses and acts extravagantly, much like his equivalent Thraso in *Eunuch*, and he is represented here wearing colourful clothes. Usually, he is the figure that attracts most attention in the illuminations. This is not the case here. The two brothers pinning him down are both citizens, well-mannered and decent in every respect—despite one of them having a secret family. In all other illuminations they are represented as respectable senior men, even engaging in serious discourse (Fig. 2.18 and 2.19). Now, one of them is sour-faced and annoyed and his brother is physically struggling, not used to this type of exertion. There is a stark contrast between their other representations and their current foolishness and vulgarity.

The illumination retains the immediacy that has been present throughout the manuscript and borrows directly from its Carolingian precedent, especially regarding group disposition and gestuality (Fig. 2.20 and 2.21). In the older manuscript the scene develops in two parts, the first one representing the fight between the three men (Fig. 2.20) and the second the arrival of Nausistrata (Fig. 2.21). In her older representation, Nausistrata touches her forehead, possibly in distress. In the Berry Terence she is holding her hand out and she has adopted a more dominant and assertive pose. The three men appear to let their victim go as soon as she appears in the Carolingian manuscript. They seem to be carrying him away, while he throws his head back as if he is trying to be heard, in the Berry Terence.
A similar scene of a quarrel on the street can be seen in an illumination from *Adelphoe* (Fig. 2.22). This image deserves a closer look for additional reasons, as it is also an example on how different social classes are represented in the manuscript. In the story, Aeschinus and his servant, Parmeno, are dragging away the unnamed Music Girl that they abducted on behalf of Aeschinus’ brother, who is in love with her. Sannio, her procurer, claims the girl because he had legally bought her as his slave, and as her procurer he is protected by law. On Aeschinus’ order, Parmeno administers a beating to Sannio on stage. After the procurer is beaten to submission, Aeschinus declares that the girl is not a slave but a free person, therefore he will protect her.

In the Carolingian illustration, Parmeno is dragging Sannio by his clothes and his hand is against Sannio’s face, slapping him (Fig. 2.23). Sannio drags the girl from her wrist but she remains calm, upright and docile, as Aeschinus places a hand on her shoulder, indicating perhaps an attempt to assert his possession of her.

In the Berry Terence, the dynamic between the characters is different. Recognisable by his bright-coloured dress and the very distinctive headpiece, Sannio is dragging the girl that he considers his property towards a house, while Aeschinus is pulling her the other way. Aeschinus is dressed as a nobleman and he is assisted in his work by his servant, Parmeno. Notably, instead of representing the procurer being publicly beaten, in this case the illuminators painted the entire skirmish in the middle of the street. The girl is being pulled in different directions and Aeschinus is no longer the calm and collected figure of Carolingian iconography, since he is represented as an active participant in the fight. It is still slapstick humour, but the focus is different, perhaps for thematic variety: there are several other instances in the manuscript where servants and procurers are being physically punished, and perhaps the illuminator found that the theme was becoming repetitive. Alternatively, it may have been an opportunity to represent a street skirmish with protagonists from different social classes, merging slapstick and social humour.

2.1.1.5 Dressing for the part

The characters in the Berry Terence are not dressed as Athenians of classical antiquity, but in a fifteenth-century French fashion. The illuminators visually translated the
Roman protagonists into culturally recognisable, fifteenth-century stereotypical characters from medieval life and folk or theatrical tradition. Thus, they transported the stories from their original classical setting to contemporary medieval society. The plays supported this initiative, as the protagonists of Terence’s comedies are stock characters, often even having the same names. In the Berry Terence each character maintains the same outfit throughout the play and each character is identified socially by their clothing.

An example is the opening illumination of *Heautontimorumenos* (Fig. 2.24). In the text, Chremes watches Menedemus, an old man and a citizen like himself, as Menedemus is ploughing the fields and obsessively works to exhaustion. Such practices are beneath him, as Chremes is quick to point out:

> Your behaviour doesn’t seem to me to be right for a man of your age and circumstances [...] if you’d only apply the effort you spend on doing everything yourself to making your people get on with the job, you’d do better.47

Menedemus and Chremes are both Athenian citizens and they are dressed in a similar manner, even though one of them is represented in the act of ploughing a field (Fig. 2.24). Menedemus is dressed as a high-class citizen and the colours of his clothes mirror those of Chremes, who stands next to him. Chremes is pointing at the tools with a furrowed brow and half-opened mouth.

Throughout the manuscript, similar identifications through garment and posture serve as social identifiers for the characters. Micio, the urban brother in *Adelphoe*, is dressed as a wise and cultured man, with sleeves that are tight to the wrists (Fig. 2.25). His money purse and his headpiece are attributes he shares with the lawyers in *Phormio*, suggesting his learned status (Fig. 2.18). Instead, Demea, the rural brother, is wearing a shorter garment and a cape, that is closer to the clothes worn by servants.48 In addition to being identified by their dress, the characters are contextualised by their surroundings: background architecture was used to translate the comedies from classical antiquity to medieval reality. The urban landscapes of the illuminations are recognisably fifteenth-century settings. There is no effort to recreate the antiquity that the text invokes.

48 For a detailed discussion on visual translation through dress see in Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 35.
Both the contextualising of the characters through their dress and the setting of classical texts in contemporary backgrounds was already a trend in the visual arts and in manuscript painting, and it is a characteristic of the Early Renaissance.\(^{49}\) It can be seen, among other instances, in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, created for Charles V, and in moralising manuscripts and in *Mirrors of Princes*, some of which are discussed later in this thesis.\(^{50}\) Premiefait applied the same principles in his Boccaccio translations as well. In the two editions of *Des Claires et Nobles Femmes* for Philippe the Bold and the Duke of Berry, created in 1403 and 1404 respectively, pagan Gods are portrayed in contemporary dress and mythological heroes are represented as fifteenth-century knights in battle (Fig. 2.26 and 2.27).

A picture constructed that way contributes to the presentation of the comedies as an exemplary text and conforms to Premierfait’s intention for visual rhetoric.\(^{51}\) Gerson’s teachings on the function of *exempla* and the purpose of education also resonate here. The Terence illuminations were making a classical text accessible and relatable to the contemporary viewer, especially since the text remained Latin, and not translated in the French vernacular.

It is proposed here that in some cases, the character’s social identification also supported the comedic function of the image. The image of Menedemus as a respectable elderly citizen who works the fields like a common servant, dressed in fine clothes as he is doing so, arguably triggers the same comedic sensibilities as the representation of Aeschinus struggling over the music girl (Fig. 2.24 and 2.22). The effect is further highlighted if the illumination is compared to its Carolingian counterpart (Fig. 2.28). The quick sketches of the Carolingian version completely omit any background and landscape, though the characters are still holding their instruments of work. Lacking facial expression, the masked figures can only rely on gestures to communicate with the audience. While Chremes is identified as *senes*, Menedemus does not receive any further characterisation. In comparison, the Berry Terence illumination is significantly more focused on representing

\(^{49}\) Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 22.

\(^{50}\) Hedeman, ‘Presenting the Past: Visual Translation in Thirteenth- to Fifteenth-Century France’, 78-82.

details of work and toil, especially as it is performed by an unnecessarily well-dressed and socially superior senior man. The artist even emphasised Menedemus’ hard work by representing the changing colour of the earth, from green grass to brown soil under the old man’s tools.

Since dress is treated as an identity and status signifier, it is worth discussing the only example where cross-dressing takes place. In the Eunuch, the protagonist is a man who dresses as a eunuch slave to get close to the girl he desires. He takes advantage of his alleged sexually neutered status to assault the girl. His actions later result in an absurd dialogue between characters, who receive the paradoxical news that the eunuch raped a maiden. This dichotomy between unrestrained virility that results in rape on the one hand and castrated masculinity on the other arguably assimilates the swapping of clothes to the swapping of genders. In the play, the eunuch’s castrated status compromises his masculine sexuality, which is the reason why he was allowed near the maiden. The cross-dressing, in this case, resembles a gender inversion.

When we first see the eunuch slave, he is an ugly, hunched old man dressed in yellow and his face is described in less detail (Fig. 2.29). Since in the Berry Terence all characters are identifiable by their dress, when Chaerea takes the eunuch’s place, he is wearing the yellow outfit (Fig. 2.30). However, in this case there is greater definition in the facial features and body posture of the two characters, to make it explicitly clear that they are not the same person. Chaerea is standing tall and confident and he is visibly younger. In contrast, when the real eunuch is asked to identify himself, even though he is not dressed in his own clothes, his hunched posture and his old face identify him beyond doubt (Fig. 2.31).

Another inversion occurs later in the play. Dorias the servant transcends the boundaries of both her gender and her social standing, by demonstrating visibly dominant behaviour. In f. 36r she is shown grabbing Chremes by the wrist (Fig. 2.32). Reappearing on the right side of the illumination, Dorias then leads the man, smiling, into her mistress’s house. The gesture of grabbing one’s wrist was traditionally connected to domination of one person over another, usually of a male to a female character. The same gesture was seen

in the scene from *Adelphoi* discussed earlier, where the music girl is dragged around by people grabbing her waist and wrist (Fig. 2.22). Interestingly, in the Carolingian manuscript Doria reaches out to Chremes, but is not dragging him in the same, physical way (Fig. 2.33).

2.1.1.6 A 'kitchen squad of thieves'\(^{53}\)

An interesting representation of a battle scene occurs in the Eunuch (Fig. 2.34). A group of men is gathered outside the two-storeyed house of Thais. They are carrying clubs and makeshift weapons and one of them wields a dish sponge like a weapon. This visual absurdity is faithful to the text, as Sannio brought a sponge to wipe the ensuing blood:

THRA. What’s that, you coward? Do you propose to fight a battle with that sponge you are carrying?
SAN. Sir? I know my general’s valour and the army’s spirit. There’s bound to be a bloodshed, said I; I’ll need something to staunch their wounds.\(^{54}\)

Despite the alleged prowess of the soldiers, they are not in formation, nor do they display any image of discipline, resembling more like an angry mob than a mercenary army. Thraso, who is supposed to be arranging the men to storm the house and steal the girl he likes, is seen on the left, waving orders to them. Yet, most of the mercenaries are not even looking in his direction. Thais and Chremes are watching from the balcony. The illumination faithfully describes the text and at the same time parodies many known images of siege and battle.

Although Thraso’s army is a farcical assembly of useless men—or, as the text describes them, ‘a kitchen squad of thieves’—Chremes, the main character, is terrified and needs to be prompted to courage by Thais the courtesan.\(^{55}\) Displaying keen awareness of politics, manipulation and problem-solving skills, she lays out to him what he has to do and how best to deal with the situation. In the illumination, Thais is pointing at the mob while looking at Chremes, prompting him to action. Chremes, instead, is holding up his hand, perhaps in expression of the hesitation he demonstrates in the text.

The illumination’s Carolingian counterpart is also a densely populated parade of

\(^{53}\) Terence, *The Comedies*, 201.
\(^{54}\) Terence, *The Comedies*, 201.
\(^{55}\) Terence, *The Comedies*, 201.
people, waving instruments and makeshift weapons (Fig. 2.35). Their masked faces and their arrangement in space resembles the Charivari from the Roman de Fauvel, and not unreasonably so, since they are indeed a noisy mob wielding whatever tools they could find as weapons. The effect is slightly different in the Berry Terence: the crowd does not look like a charivari, but it does look like a parody of what a proper scene or warfare would be, referring to similar scenes of castle sieges as they appear in romances like Roman de la Rose and in historic works. It is argued here that a battle scene visually parodied in that manner constitutes a form of visual pun, easily recognisable by its designated audience.

2.1.1.7 ‘Amplius deliberandum’: let us deliberate further

A potential inside joke, perhaps connected to the humanist environment within which the Berry Terence was created, can be found in Phormio (Fig. 2.18). In the text Demea, the protagonist, asks his assistants and friends for consultation about the best way to deal with the issues he is facing. However, instead of giving him an answer they keep debating, to no apparent end, making many lengthy arguments without reaching a conclusion, in a very eloquent manner:

DEM.: You see the situation. What shall I do? You tell me, Hegio.
HEG. Me? I think Cratinus would be better, if you don’t mind.
DEM. Then you, Cratinus.
CRAT. Me?
DEM: Yes, you.
CRAT: I should like you to act in your best interest. In my view your son’s actions during your absence should rightly and properly be rendered null and void: and you will succeed in this. That is my opinion.
DEM. Now, Hegio.
HEG. I am sure Cratinus has delivered a carefully considered opinion. But the truth is, there are as many opinions as there are men to give them, no two think alike.56 I cannot agree that a legally produced judgement can be quashed; and it would be discreditable to attempt it.
DEM. Now you, Crito.

CRIT. I must have further time to consider this further. It is a difficult case.\textsuperscript{57}
HEG. Have you further need of us?
DEM. No, no, you have done very well. I am more undecided than ever.\textsuperscript{58}

The illumination is translating the text. The entire group is engaged in deep conversation. The assistants are dressed as intellectuals and men of status and their posture shows that they are discussing and asking one another. It is an image of philosophers and clerks in debate, not comparable to the parataxis of characters that formulate the Carolingian iconography of the scene (Fig. 2.36).

A similar image with scholars in conversation appears in the Collins \textit{Cité de Dieu}, already mentioned earlier and discussed later in further detail (Fig. 2.37). Here the two groups converse in a similar manner and some of the gestures are repeated: the raised finger, probably to illustrate a point and attract attention, the raised palm of the man that is, in both cases, dressed in blue, are identical in the two illuminations. A keen observer like the Duke of Berry would have spotted the visual reference.

It is proposed here that the Berry Terence image visualises the text, but with a teasing attitude that is consistent to the humour of the scene, parodying serious, juridical deliberations. At the same time, it could also be a mirror, potentially with a teasing attitude, of the debates that were taking place within the humanist circles that Premierfait, Martin Gouge and the Duke of Berry were also part of. The side glance that the servant was giving to the audience in an earlier illumination could also be a metaphorical side glance, from Premierfait to his own audience.

\textbf{2.1.2 Visual humour and visual rhetoric}

It emerges from the visual analysis that the Berry Terence visual cycle was the product of careful contemplation. Premierfait probably had general oversight of the entire manuscript production, most likely assisted by a \textit{libraire}, and his contribution extended to the illuminations. It is almost certain that, either directly or probably through a \textit{libraire}, he

\textsuperscript{57} The latin phrase ‘Amplius deliberandum’ (verse 457) is borrowed by judicial jargon and alluding to the procrastinations that usually occurred in the judicial system. See Riley’s relevant comment in Terence, \textit{The Comedies of Terence Literally Translated into English Prose, with Notes}, 465-66.

\textsuperscript{58} Terence, \textit{The Comedies}, 248.
provided the artists with written, detailed instructions about each illumination.\textsuperscript{59} Few notes survive dispersed in the Berry Terence, and are best visible in ultraviolet light: the scribbled ‘chamberie[re]’ in French above Doria’s head in f. 39r is one such example where the illuminator is instructed to represent the old lady as a servant (Fig. 2.6).\textsuperscript{60} Elsewhere in the manuscript, characters are described as ‘adulescens’, ‘Senex’ and ‘Servus’ in the rubrics, while their names are repeated inside the illuminations.\textsuperscript{61}

The practice was common among early humanists: Jean Lebègue, also a great humanist and state official, worked in a similar manner. Around 1417 Lebègue devised an iconographic programme for the illustration of Sallust’s translated works. His written instructions to the illuminators survive and they include details about both the context and the placement of the illuminations in the text. For Lebègue, the illuminations should enhance and not simply embellish the text, guiding the reader to the passages of special importance. Sallust, like Terence, was used as a school text at the time, and its didactic value was reiterated in the Valois milieu by the chancellor to the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, in his letters regarding the education of the Dauphin.\textsuperscript{62} As seen earlier in this thesis, Nicole Oresme followed a similar practice for his translations.\textsuperscript{63}

Premierfait undoubtedly admired the language of Terence and appreciated the moralising qualities of the plays. Did he also appreciate the humour of the comedies? In the prologue of the Cent Nouvelles, discussed earlier, he used Terence’s works to support his argument in defence of Boccaccio’s humour.\textsuperscript{64} Yet, he did not feel the need to defend Terence’s humour. It is possible that the linguistic qualities of the text and the direct connections with classical antiquity sanctioned its humour in Premierfait’s eyes.

\textsuperscript{59} Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{61} Instructions of this type are visible in f. 76r-82v. See also Meiss, \textit{The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries}, 347-350.
\textsuperscript{63} See previous chapter, 51.
\textsuperscript{64} See previous chapter, 48 and Cucchi, ‘The First French Decameron’, 124-126.
Terence’s humour does not use vulgar language, nor is it particularly indecent; there is much more obscenity in most fabliaux. Compared to the French comic literary tradition, the humour in the comedies is considerably more sophisticated. In addition, the events in the text are not tied to specific historic events and there is no explicit reference at the time when they are taking place. The humour in the comedies is based on the human condition and experience, not the society and historical time of the dramatic action. This was probably one of the reasons that Terence’s works did not lose their comedic value throughout the Middle Ages. The characters are common citizens, slaves and servants. Higher ranks of the social hierarchy are not present, nor is there any mention of pagan Gods. The protagonists are tormented by love, lust, jealousy, illicit affairs, adultery, marginally legal activities—all these are situations that any person could find themselves in. The comedies had not been rendered irrelevant by time, they were material that audiences in medieval France could generally still recognise as comic.

Aristotle had described comedy as ‘a representation of inferior people’ and acknowledged that, if humour is done in a measured and tasteful way, it is a mark of a ready wit.\(^\text{65}\) He also pointed out that an educated person will joke differently than a vulgar one, and emphasised the importance of a homogenous audience, since not everyone laughs with the same jokes. Aristotle thus connected humour to someone’s intelligence, their education, their manners and their character, and he differentiated between a sense of humour, which is collected and witty, and ridiculousness. He further suggested that any recreation should maintain a connection with didacticism, since it is pointed out that humour must contribute something to social intercourse, so as to focus the feelings of superiority that humour implies.\(^\text{66}\)

The creation of Terence’s manuscripts was fulfilling all these requirements. For Premierfait, it is argued, the comedies were a humorous text that reflected the education, culture and wit of its audience. It was a celebration of his humanism, and the humanism of his intended audience, over the vulgarity of others. The connection with the classical past was another point of validation for the fifteenth-century humanist. What is extraordinary in

\(^{65}\) Aristotle, Poetics, 1449a, 34-35 and Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Chapter 8 respectively.

\(^{66}\) See earlier discussion and Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Chapter 8.
the Berry Terence is the effort, made at first by Premierfait and then carried out by the artists, to translate in visual terms the most humorous attributes of the text.

In the Berry Terence, the academic practice of reading the comedies aloud by a learned reader who could lead the ensuing discussion, answer questions and encourage commentaries on the text, was taken one step further. Premierfait’s commentary, added in the end, substitutes his presence and serves the same function. His use of illuminations as means of translating the text to his audience, not only as embellishments for a better aesthetic result, but also as independent rhetoric devices, is distinctly humanist.

The connection between the verbal and visual arts was central to academic debates at the time, owing mostly to the writings of Aristotle and Horace who suggested analogies between poetry and painting. The humanist appropriation of *Ut Pictura Poesis* is manifest in the illuminations of Terence, confirming that these manuscripts were regarded as contemporary, intellectual works that reconsidered a classical past. Through the illuminations of the comedies, the rhetoric value of the text became visual, a rhetoric of the image. Thus, the visual cycle could be used in lieu of a translation for an audience who could not read Latin. By connecting rhetoric and visuality, Premierfait’s manuscripts embodied the main principles of the Renaissance.

It is argued here that as this philosophy was translated in the visual arts, it marked a major change in the way humour and comedy were represented visually. This intellectual approach was built on the teaching of Aristotle and Aquinas, who promoted humour when it was done with taste and decorum. Previous evidence of visual humour, either in marginalia or in manuscripts like the *Roman de Fauvel* and other examples, represented crude, unrefined episodes that often identified with the grotesque and the absurd. These episodes rarely took over the pictorial space, and in the case of the *Roman de Fauvel* their prominent positioning on the page was part of the inversion; besides, the *Roman de Fauvel* is not a work of prose or classical literature, and it is argued that its nature as a collection of songs allowed for greater expressive and compositional liberties.

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67 See previous chapter and Bozzolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 127.
Instead, Premierfait’s project presented humorous iconography that was well executed, aesthetically pleasing, thoroughly researched and exercised within reason, without unnecessary obscenity. Humorous iconography was no longer marginal, vulgar or inappropriate. It was a celebration of wit and an independent rhetoric device. As such, it was treated with attention and care and it was placed in a more prominent position on the page.

2.1.3 The illuminators

One of the originalities of the Berry Terence is the effort, throughout the manuscript, to maintain visual homogeneity even though it is not the work of one single illuminator. Premierfait’s involvement was a potential contributing factor to this direction, although his input in the visual cycle was probably limited to the detailed instructions he furnished to the illuminators. It is uncertain if it was him or a libraire who recruited the illuminating teams for the Berry Terence, but it is clear that two illuminating teams were involved. Both masters have been studied by scholars and both had worked for the Duke of Berry before.

The Flavius Josephus Master is named conventionally after his work on two illuminations in the manuscript of the Antiquités Judaïques, created around 1410-20 (BnF Fr. 247, Fig. 2.38 and 2.39). His reconstructed artistic identity and corpus of works reveal an artist that worked mostly on secular material, such as the works of Froissart, Jean de Meun and Virgil. The principal illuminator, the Orosius Master, was more extensively

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69 This goes against contemporary practice: although collaborations between artists were frequent, usually each illuminator was responsible for specific miniatures and there was no requirement for uniformity. See Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 10. In other manuscripts created for the Duke of Berry, the Grandes Heures being a prominent example, the illuminators maintain their style and do not strive for a visually consistent outcome. The author points to a Psalter created for him under the direction of Beauneveu and to the Terence des Ducs, but he does not discuss the Berry Terence illuminators.


71 Hedeman, ‘Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and the Visualization of Antiquity’, 30. The manuscript is not found in the Duke of Berry’s inventories because it was probably incomplete when the inventories were compiled, and it passed to a new owner with the Duke’s death; however, it was originally destined for him, since his coat of arms is visible in the tents of the Jewish people. See also Durrieu, ‘Notes sur quelques manuscrits français ou d’origine française conservés dans des bibliothèques d’Allemagne’, 115–43.

72 His hand can be identified in the frontispieces for the Roman de la Rose, the Testament of Jean de Meung and his Trésor, in Arsenal Ms-3339 réserve, f. 1r, 156r and 187r. He contributed to Froissart’s Grandes
represented in the collection of Jean de Berry, mostly through his work on secular manuscripts. The Duke possessed a copy of Livy’s *Histoire Romaine* (BG Fr. 77), a Boethius’ *De Consolatione* (BnF Lat. 9321) and a manuscript of *Histoire Ancienne* (BnF Fr. 301) illuminated by him. Apart from the volumes in the Duke of Berry’s collection, the artist was known to collaborate frequently with the *libraire* Regnault du Montet, who procured manuscripts for the Valois.

Perhaps the Orosius Master’s previous work can provide suggestions regarding the reasons that he was selected as the chief illuminator of the Berry Terence. Around 1405-6, he worked on a manuscript of a *Cité de Dieu*, now known as the Collins *Cité de Dieu* (PMA 1945-65-1). The Berry Terence was presented in January 1408, which means it was created around 1407. The Collins *Cité de Dieu* predates the Berry Terence slightly and it belonged to Duke of Berry despite being incomplete. It is lavishly illuminated, more so than the other two copies of *Cité de Dieu* already in the Duke of Berry’s possession at the time. This could suggest that the patron particularly favoured the work of Orosius Master’s workshop.

Two observations relevant to the Berry Terence can be made, when looking at the Collins *Cité de Dieu*. Firstly, a theatre scene similar to the presentation page of the Berry Terence also occurs in the Collins *Cité de Dieu* (Fig. 2.40). In this case, the Orosius Master represented a hexagonal scene with a pulpit but placed the audience distinctly outside the confines created by the stage. He followed the same practice of identifying the characters by name. Little words describe what is represented: *le teatre, les romans, les ydoles*.

The Berry Terence illuminators were probably familiar with the older work before painting the Terence presentation page. They could have had access to it either as it was made or after it was acquired by the Duke of Berry, or they could have had access to a

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*Chroniques* today in the Hague and he painted a copy of Virgil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics* today in Lyons (BM Ms 27), which earned him the appellation ‘Master of the Roman Texts’. For a reconstruction of his corpus of work see Inês Villela-Petit, ‘Le Maître de Boèce et le Maître de Giac, enlumineurs de la guerre’, *Art de l’enluminure*, no. 31 (2010): 24–45.


Hedeman, *Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio’s De Casibus*, 241.

Tennison, ‘Valois Court Politics in the Time of Jean of Berry and the Collins Cité de Dieu’, 11.

preliminary model. Alternatively, the two illuminating teams could have worked in collaboration in other projects, as was common practice in Parisian workshops at the time. Either way, the scene’s repetition is an indication that the *Cité de Dieu*’s representation of ancient theatre was a successful solution and that the two illuminators were familiar with each other’s work. The same iconography is repeated almost identically in the Terence des Ducs, in further affirmation of its original popularity. Interestingly, the Berry Terence theatre scene is more crowded, potentially because the artists were furnished with more detailed instructions by Premierfait.

Secondly, in the Collins *Cité de Dieu* the Orosius Master demonstrates considerable political insight. Augustine’s *Cité de Dieu* was immensely popular in France at the time, and its popularity was directly related to court politics of the period. Raoul de Presles’ liberal translation of the text changed its original character, that advocated community over individuality as a model for society. The French translation is populated with comments making references to the works of Isidore of Seville and other authors; as a result, the translated *Cité de Dieu* puts special emphasis on the preservation of the kingdom, on maintaining the King’s dignity and on keeping a just and honourable court; all these were pressing issues at the time, when the King’s mental health was failing and the kingdom was on the verge of civil war, while the country was at war and the English King claimed the French Crown.

What is interesting in the Collins *Cité de Dieu* is that the illuminations are closer to the translator’s commentary than the Augustinian text. The placement of the miniatures breaks the flow of the text, prompting the reader to focus on specific parts of it (Fig. 2.41). The Orosius Master used his art to express some interesting political arguments. An example is Chapter 18, where Marcus Regulus places the good of the State before his own life. Raoul de Presles’ translation puts the entire episode in its historical context. The

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78 Desmond and Sheingorn, *Myth, Montage & Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture*, 14.
79 See earlier discussion in this chapter.
80 Hedeman, Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio’s *De Casibus*, 6.
81 Tennison, ‘Valois Court Politics in the Time of Jean of Berry and the Collins Cité de Dieu’, 12.
84 For this and for a detailed discussion on the political propaganda expressed in the Collins *Cité de Dieu* see Tennison, ‘Valois Court Politics in the Time of Jean of Berry and the Collins Cité de Dieu’, 14-19 and 34-35.
illuminations, however, represent the characters in contemporary, fifteenth-century dress; in the scene of his torture, Regulus is represented almost as a martyr (Fig. 2.42).\footnote{Tennison, ‘Valois Court Politics in the Time of Jean of Berry and the Collins Cité de Dieu’, 18-20.}

The original placement of the text and the two illuminations of the chapter draw the viewer’s attention specifically to Regulus’ sacrifice for the benefit of the state. This choice had undeniable political connotations and it must have resonated very deeply with Jean de Berry, considering his involvement with court politics at the time: the King’s compromised mental health had created a power vacuum that was filled by the Dukes of Orléans and Burgundy. The turbulent political situation, that culminated with the assassination of the Duke of Orléans by John the Fearless in 1407, caused deep fractures between the Princes of the Blood.\footnote{Tennison, ‘Valois Court Politics in the Time of Jean of Berry and the Collins Cité de Dieu’, 1-8.} Ostensibly, an argument towards state stability and continuity would not go unnoticed.

The visual analysis identifies similar techniques in the Berry Terence. The bordered illuminations of the Berry Terence break the text, usually when the scene breaks. They function as text dividers, but also as an alternative means of narration that allows the reader to follow the plot without having to resort to the text. The modernisation of clothes and setting arguably facilitated the reading of the image for the contemporary viewer. The content of the illuminations also follows the same principle. Premierfait transformed Calliopius into a reader instead of a scribe, and the illuminators translated that change visually. Within the illuminations there are visual puns, like the mirror-like polished pan, that draw attention to specific comic moments of the play.

The real names of the two master illuminators remain unknown, unlike other artists at the Duke of Berry’s service. Perhaps the fact that both worked on secular and classical texts is the reason for their anonymity.\footnote{Jacquemart de Hesdin and the Limbourg brothers are known to posterity by their names, not by an identifier. Interestingly, these named artists worked exclusively on religious texts, Books of Hours, Psalters and Bibles. Meiss, \textit{The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke}, 303.} It is possible that the secular subject matter was considered less important, and therefore the artists were not as renowned as those who worked on religious texts, although they were by no means inferior artists in terms of technique.
If that hypothesis is correct, then the reason for the artists’ anonymity was probably also the reason for their selection for the Berry Terence. Their experience in works of secular literature may have assisted them in successfully translating Premierfais’s instructions into image. In addition to the works mentioned, the Orosius Master’s hand has been identified in a Thébaïde et Achilléide (BL Burney 257), a second Cité de Dieu (KB KW 72 A 22) and contributions to the Terence des Ducs and to the Breviary of Louis de Guyenne.88 With the exception of the last one, all these are secular texts. The works attributed to the Flavius Josephus Master are also secular.

Moreover, both artists show a Northern stylistic perspective, which is consistent with the Duke’s taste: most of his secular manuscripts were in Northern style.89 This could account for their familiarity with scenes from everyday life, and with comic visualisations: both themes were applied extensively in marginalia in the Netherlands since the thirteenth century.90 Often the inspiration for marginal decoration was exemplary stories.91 Terence’s exemplary and comic text, therefore, would be common ground between a familiar iconographic tradition and a textual novelty.

It is safe to assume that, since the Berry Terence was a gift, the Duke of Berry was not involved at all in its production. However, it is likely that the artists of the Berry Terence knew for whom they were creating this manuscript. It is also a safe assumption that most illuminators and manuscript procurers in Paris were familiar with Jean de Berry’s taste, as he commissioned and purchased manuscripts often. They were, probably, familiar with the scenes from everyday life that the Limbourgs were creating for their patron, discussed further later. It is reasonable that some professional competition stimulated the Berry Terence illuminators to improvise further on the material they had to work on, in an attempt to make an impression.

The subject matter worked in their favour in that respect, as it lends itself well to domestic and everyday life scenes of men ploughing the fields and servants at work.

89 Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 303.
Illuminations like these are among the most carefully executed in the manuscript (Fig. 2.24 and 2.7). The inclusion of details like a sponge on a spike indicates that artists either read the text or were aware of it by other means, perhaps through Premierfait’s instructions (Fig. 2.34). Religious iconography was also repurposed: the pensive Dorias in f. 39r and the seated woman in f. 99v in the first illumination of Hecyra are clearly inspired by the iconography of the Virgin enthroned (Fig. 2.6 and 2.43). Both characters are servants, not comparable to the sanctity that Marian iconography relates to. The similarity is an additional indication of the secularisation of images and iconographies that had started manifesting in the fifteenth century. In this case, this secularisation also included a humorous intention, aligned to the subject matter’s comedic nature.

Building on the framework furnished by Premierfait, the illuminators also resorted to an alphabet of gestures, postures and facial expressions created specifically to convey moods, characters and situations. To this, the tradition of marginalia and the precedent of manuscripts like the Roman de Fauvel were fundamental. Moreover, the older Terence iconography may have been consulted: sometimes character posture and gestuality in the Berry Terence refers to the older versions, following a physical vocabulary that echoes classical theatre poses of the Carolingian copy. Identical postures tend to appear more frequently in lone-standing figures. Sostrata’s facial expression in the Berry Terence communicates the same feelings as her gesture of touching her face, in the older manuscript (Fig. 2.44 and 2.45). She is pensive and in internal monologue in the Berry Terence but standing and calculating in the Carolingian iconography (Fig. 2.46 and 2.47).

The artists were likely familiar with plays and performances staged on the city streets, as they have been taking place in the streets of Paris since the fourteenth century. This experience arguably made the setting and the plots of Terence more familiar and accessible to them, if not as texts, then as comedic subject matter, and it may have eased the visual transition between the streets of Athens and the streets of Paris. Moreover, Christine de Pizan’s words on Parisian illuminators suggests that they were not unfamiliar with deviant behaviour: she was concerned that the ‘lechery in taverns and luxuries they

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92 Miles and Lyon, A Complex Delight, 134.
93 See earlier chapter, 35.
habitually indulge in, may bring many illnesses and misfortunes upon them’. Her description of their lifestyle suggests that they may have identified with some of the characters they represented.

It is proposed here that, for the illuminators, there was an additional and more personal dimension in the creation of the new Terence visual cycle. The artists were of modest origins and their social background was similar to that of the protagonists of the comedies. Their perspective on the lives of common people was drawn from their life experience, as was their approach on action and performance staged on the city streets. The Berry Terence arguably presented a rare opportunity for them to represent their world. This approach must have been fully endorsed by Premierfait, judging from the views he expresses in the prologue for his Boccaccio translations: it was seen that in his prologue for the *Decameron*, he praised the everyday activities of the common folk and their contribution to the social fabric, assigning new dignity and importance to the lower classes. Representations of people ploughing the fields and performing domestic chores are a direct visualisation of his argument. The Berry Terence was an eminent commission intended for an illustrious patron; therefore, the opportunity would have been both novel and exciting for the artists.

In summary, the visual cycle of the Berry Terence emerges as the outcome of a combination of factors. Premierfait, the leader of the project, relied on these images to support his reader in following the plot. He reconceptualised the older iconography, almost certainly furnishing detailed instructions to the illuminators specifying how to represent the stock characters that appear in the plays. His updated, modernised representation of the comedies fulfilled the additional purpose of presenting them as *exempla*. The didactic character also served to defend the humour of the text against any accusers, past or present. In their turn, the illuminators thrived in the opportunity to distinguish themselves in their profession. Not only were they working for the most prolific patron of their time,

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94 ‘[…]Mais pour parler un peu au fet de leurs meurs, je vouldroie que il pleust à Dieu, mail à eulx mesmes, car à Dieux pleuroit bien, que leur vie fust communément plus sobre et non si délicative comme il ne leur apertiege: car la lècherie des tavernes et des friandises dont ilz usent à Paris les peut conduire à mains maulx et inconvéniens […]. *Le corps de policie*, pt 3, chap. ix (Arsenal Ms 2681, f. 90r); published in Meiss, *The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke*, 3.

95 See earlier chapter, 47.
but they had the opportunity to rival the most prestigious court artists, by working on material that allowed them to draw from their everyday experience and represent fresh, original images of everyday life.

Premierfait and Gouge undoubtedly intended to create a humanist re-evaluation of a classical text, and probably expected the patron to appreciate it as such. It is known that the Duke of Berry accepted the gift enthusiastically: he kept the manuscript with him in Paris during his last days, when he was surrounded by only few of his belongings, the ones he loved the most.\footnote{Meiss, \textit{The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke}, 294.} Did he also appreciate the humour of the illuminations? To answer this question, it is important to understand the personality of Jean de Berry.

2.1.4 Jean de Berry: his humour and pleasure

Jean de France, Duke of Berry, was one of the most powerful men in France in the early fifteenth century. Brother and uncle to two Kings, he became a regent to the throne of France upon his brother’s death on 1380. The regency of the Dukes of Berry and Burgundy officially ended in 1388, but King Charles VI’s mental illness gave both Dukes the opportunity to wield significant power in France.\footnote{Meiss, \textit{The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke}, 30-31.}

Renowned for his fascination with beautiful objects and for his patronage, both during his time and in posterity, Jean de Berry lived in lavish expense. His vast collection consisted of acquisitions either by commission, by purchase, or by objects received as gifts. It has been mentioned that the manuscript of Terence was probably offered to him during the \textit{étrennes}, the ritual exchange of gifts taking place on the first days of January, around the same period when the Feast of Fools was taking over the town streets.\footnote{For more on the \textit{étrennes} see Buettner, ‘Past Presents’, 598-625.}

One of the most sumptuous representations of the courtly event of the \textit{étrennes} at the court of Jean de Berry can probably be seen in the January illumination of the \textit{Très Riches Heures} (Fig. 2.48). In the \textit{Très Riches Heures}, the Duke of Berry and his court are shown in full splendour, as the artists attempted to open the manuscript in the same way that the year started at court: full of colour, luxury and magnificence. Although an
exchanging of gifts does not take place in the miniature, the protocol established by the words ‘Aproche, approche’ written above the head of the Duke’s prelate and the abundance of objects scattered around in the image give a very good impression of how representation events may have looked like in reality.

The Valois Princes invested heavily in gift giving for the étrennes. As usual with gift exchanges in an official setting, the event was strongly diplomatic. Political and ceremonial, the étrennes did not lack in entertainment. Yet there is one specific incident worthy of particular attention: according to contemporary accounts, in the étrennes of 1411 the Limbourg brothers presented the Duke of Berry with a special gift. They offered him a wooden box, covered with white velvet and decorated with two silver clasps bearing the Duke’s arms. The box looked like it contained a manuscript. One can imagine the Duke’s enthusiasm at the prospect of a new manuscript from his favourite artists and the build-up of his excitement as he tried to open the box, but to no avail: the item was not meant to open. It was simply a decorated block of wood that looked like a manuscript container.

The Limbourg brothers had played a practical joke on their patron during the court ceremony of the étrennes.

Considering his social status, Jean de Berry was probably a man that few people would dare to joke with in public and even fewer would risk offending. Staging a prank during an important court event indicates a level of familiarity between the artists and the Duke of Berry that goes well beyond patron and artist interaction. Yet the Limbourgs’ disregard for social hierarchy did not cause offence: the object was accepted, it was catalogued in the Duke’s inventories and was probably received as an estrangeté: the term was used to describe a familiar object that was transformed into something new, through ingenuity and wit. The box was with the Duke of Berry in Paris in his final years, together with a collection of items and manuscripts of great sentimental value. This suggests that

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100 ‘Item, un livre contrefait d’une pièce de bois painte en semblance d’un livre, où il n’a nuls feuillet ne riens escript; couvert de veluiau blanc, à deux fermouers d’argent dorez, esmaillez aux armes de Monseigneur; lequel livre Pol de Limbourc et ses deux freres donnèrent à mondit Seigneur ausdictes estrainnes mil CCCC et X’. Guiffrey, Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry, t. 4, No 994. See also Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 48; Buettner, ‘Past Presents’, 606.
102 Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 294.
he treasured the gift and also appreciated the reasoning behind it, the humorous intention it carried with it. It also suggests that the Limbourg brothers were both familiar with their patron’s sense of humour, and confident enough about their position in court to openly joke with him.

Evidence of Jean de Berry’s sense of humour survive, as has been documented joking on several occasions. In a debate on love and women in the presence of the King, he allegedly commented that ‘the more [women], the merrier, and never tell the truth’. 103 Froissart mentions an occasion when King Charles VI teased him about the young age of his wife, Jeanne de Boulogne. Jean de Berry replied: ‘If the girl is young, I can save her for three or four years, even longer if she turns out to be a beautifully formed woman’. The King had a witty retort: ‘But, my dear uncle, she will not save you!’ 104 This dialogue not only attests to Jean de Berry’s sense of humour, but also gives an indication of the type of humour he preferred. In both these cases there are sexual overtones in the friendly banter, and there’s also amicable teasing about the age difference in his marriage and the sexuality of his young wife. Such jokes fit comfortably within the style of humour in Terence’s comedies.

On occasion, Jean de Berry’s humour disregarded social hierarchy. Evidence of this can be found in the incident in the étrennes described earlier, and in his entire relationship with the Limbourg brothers, which was in many ways uncommon. It was not unusual for court artists to receive regular payments, either periodically, following each production, or both. Usually this was combined by gifts and other favours, such as their own housing, tax exemptions, emergency payments or pensions to their widowed wives. 105 It was also not unusual for the most favoured court artist to be named valet de chambre, which allowed them a close relation with their patron and the privilege to escort him in his travels. 106 Therefore, the frequent gift exchanges and lavish payments from the Duke to his artists are expected and consistent with their position in his court. By the time they presented him

103 Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 32.
105 Claus Sluter, court artist to the Duke of Burgundy, was provided with his own house, and Jean Malouel was granted tax dispensations by the same patron. Elisabeth Antoine, Art from the Court of Burgundy: The Patronage of Philip the Bold and John the Fearless 1364-1419 (Dijon: Musée des beaux-arts, 2004), 91-92.
106 Antoine, Art from the Court of Burgundy, 92.
with the prank in the étrennes, the three brothers had already been in his service for some
time and the patron had demonstrated his appreciation with gifts and favours, some of
which were also offered during the étrennes.\textsuperscript{107}

Alongside these socially acceptable interactions, however, there is the prank gift
offered at the étrennes and at least one other incident that merits attention. Jean de Berry
had a girl abducted and kept into one of his castles, intending to offer her in marriage to
Paul de Limbourg. Considering that she was coming from a wealthy family, it is deduced that
the Duke considered her a good marriage match for his favourite painter and he was
determined to see the marriage through despite her mother’s objections. He kept her in his
castle until she was of eligible marriage age.\textsuperscript{108}

This is highly unusual behaviour for a man of his standing. What is most interesting
for the purposes of this analysis is that this incident resonates with many of the plots and
sub-plots in Terence’s comedies. The theme of a young man who wants to marry his lover
despite parental disapproval is recurring in the comedies, and so it the theme of the young
woman taken home by her lover disregarding social norms. It appears, therefore, that
Terence’s comedies would amuse the Duke of Berry. His own sense of humour seems
aligned with the text’s humour.

What about humour expressed visually? Again, evidence suggests that he would
appreciate it. At least one of the illuminations created for him by the Limbourgs includes a
practical joke. In one of the most remarkable illuminations of the Belles Heures, they
represented an episode from the life of St Jerome (Fig. 2.49). According to the Legenda
Aurea, the saint—then still a monk—had retired for the night, and his fellow monks
replaced his habit for a woman’s dress. The intention was to accuse him, the following day,
of admitting a woman in his chamber. However, when Jerome woke up in the morning, he
hastily reached for a garment and put the dress on, without realising it was not his own. He
then proceeded to attend Matins as usual, much to the surprise and derision of the monks

\textsuperscript{107} Further details on gifts given and received by the Duke of Berry can be found in his inventories. See also
Meiss and Off, ‘The Bookkeeping of Robinet d’Estampes and the Chronology of Jean de Berry’s Manuscripts’,
225.

\textsuperscript{108} Meiss, The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries., p 74-75. and Buettner, ‘Past Presents’, 616.
in attendance. Jerome was so annoyed by the incident that he allegedly left Rome forever.\textsuperscript{109}

The episode was rarely depicted and the Limbourgs created a new, unique visualisation, where they made every effort to highlight the humorous elements of the scene (Fig. 2.49).\textsuperscript{110} Jerome is represented with a halo that only emphasises his long beard and a tonsured head. Both the beard and the tonsure are symbols of wisdom and sanctity, but they also serve to accentuate his male gender, which comes in stark contrast with the bright blue dress that he is wearing in the left part of the illumination. The neckline is low, the waistline is tight and the trail is following his sleepy steps into the church. The monks behind him have noticed it: they are leaning towards one another, like they are whispering in secret about the comic spectacle they are witnessing. The colour of the dress stands out in the church that takes over the left part of the pictorial space, but also in the right part of the illumination, where a monk, with his head hidden under his hood to emphasise the secrecy, leaves the dress next to sleeping Jerome’s head. The posture of the monk and the raised habit that hides him give the impression that he is tiptoeing into Jerome’s room, to avoid waking him up. The blue of the dress is copied in the ceiling of the room, perhaps referring to the blue colour usually reserved for the Virgin’s cloak. At the same time, the Limbourg brothers dressed in similar blue gowns the music girls that tempted Jerome later in his story (Fig. 2.50). In the Limbourg view, not only was Jerome dressed as a girl, but it was a music girl’s dress that he put on. For further comic effect, Jerome seems oblivious to the fact that he is wearing a dress as he walks into the church holding his lantern. The artificial light indicates that he is walking in the dark, explaining why he did not see what he was wearing and suggesting that he still is not aware.

The monks intended to shame Jerome and accuse him of lasciviousness. The fact that he appeared for Matins cross-dressed was a mistake, because things took a different turn, as is the case in many successful comedies. Interestingly, the Limbourgs created an illumination that only narrates the comic plot. They emphasised the cross-dressing and the

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\textsuperscript{109} Timothy Husband, \textit{The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg Brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry} (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), 220.
\end{flushright}
set-up of events, but they omitted the initial plan of the monks. Nowhere in the illumination can it be seen that there was any other intention than to play a prank. The monks looking at Jerome look surprised, confused, but their expression does not reveal their scheme to stain his reputation. All the viewer can see, is a monk setting up another monk for a good laugh.

It is significant that the Limbourgs chose to depict this scene. It has been seen that a monk dressed as a woman inside a church, probably also bearded and tonsured, would have been a familiar image when liturgical plays like the *Play of Daniel* were being performed. The Limbourg brothers would have been familiar with such performances and the overall folk culture discussed earlier in this thesis. Their works are full of representations of their modest social heritage and scenes from the lives of common folk populate their illuminations. The calendar illuminations of the *Très Riches Heures* and the many representations of people in everyday occupations are such examples.

The three people warming their genitals by the fire in the February illumination have received scholarly attention in this context (Fig. 2.11). Their obscenity and lack of decorum emphasises their lower social status. It has been suggested that the Duke of Berry would amuse himself at the sight, as the illumination affirmed his social superiority. In addition, the identifiable homoerotic elements in the picture add another interpretative layer in the ways Jean de Berry appreciated his manuscripts.\(^{111}\)

Jean de Berry’s fascination with the lower classes is an intriguing topic, and it is identifiable in his patronage to a great extent. The abundance of genre scenes created for him, most famously by the Limbourgs but by others as well, stand as evidence of his taste. It is impossible to understand exactly what it was that piqued his interest, based only on remaining evidence. The Duke of Berry was not loved by his subjects and his relationship with them was a turbulent one. Administratively, he taxed his territories to poverty in order to finance his lavish lifestyle. His taxation was so extreme that in 1388 the public rioted against him, the King had to intervene, and he was stripped from his power over

\(^{111}\) Camille, ‘For Our Devotion and Pleasure’, 170.
In 1411, his residence in Paris, the Hôtel de Nesle, was looted and many of his belongings were burnt by an angry mob.

At the same time, both Froissart in his *Chronicles* and some verses of the political poem *Le songe veritable* both mention that he had favourites, possibly lovers, that came from the lower classes. He showered them with gifts and he presented them at court, scandalising his peers. It has been theorised that he treated his people as he did his possessions, and through their objectification he could enjoy their presence in the same way he enjoyed his other collectable items. Although such in-depth psychological profiling of historic personalities may be hard to substantiate, it is evident beyond doubt that some of the representations of lay people in manuscripts intended for him are sexualised. It is possible that these are references to his idylls and the backgrounds of his lovers.

Potentially, Jean de Berry was introduced through his favourites to a folk culture he would otherwise have less contact with. It was seen that he observed the Feast of Fools, which is further evidence that he enjoyed some of their practices. It is entirely possible that he found folk humour amusing, and he may have genuinely appreciated street theatre, which he probably could not enjoy openly as often as he would like of Paris, considering his position and unpopularity.

It is argued here that the Berry Terence visual cycle combined a series of elements that appealed to the patron’s taste. Their humour was compatible to his, the illuminations were translating this humour beautifully and there was a humanistic element that pandered to his taste for classical antiquity. These illuminations turned the comic text to a painted performance taking place on the city streets, opening a window to the social class that he enjoyed looking at and entertain himself with.

Finally, it is known that Jean de Berry liked to engage with the items in his collection, to the extent that he inserted special clauses when he donated them to churches: when he offered a reliquary to the Chartreuse in Paris, he reserved the right, in writing, to take it

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113 Meiss, *The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke*, 34.
114 Camille, ‘For Our Devotion and Pleasure’, 172-173.
back for his ‘devotion and pleasure’.\textsuperscript{116} This indicates a collector who took pleasure in interacting with his collection and a person who liked to be surrounded by items he liked. More than half of his collection of manuscripts were illuminated, which is an impressive percentage for the time, as is the quality of most illuminations.\textsuperscript{117} It is safe to assume that he engaged with the illuminations of the Berry Terence as a viewer who takes pleasure at looking at them.

Although he had received an education as appropriate for a man of his status, Jean de Berry was probably not fluent enough in Latin to read the text unassisted.\textsuperscript{118} However, this would probably not affect his appreciation of the manuscript. His collection included manuscripts in Greek that remain unidentifiable to this day, because no one understood Greek in order to accurately record them.\textsuperscript{119} This suggests that he would not be dissatisfied by the Latin in the text, especially since the rich visual cycle would most probably satisfy his ‘pleasure’.

2.2 The Terence des Ducs

Considerably bigger in size than the Berry Terence, the Terence des Ducs contains all six comedies and Premierfait’s commentary. However, the structure of the manuscript is different, and the relationship between text and image is reconsidered. The manuscript opens with a ‘brevis descriptio vite Terencii’—a brief biography of Terence, followed by a prologue for all six comedies.\textsuperscript{120} This time, Premierfait’s own commentary precedes the

\textsuperscript{116} Camille, ‘For Our Devotion and Pleasure’, 185.
\textsuperscript{117} Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 288.
\textsuperscript{118} The suggestion that Jean de Berry did not read Latin comfortably has been advanced by Famiglietti, ‘Laurent de Premierfait’, 35. Jean de Berry’s lack of fluency in Latin can be extrapolated, since most nobles at the time were familiar with several formulaic Latin phrases but were not perfectly comfortable with the language. This explains the popularity of translations: Laurent de Premierfait states, in his prologue for Cicero’s De Amicitia translation, that the patron became acquainted with the ancients’ speech through the translated ‘De Senectute’ and he hopes that the present translation will please him, and everyone else who wishes to benefit from the wisdom of the classics. See also Reginald Hyatte, The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167.
\textsuperscript{119} Meiss, The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke, 288. The inventory reads: ‘D’un grant livre ancien (4), escript en grec, fermant à plusieurs fermoers de cuivre, couvert de vielz cuir empraint de plusieurs escriptures; et dessus lesays à gros boulions de cuivre d’estrange façon et une manière d’astralade de cuivre sur l’un des ais; xv liv. t.’ Guiffrey, Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry, vol. 2, 238, No 524. The manuscript remains unidentifiable to this day.
\textsuperscript{120} Bozzolo, ‘Laurent de Premierfait et Terence’, 97.
classical text. The commentary explains the function of Terence’s *periochae* and *prologi* and proceeds with the *argumentum* of *Andria*. Then follows the rubric and the *periocha*; the first act is introduced by another brief commentary that repeats the role of Calliopius, who was petitioning for public favour. It is followed the prologue and the five acts. The comedies are presented in a different order, with *Phormio* preceding *Hecyra*. There are rubrics at the beginning and the end of each comedy and there are rubrics before each scene, which is introduced by an illumination. In *Eunuch* and *Hecyra* there is also a *didascalia*, which is not found in the other comedies.121

It is proposed here that Premierfait was involved in the creation of this manuscript as well. This would be consistent to his usual practice, as evidenced by his Boccaccio translations—especially since the *Terence des Ducs* was also intended for one of the Valois.122 Thus, he is probably responsible for the change in the structure of the text and the placement of his comments before each scene. The inconsistencies in the *didascalia* for *Eunuch* and *Hecyra*, but not for the remaining comedies, may indicate a continuous reworking of the structure of the manuscript: Premierfait could be still striving to find the best possible way to present the material, even as the manuscript was being written.

The format of the *Terence des Ducs* is more similar to Premierfait’s translation of the *Cent Nouvelles* than the Berry Terence. It is argued here that this signifies a different approach to the classical work. The break in the text’s narration and the interpolation of Premierfait’s commentary transforms the text from play to prose. Commentary and comedy are treated as one text, although the comments are written in smaller-sized letters, so that they are still visually differentiated from the actual plays. However, with this layout, the classical text is merged with the commentary and relies heavily on it. The commentary, in turn, is placed in a more prominent position in the manuscript, which suggests its new, elevated status. It could indicate greater confidence in Premierfait’s own commentary and perhaps a desire to take authorship of the work as a whole.

It is further argued here that Premierfait was much less involved in the creation of the visual cycle of the *Terence des Ducs* and that the illuminators were allowed greater

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liberty, although still working under his instruction. The precedent of the Berry Terence and Premierfait’s instructions would have been sufficient for the team of illuminators, most of who have worked, or were simultaneously working with Premierfait on other projects.123

Visually, the Terence des Ducs is considerably different than the Berry Terence. The borders of the presentation page and the first scenes of Andria and Eunuch are fully decorated (Fig. 2.51 and 2.52). This practice was later abandoned, in favour of much simpler and smaller acanthus leaves around the initial letter. The first letter of each scene is also decorated (Fig. 2.51). There are a few additions and corrections in the margins or between the lines, indicating once more that the manuscript was being revised as it was being written: notes can be found in f. 19v, 23v, 74v, 77v, 79v, 85v, 87v, 95v and 155r. The characters are identified by their names throughout the manuscript, but the names are usually just under the frame instead of being inside the picture, as was the case in the Berry Terence. The pictorial space in this case is dedicated exclusively to the illumination.

Each page featuring a change of scene is dominated by an illumination, framed either with a simple border or, in the case of the first scenes of Andria and Eunuch, with acanthus and floral motifs (Fig. 2.51 and 2.52). The character names are written under the illumination and the commentary develops around it. The text is written in one block, but letter sizes vary: as mentioned, smaller letters are used for the commentary, differentiating visually between classical and fifteenth-century text. While two illuminating hands were identified in the Berry Terence, a significantly bigger group of illuminators was involved in the production of the Terence des Ducs. The change in the illuminating hand is perceivable throughout the manuscript, but there is some effort for uniformity.

The illuminations have been attributed to some of the most popular workshops of Paris at the time.124 The illuminators are only known by their conventional names: the Bedford Master, the Luçon Master, the Cité des Dames Master, the Adelphoe Master and the Orosius Master.125 Most of them have worked with Premierfait before. The Luçon Master illuminated Premierfait’s translation of Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes for

123 The artists are discussed in detail later in the chapter.
125 Meiss, The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries, 41-54 and 336-9. It has been uncontested by scholars so far. See also Keefe, ‘Illustrating the Manuscripts of Terence’, 51-52.
the Duke of Berry, either at the same time or immediately before embarking on the *Terence des Ducs* project. The Cité des Dames Master worked on the second copy of *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes* and the *Cent Nouvelles*, both destined for the Duke of Burgundy. The Orosius Master worked on both the Berry Terence and the *Terence des Ducs*.

It is possible that the artists’ experience in classical texts and secular scenes was the reason why they were selected, either by Premierfait or by a *libraire*. Both the Luçon Master, who worked on *Andria, Eunuch* and *Phormio*, and the Orosius Master, who painted *Hecyra*, specialised in classical literature. The Cité des Dames Master, who illuminated *Heautontimorumenos*, specialised in allegorical, historical and literary works, and he demonstrated exceptional ability to represent scenes from everyday life. Moreover, the continued collaboration could suggest that the illuminators’ approach translated Premierfait’s vision regarding the visual aspect of the manuscripts, and they would be familiar enough with his method of work to work with minimal supervision.

For a collective work of large scale that involved some of the most popular workshops of Paris, the *Terence des Ducs* is remarkably uniform. The differences in each illuminator’s technique are visible, but they all follow the same principles throughout the work. While the illuminations of Berry Terence generally put significantly less emphasis on architecture, in the *Terence des Ducs* architecture is treated differently, with greater realism

126 BG Ms Fr. 190/1. The inventories indicate that the Duke of Berry came to possess other manuscripts illuminated by the Luçon Master, but he acquired them through gifts rather than through purchase. See Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 394. The Luçon Master produced mostly Books of Hours and religious texts until 1406, when he started working for aristocratic patrons, illuminating moralistic and secular texts, specialising on classical and roman authors. Attributed to him from that period is a *Histoires Romaines de Tite-Live* translated by Pierre Bersuire, in which he collaborated with the Cité des Dames Master (1410 ca, today in Paris, BnF Fr. 264). Additionally, he illuminated the works of Aristotle (BR Ms 9089-90; BnF Fr. 208) and Virgil’s *Eclogues et Géorgiques* (Norfolk, Holkham Hall Ms 307). For a complete list of the manuscripts attributed to the Luçon Master see Colum Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), vol. 2, 155.

127 Among other works, the artist worked on *Le Chevalier errant* (BnF Fr. 12559), *Le Livre de la Cité des dames* de Christine de Pizan (BnF Fr. 607), Pierre Salmon’s *Dialogues* (BnF Fr. 23279), a *Miroir Historial* (KB KW 72 A 24), on French translations of Flavius Josephus (BnF Fr. 6446), as well as the works of Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio. For a reconstruction of his catalogue see Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 116-117.

128 Meiss, *The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 377-382. For a reconstruction of Orosius Master’s works see earlier in this Chapter.

on proportions and more prominent details. Architecture and dress are still not classical, therefore not historically accurate, aiming instead to make the stories contemporary. Very often a building will assume the same role as a theatre stage, enclosing the entire action within a room, even if action is supposed to happen outdoors in the text. Even though the *Terence des Ducs* is treated as prose, the artists made considerable effort to maintain a sense of theatricality. The space limitation imposed by architecture also served this purpose.

The artists of the *Terence des Ducs* do not always follow the text’s narrative sequence: often in an illumination they represent scenes from other moments occurring later in the text, indicating that they were reading what they were representing. They tend to represent all people mentioned in the text, even if they might not be on stage for the scene. The illuminations showcase many elements of contemporary courtly and city life, and such scenes are abundant, aiming once again to facilitate the switch between *exemplum* and real life. It is demonstrated below, however, that the *Terence des Ducs* is much courtlier than the Berry Terence.

The *Terence des Ducs* opens with a representation of an ancient theatre, an illumination almost identical to the one found in the *Berry Terence* (Fig. 2.53). The main idea is the same: Calliopus is still narrating the play for the masked actors, as the roman citizens watch them perform. Terence presents his manuscript to the Senator on the bottom left. A small detail perhaps indicates the courtlier tone of the *Terence des Ducs*: contrary to the Berry Terence, the dancing of the actors around the stage do not expose their undergarments.

Two more significant differences need to be pointed out. First, the *Terence des Ducs* page also has lavishly decorated borders, which include the arms of France, the device ‘*de bien en mieux*’, angels, banners, birds and flowers. It is clear from the opening page, therefore, that this is a high commission, connected to royalty and of an unquestionably courtly character. Secondly, although the illumination faithfully represents the fifteenth-century perception of ancient theatre, the bottom register is different. Terence presents his work to the Senator on the bottom left, and scenes from Terence’s life populate the rest of the bottom register. The inclusion in the illumination of part of Terence’s biography indicates that part of the commentary, not the classical text, was visualised. It is, arguably,
an indication of Premierfait’s increased confidence in his own work and of his desire to take
authorship of the manuscript. This would be consistent with contemporary commentary
practice, where the commentator’s narration often displaced the original text.\textsuperscript{130}
Additionally, this approach would transform the entire work as a French production, as a
modernisation of the older text, which was now being reclaimed as a fruit of French
humanism. Again, this was consistent with contemporary practice.\textsuperscript{131}

Nowhere is this desire to appropriate of the older text more prominent than in the
cases when the artists exercised their license to the fullest, ignoring the instructions
furnished for them. An excellent example is an illumination from \textit{Andria} (Fig. 2.54). Crito,
the person who will resolve the drama, is introduced to the audience. In the text, Crito and
Mysis meet on the street as Crito enters the city on foot. In the illumination, Crito meets
with Mysis outside an inn with a fish painted on its sign. Despite the written instruction
below the image, Davus is nowhere to be seen, although he is present in the scene. Not only
did the artist ignore the written instruction to include Davus in the picture, but he provided
horses and lodgings for the new person, whom he understood and represented as a
respectable traveller. A person who is probably a manservant to Crito is guiding the horses,
that are not mentioned in the text since Crito arrives on foot, behind the tavern. The artist
emphasised the medieval urban context, the city landscape and the inn with the sign of fish.
He improvised in favour of a familiar, fifteenth century urban scene.

There are instances where the modernisation is taken one step further. In an
illumination from the \textit{Eunuch}, Thais reveals to Chremes information about his sister, whom
she is hiding in her house; she sends her servant to fetch the trinkets that will serve as proof
of her identity (Fig. 2.55). In the illumination the meeting takes place inside the house. An
incredulous Chremes is confronted by a persistent Thais as the servant runs in, holding a
chest and some documents.

The text mentions trinkets, but the illuminator represented the servant waving an
item that looks like a notarial document. This illumination can be read as a courtly
celebration of the administrative achievements and state organisation of the time. It was a

\textsuperscript{130} Copeland, \textit{Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages}, 65.
\textsuperscript{131} Copeland, \textit{Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages}, 103.
period when state bureaucracy in France was becoming notorious and it was constantly getting bigger. The emphasis on the importance of State institutions, administration and documentation, resonates deeply with the turbulent court politics of the period.

It is not unusual for state and institution functions and policies to be used in comedy, and one such popular example is when people parody court proceedings and judicial language. Such incidents are found elsewhere in Terence, as the discussion on the illumination of the wise men demonstrated, earlier (Fig. 2.18). In Phormio, there is an entire monologue dedicated into how several people manipulate the judicial system through language and actions, to get what they want. Similar examples are also encountered later in the century, for example, in the Farce de Maître Pathelin and in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. Terence is arguably one of the earliest examples of such humour expressed pictorially.

Phormio seems to have been particularly favoured in the efforts to translate the manuscript in contemporary courtly terms. One of the most striking changes to the text takes place in its first illumination (Fig. 2.56). It is of special interest because it is related to gifts exchanged between masters and servants. The importance of gift giving in French courtly ritual and practice has already been highlighted. In fact, both Terence manuscripts were offered as gifts to eminent patrons. Within the context of the Valois courts, this illumination assumes different and greater significance.

The play starts with the monologue of Davus the servant, who is discussing gift giving from servants to masters: his friend Geta will have to provide gifts for his master’s wedding and for many other occasions that will follow, even though his resources are extremely limited. The text does not mention the types of gifts, only the requirement that some gifts must be bought.

The illuminator’s visual translation was liberal. None of the men look like servants. The characters’ clothes make them look more like nobles or rich men, but at least one of them is identified in writing as Davus. He is watching Geta as he comes in, carrying the gifts:

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133 See earlier chapter, 44 and Buettner, ‘Past Presents’, 600.
he holds a gilded belt, a brooch and a container that looks like a golden jar. Davus is stunned by looking at the items, as they look particularly expensive and any simple servant would not have been able to afford such gifts.

It is possible that this is a reference to the large expenses undertaken by servants in their effort to please their masters. The donor of this manuscript would have identified with Geta for commissioning this manuscript, even though he was not a slave and was, in fact, significantly richer than the protagonist. The representation emphasises the act of providing gifts for one’s master, and it arguably reflects the donor’s desire to emphasise his own gift-giving and expense. The recipient of the manuscript could celebrate their own princely status and renew the requirement to exchange gifts with their peers and subordinates. The illumination could serve as a classical example that sanctions the gift-giving tradition. Thus, it emerges as a celebration of courtly ritual and practice, and of ritualistic gift exchanges like the ones taking place over the étrennes. If this was indeed the intention, then the illumination was an excellent opportunity to connect exemplum and reality, and this visual translation is one of the most successful in the entire work.

2.2.1.1 Genre scenes and trickery

Although tricksters and eavesdroppers appear in the Terence des Ducs in the same frequency as in the Berry Terence, the same scenes do not always receive the same treatment. The eavesdropping scene from Andria is an example that showcases the illuminator’s shift in focus (Fig. 2.12 and 2.57). In the Terence des Ducs, Davus and Mysis engage in their mock fight as the baby is on the ground at the front door (Fig. 2.57). Mysis is scolding Davus in the same way that she does in the text, but she looks less lost and more annoyed than her Berry Terence counterpart. She is waving angrily towards Davus as Chremes is approaching. Curiously, Chremes is not shown comically eavesdropping and he is not hidden from Davus, which contradicts the text. In this case his presence is known, he is not hidden, he is listening casually. Perhaps the intention of the artist was to showcase the fact that Chremes is not hidden from the audience, who looks at the picture as a still image from a theatre stage.
The illuminator focused on a completely different type of humour than his Berry Terence colleague. It is evident that the difference is not due to lack of skill, but to a different artistic choice. The Berry Terence illumination emphasises the humour in the figure of the eavesdropper who is also being tricked. The *Terence des Ducs* focuses on the humour found in a quarrelling couple: Mysis is holding up her hand as if she is ready to slap Davus, and he is keeping his arms crossed as he tries to remain calm and continue with the plot. Enhancing the comic effect, the size of the two characters is inverted and she is much larger than him. Both artists are aware of the comic elements present in the text, but they are choosing differently as to what to represent. Both include humour in their illumination consciously and intentionally, even if it is not the same type of humour found in the text.

A different emphasis on an eavesdropper is seen in an illumination from *Andria* (Fig. 2.58). In the text, three dialogues happen simultaneously: Simo and Pamphilus, father and son respectively, are engaged in a talk. Pamphilus replies by repeating what Davus, the servant, whispers to him in his silent instructions. Burria, the accidental eavesdropper, talks to himself, commenting on what he overhears. He is seen in the far end of the image. He is the only character to interact with the viewer, and he is easy to identify with, since the viewer is also listening to the discussion as an outsider.

This is an image of striking narrativity. Simo is waving to summon his son. Davus is wearing a pinkish hat and he guides Pamphilus with gestures and movements, both physically and verbally. He holds him by his arm as if he is steering him, much as he does verbally in the text. Burria is seen in the background as he listens from a distance, visibly emotional: his exaggerated gesture of despair and his expression are both very eloquent, as he brings his hands close to his face and frowns. The descriptions under the image indicate who is represented. The illuminator here paid particular attention to facial and emotional expression of the characters. In doing so, he tried to include as many comic elements as possible, aiming to visualise the comedy and feeling of the text.

It is not only slaves and servants that engage in trickery and eavesdropping. In a scene from *Phormio*, Geta is the trickster (Fig. 2.59). Geta narrates to Chremes and Demipho a fictional dialogue that allegedly happened between him and Phormio, aiming to extract money from the two older men. Antipho, the younger protagonist, observes, hidden.
The scene was illuminated in a very different way in the two manuscripts and it is another good opportunity for a comparison. In the Berry Terence, Antipho is hiding around the house’s corner as Geta is acting out the fictional dialogue (Fig. 2.60). Geta has taken off his hat for a more emphatic representation: since he is narrating a lie, he needs to act the part. The two older men observe attentively, and Demipho is more expressive than Chremes, who is composed and calm. For the Berry Terence illuminator, the emphasis was on the characters, their movements and their acting. The figure of Geta is commanding attention, placed centrally and gesturing vividly.

In the *Terence des Ducs* everything happens inside a room, contrary to the text. Antipho is eavesdropping hidden behind a door (Fig. 2.59). Chremes and Demipho listen attentively to Geta, who emphatically narrates his story, but his gestures are much smaller and more reserved. The focus here is more on Antipho, even if Geta is in the centre of the picture. Antipho is shown as the typical spy, leaning to hear and sneakily peeking into the next room. He is dressed in his rich garments and wearing his distinctive hat, which leaves no doubt about his social status. Where the *Berry Terence* favoured the representation of the slave narrating a lie, the *Terence des Ducs* focused on the image of the courtly man behaving below his station. Different types of humour were used to represent the same scene.

It was seen that often the illuminators ignore the fact that most action is supposed to take place in the city streets, and they place their figures inside their respective houses, taking advantage of the chance to paint an urban interior. Another such example is found in *Phormio* (Fig. 2.61). A missing wall permits the viewer to see inside the house’s kitchen where pots, pans, tools and a burning fire are in the background, and people are discussing in the foreground. The details on the floor pattern, the attempt to represent perspective—since the kitchen would be the room farther away from the viewer—and the representation of utensils indicate that the artist was eager to represent an urban interior.

Overall, the *Terence des Ducs* illuminating cycle pays more attention to urban and bourgeois interiors, but also to clothes and other status signifiers, like coin pouches and bags, that are constantly emphasised throughout the manuscript. There is a strong focus on
dramatic representations of a significantly courtlier character, yet this is not compromising the humorous qualities of the illuminations.

2.2.1.2 A different take on slapstick humour

Physical humour in the *Terence des Ducs* is treated differently than in the Berry Terence. The illumination from *Andria*, where Davus is restrained at the stocks, is an example (Fig. 2.62). This is a particularly interesting illumination because it is, once more, an improvised image. There is no mention of Davus in the written instruction or in the text, as the character is not present in the scene. It is known that he is kept into custody, but his detention and punishment take place off-stage. In the illumination, he is tied at the stocks, the same instrument that was used for public shaming, and his legs are inserted in this wooden structure that does not allow him to move.

It is known from the text that Simo is overreacting by ordering for Davus’ restrain and punishment. In the picture, Crito and Chremes try to reason with Simo, who is angrily accusing everyone around him. The three older men are sitting on a bench opposite Pamphilus in a layout that reminds of a tribunal, and they are discussing. Simo and Crito gesture to each other and Pamphilus’ face is hidden.

The artist represented Davus punished in public display for his transgression and the viewer is assuming the role of the public. The elders that are holding a meeting next to him look intimidating enough in their seriousness, but the most intimidating thing in the picture is arguably the size of the stocks. The relative enormity of the block of wood makes Simo’s exaggerated reaction very visible: there is simply no way that this little man can escape from this massive restraining device. The inconsistency between the sizes of Davus, who looks extremely small in comparison to the wooden structure, and his instrument of torture, is what makes this image comic instead of tragic.

This is the only instance in the Terence des Ducs where proportions are distorted in such a manner. The difference should not be attributed to lack of skill, but rather to a specific artistic choice. The intention is, arguably, to make the restrained Davus look ridiculous and exaggerate his condition, just like his punishment was exaggerated. The *Terence des Ducs* illumination is like a caricature of a very dramatic contemporary
illumination found in Boccaccio. The same artist painted a similar scene in the *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes* overseen by Premierfait for the Valois Dukes. There, he represented a king restrained in the same way (Fig. 2.63). In that case, the realistic proportions result not in a humorous, but in a highly dramatic image.

Contrary to the Berry Terence, in the *Terence des Ducs* there is no effort to finish with an obviously comic tone. The *Terence des Ducs* does not finish with *Phormio* but with *Hecyra*, and its illuminations are attributed to the Orosius Master. Consequently, *Hecyra* is an excellent example of how the same play was treated differently by the same artist.

The last illumination is condensing more than one act and it represents parts of the play that are narrated, but not acted out on stage (Fig. 2.64). The moment illustrated is the resolution of the comedy's plot, where characters are recognised by means of a lost ring that was given as a gift and resurfaced at an opportune moment. Immediately after this scene all sub-plots are resolved and the comedy ends with pleasantries exchanged between characters. In the text, most of this is narrated by Bacchis to Parmeno. The only action happening on stage would be what is represented on the left side of the illumination. The artist, however, has also depicted the entire story as it is narrated by Bacchis: she is holding out the ring that helped identify Myrrhina.

It was perhaps the difference in the intended audience that demanded a courtlier final illumination: the *Terence des Ducs* was originally intended for a different patron, potentially the Dauphin, who was a teenager at the time. If the intention was to present the manuscript as a *Mirror of Princes*, then the choice could be justified. It is equally possible that the courtly tone set by the two main illuminators, the Luçon and the Cité des Dames Master, had to be followed to maintain the visual integrity of the work as a whole. Having worked on the Boccaccio translations, both these artists were applying a visual vocabulary that celebrated the life and experience of lower and bourgeois classes, as well as popular comic theatre, while maintaining an air of courtliness when necessary. The Orosius Master, already experienced in the Terence text but with a much smaller contribution to the entirety of the project, had to adapt to their example.
2.2.1.3 Comedy and a Code of Conduct

So far, the scenes discussed were humorous moments treated differently in the two manuscripts. The following example from *Heautontimorumenos* is a non-comic scene that received an interesting visualisation. In the play, Chremes has been tricked to believe that Bacchis the courtesan is the mistress of his son’s friend. In reality, she is the mistress of his own son, and the young couple lied to avoid Chremes’ disapproval. At some point, Chremes narrates how he walked in on his son and Bacchis embracing. Frustrated, he calls his son and scolds him for embracing his friend’s mistress. The text includes brilliant comments on friendship and interpersonal relationships, as well as paternal advice on proper behaviour and manners. The didactic character of the comedies is very prominent in this case.

In the *Berry Terence* the scene does not receive any special treatment, as it is represented like a conversation between the main characters. The illumination in the *Terence des Ducs*, however, represents the action that happened off-stage: Chremes is peeking into a room and he sees his son touching Bacchis’ breast (Fig. 2.65). There is a strong voyeuristic element, made more evident because of the sexual nature of the representation. The strict father is comically reduced into a Peeping Tom, spying on young couples as they embrace.

On the right side of the image Chremes is discussing with Syrus. They are setting out a secret plan for the steps forward and they are narrating that plan for the audience to hear. This typical trickster behaviour only emphasises Chremes’ actions on the left. The viewer, also spying on the two lovers during an intimate moment, gets involved in the picture through Chremes’ involuntary indiscretion. Thus, the viewers participate both in the joke and in the didactic monologue that Chremes is delivering afterwards.

The illumination could rival some scenes from Premierfait’s *Cent Nouvelles* or anticipate the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. There are obvious similarities between the *Terences des Ducs* illumination and one in f. 82r of the *Cent Nouvelles*, where the trickster Masetto is seen kissing a nun in secret, but they are spied on by the nun on the window—and by the viewers at the same time (Fig. 1.10). Masetto is a trickster character who lied his way into the convent, but this is not represented. The image of an illicit sexual encounter that is being spied upon was probably considered comic enough. The Cité des Dames Master
probably worked on the two manuscripts in close chronological proximity and evidently his experience from one manuscript informed the illuminations of the other.

It needs to be reiterated that although this is not a humorous part of the play, it is nonetheless visualised humorously. It is also significant that the depicted action is not taking place on stage. The illuminator painted a scene that takes place in the background and it is argued here that his aim was twofold. Firstly, he intended to guide the reader to the father’s monologue, which has excellent didactic value and will inspire further discussion and comments. This could have been consistent with any instruction by Premierfait and it has been seen earlier that it was becoming common practice in Parisian workshops.

Secondly, it is argued that the illuminator chose to insert a voyeuristic scene where a tricked father catches his son and his mistress red-handed, because it would be an amusing image that would lighten up the serious tone of the text and it would allow the viewer to follow the plot. The audience is supposed to be aware that the couple is deceiving Chremes. The image emerges as a creative visual translation of the story, representing the deceptions and misunderstandings that distort the flow of information to create comic effect. At the same time, the illumination is not a parody of the text. It is an inspired initiative that possibly demonstrates the illuminators’ concern: instead of focusing on what was happening on stage, he chose to represent the plot in an eloquent and pleasing manner, in a visual narration that develops in parallel to the text and retains its comedic character.

It has been seen that such creative liberties were taken often in the *Terence des Ducs*. The artists did not hesitate to stray frequently from the text or their instructions, to create humorous illuminations for scenes that did not necessarily require it. If they were familiar with the *Berry Terence*, and they probably were, this did not impede their artistic vision. The differences between the two visual cycles suggest that they were taking expressive liberties with Premierfait’s instructions. These could have been on their own creative impulse, or they could have been allowed greater licence. At either case, they focused on a visual narration that includes humour organically, and they improvised creatively in favour of humour when the scene of reference required them to. The *Terence des Ducs* illuminations are evidence of the significance visual humour was acquiring in
Parisian workshops of the time: an important element in visual rhetoric, it was adopted with enthusiasm, skill and imagination.

2.3 ‘Plaudite’: Reception and fortune of the Terence manuscripts

In the early years of the fifteenth century, the Duke of Berry had two copies of the works of Terence in his library, at a time that Terence could not be found in the inventories of other princes, in France and beyond. The Berry Terence, that was created for him, stayed with him to his death. It obviously made an impression to the royal collectors, since the *Terence des Ducs* was created shortly after and destined for a member of the royal family, possibly the Dauphin; the manuscript it was certainly in royal possession before also being given to Jean de Berry. This change of hands could suggest that the bishop of Chalons believed that the Duke of Berry would appreciate the manuscript. Whether he had expressed his admiration already, or if the bishop decided to offer him the manuscript entirely on his own initiative, it is impossible to know. The chronological proximity between the two commissions, however, is the strongest possible indication that the Berry Terence made an impression.

Jean de Berry died in 1416 in Paris. His library was dispersed after his death and his manuscripts ended up in the possession of several members of the nobility. The Berry Terence was entrusted to Étienne de Bonpuis and Audebert Catin, who managed the Duke’s belongings, and it was appraised at ‘24 l. parisis, valant 30 livres tournois’.

At the same time, the attitudes of scholars were changing. Nicolas de Clamanges wrote to Gontier Col in 1418, in a rather melancholic tone, and professed that he was ‘sated from reading the pagans’ because his soul now yearned for ‘true fruits’, although as a younger man he walked ‘in the garden of oratorical art and gather blossoms for a while’. He expressed a preference for Augustine and Jerome instead of the classics. By 1420, all

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134 ‘Plaudite’ is the typical closing phrase of Terence’s comedies. With the exception of *Andria*, at the end of the play one of the characters will prompts the audience for their applause, usually by the word ‘*plaudite*’, generally translated as ‘grant us your applause’.


138 Guiffrey, *Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry*, vol. 1, No 969, 257.

protagonists of the Terence manuscripts had passed away: Premierfait, Pierre and Gontier Col, Jean de Montreuil, Nicolas de Clamanges had disappeared, and it appears that towards the end of their lives they turned more towards religious than classical writers.

In the following decades, manuscript production in Paris declined, only to pick up again later in the century.\textsuperscript{140} However, the next generation of artists built on the foundation of the Limbourgs, the Cité des Dames Master and the other Terence illuminators, representing humorous secular themes and scenes from everyday life for royal and bourgeois patrons, in Paris and beyond.

\textsuperscript{140} Susie Nash, \textit{Northern Renaissance Art}, Oxford History of Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76.
3 THE LIVRE DU CŒUR D’AMOUR ÉPRIS

ÖNB Cod. Vind. 2597, henceforth the Vienna Coeur, is one of the three surviving illuminated copies of René d’Anjou’s Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris, along with two manuscripts today in Paris (BnF Fr. 24399 and BnF Fr. 1509). Written on 127 pages of parchment and measuring 290x207 mm, the Vienna Coeur is incomplete, containing only sixteen illuminations when the fully illuminated BnF Fr. 24399 contains seventy-one. Even though the Vienna Coeur illuminations are of exceptionally high quality, the manuscript does not contain obvious evidence regarding the identity of either the patron or the illuminator. The excellence of the visual cycle attracted the attention of scholars fairly early and the artist’s identity had been the subject of considerable debate for a long time. The illuminations have been reasonably attributed to Barthélemy d’Eyck, court artist and valet de chambre to René, Duke of Anjou and self-styled King of Naples and Jerusalem. Further evidence, discussed below, supports this attribution and contributes to the reconstruction of the artist’s catalogue.

1 BnF Fr. 24399 is fully illuminated. BnF Fr. 1509 is also illuminated, but with less illuminations. The remaining surviving copies of the text are not illuminated. They are Arsenal 2984; BnF Fr. 1425; BnF NAF 11679 (f. 184r-304v); and BAV Reginensi Latini 1629.

2 The artist has been conventionally named at first ‘Cœur Master’ or ‘Maître du roi René’, and was discussed by Durrieu as the painter of the Aix Annunciation in Durrieu, ‘Notes sur quelques manuscrits français ou d’origine française conservés dans des bibliothèques d’Allemagne’, 115–43. He was discussed still in the same capacity in Unterkircher, King René’s Book of Love. He was identified as King René himself by Otto Pächt, in ‘René d’Anjou et les Van Eyck,’ 41–67; also in Pächt, ‘René d’Anjou-Studien I,’ 85–126. In a series of publications by Sterling and Avril and later by Reynaud, the ‘Cœur Master’, the ‘Master of King René’ and the ‘Master of the Aix Annunciation’ were identified as the same person, René’s court artist, Barthélemy d’Eyck. For details, see Sterling, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck, l’auteur du triptyque de l’Annonciation d’Aix et l’enlumineur du Coeur d’Amour Épris’, 179; Reynaud, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck avant 1450’, 22–43; König, Das Liebentbrannte Herz; Avril, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck (le Maître du Cœur d’Amour épris), 224-225. The identification was reiterated by Yoshiaki Nishino in Nishino, ‘Le triptyque de l’Annonciation d’Aix et son programme iconographique’, 55–74. For arguments against this identification, see Châtelet, ‘Le problème du Maître Du Cœur d’Amour Épris’, 7–14; and Châtelet, ‘Pour en finir avec Barthélemy d’Eyck’, 199–220. Reconstructing his complete corpus of works has been problematic, since he has also been tentatively identified with the Intermediate Master, or the Master of Shadows, of the Très Riches Heures. Recently, scholars have attributed to him a comprehensive catalogue and advanced suggestions that he also worked in other media, such as textiles and wall painting. See Thiébaut, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck’, 123-141; and Ferré, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck’, 123-131. Finally, Villela-Petit provides convincing evidence that the Intermediate Master and Barthélémy d’Eyck were the same artist, in Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’, 125–43.

3 The assimilation of the documented Barthélemy de Clerk with the Master of René, the Master of Coeur d’Amour Épris and the Master of the Aix Annunciation is based on stylistic and visual evidence: a close look at the two figures hidden behind the columns of the Aix Annunciation reveals a striking similarity between them and the faces of the servants in the fifteenth miniature of the Vienna Coeur. See also footnote above, particularly the most recent Thiébaut, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck’, 134, and Ferré, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck’, 123.
This chapter addresses the relationship between text and image in the Vienna _Coeur_. Visual analysis reveals significant incongruities between the text and the artist’s illustration of it, that have gone largely unnoticed by earlier scholars. It is suggested below that these incongruities are directly related to the personalities of artist and patron and that they are intentionally comic in nature, pandering to the patron’s well documented taste for humour and farce. To do so, the present analysis discusses the Vienna _Coeur_ in comparison to the fully illuminated BnF Fr. 24399, henceforth the Paris _Coeur_.

The text was written in the second half of the fifteenth century by René d’Anjou. The Vienna _Coeur_ is one of the oldest copies.\(^4\) Within the manuscript’s text the author dates it to 1477, but the date is contradicted by intertextual evidence.\(^5\) Instead, it has been argued convincingly that the Vienna manuscript was created in two stages. The first stage included the creation of the text around 1460 and illuminations by Barthélémy around 1465.\(^6\) The manuscript was left incomplete, probably after the death of the artist. The second part of the work was created probably around 1477, which accounts for the presented date, and for some revisions in the text.\(^7\)

The lavishness of the existing illuminations in the Vienna _Coeur_ implies a high commission and it has been suggested that it was destined for René.\(^8\) This thesis presents evidence emerging from visual analysis that support this suggestion. It has also been suggested that the Vienna and Paris manuscripts were copied after a common prototype, instead of one being the copy of the other.\(^9\) This thesis presents further evidence that corroborate this hypothesis as well.

\(^4\) Ferré, ‘René d’Anjou, _Le Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_’, 300.
\(^5\) The date is given in Verse 314. The work is accepted to have initiated between 1455 and 1461, as the tapestries described in the text are historically identifiable and they could not have been commissioned before 1447. See René d’Anjou, _The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart/Le Livre Du Cuers d’amour Éspris_, trans. Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewska (New York: Routledge, 2011), xxi.
\(^6\) Ferré, ‘René d’Anjou, _Le Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_’, 300.
\(^7\) An entire paragraph in the cemetery of Love has been rewritten, and several names in this same section have been changed, implying reviews and edits on the text at a later date. Ferré, ‘René d’Anjou, _Le Livre du Cœur d’Amour Épris_’, 300.
\(^8\) Pächt, ‘René d’Anjou-Studien I,’ 85–126; Ferré, ‘René d’Anjou, _Le Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris_’, 300.
In writing the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*, René was heavily influenced by the literary tradition of the *Roman de la Rose* and followed the themes of the *Queste del Saint Graal* and other chivalric romances:10

As once many romances had been made and recounted for everlasting memory of noble deeds and prowess, of great conquests and wartime courage, of astonishing events and most adventuresome dangers which were concluded, carried out and accomplished to win the Holy Grail by the courageous and bold knights Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Tristan, Palomides, and other knights as well, peers of the Round Table in King Arthur’s time, as ancient histories tell of from beginning to end, so similarly, to better grant you the means to understand my present work, which tells the quest for most Sweet Mercy by the love-smitten Heart, I will follow the plan of the book of the quest for the Holy Grail [...].11

This is not a comic story. It narrates an allegorical emotional experience through the adventures of René’s heart, personified in the Knight Coeur. It begins with a dedication and an appeal to René’s nephew, Jean de Bourbon. René seeks his advice and asks him to read this allegory, which will help him understand René’s emotional state.12 The narration then develops as a tale within a tale: One night, René retires to his bed with his heart aching. Somewhere between dream and reality, he is visited by the God of Love. In this dream-like state, René describes how Love reaches out, removes René’s heart from his chest and delivers it to Désir, Ardent Desire (Fig. 3.1). Désir urges the heart to go on a quest to conquer his chosen one, Dame Tresdoulce Mercy, Lady Sweet Mercy; then, the heart transforms into the Knight Coeur, the heroic protagonist of the story. Coeur is then given his equipment and Free Will as his horse, and squired by Désir he rides to adventure. Though the story the two of them encounter Espérance—Hope, Jalousie—Jealousy, Courroux—Anger, Souci—Worry, Mélancolie—Melancholy, Tristesse—Sadness, Honneur—Honour and

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several other personifications of feelings and states of being. In the end, they managed to arrive to the Island of Love and meet Dame Tresdoulce Mercy, and Coeur manages to earn a kiss from her. As they leave to return to Love’s Castle of Pleasure, they are ambushed by their enemies. Désir is killed, Coeur is wounded and Refus—Refusal and his group seize Dame Tresdoulce Mercy again. Coeur is then advised by Pitié—Pity to return to the Hospital of Love to spend the rest of his days. Following this scene of stunning defeat, René narrates that he wakes up from his sleep. Still unsure if this was a dream or not, he picks up pen and paper to record the experience. He then addresses Jean de Bourbon again, seeking his advice and entreating him to read this work with favour.

The text has a strong self-reflective character. The protagonist is René’s own personified heart, René appears inside the text as the writer and narrator of the work and he is mentioned again as a character within the narration, when the heroes read his description in the hospital of Love. Furthermore, René’s device, for a long time, was D’Ardent Désir. Although there are instances where the narration gets lighter or the textual interplay allows for some relaxation, the story generally reads as a piece of chivalric literature similar to the works that inspired it. René is presented as a writer tormented by his feelings. The quest is not fulfilled, the story does not end happily and there is only the prospect of eventual healing. Coeur is often anxious to prove himself, and sometimes unsure and doubtful of his future.

It is argued here that the illuminations do not always share this tone of the text. The visual analysis focuses on specific, recurring themes throughout the manuscript, that match familiar comic stereotypes discussed elsewhere in this thesis: anthropomorphic animals, inversions, characters with different function in the text and in the images, scatological humour and humour based on exaggeration and absurdity. These themes are unique to the Vienna Coeur visual cycle, as comparisons with other surviving illuminated copies indicate.

Based on this visual evidence, this thesis proposes that the illuminations of the Vienna Coeur were conceived as a visual retelling of René’s story, intending to amuse the manuscript’s owner through comedy and humour. This proposed interpretation has not

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been previously advanced, and it is connected to the theatre culture that was prominent in Anjou court, which informed the expressive vocabulary of the artist. Thus, the Vienna Coeur emerges as a work particularly and intimately connected to its patron.

Due to the nature of humour and comedy, the validity of the above hypothesis depends heavily on the personalities of both patron and artist, as well as on the nature of their relationship. To that end, it is essential to present here existing evidence indicating an unusually close friendship and a fruitful collaboration between the two.

Barthélemy was probably born in Liège, and a connection with the van Eyck family is possible, if not by blood then certainly by formation.\(^{14}\) By 1435 he is thought to have already encountered René, while the latter was in Dijon, held captive by the Duke of Burgundy.\(^ {15}\) If this was when René recruited him, then it is possible that he accompanied his patron in his Italian expedition between 1438 and 1442, when René was attempting to establish his authority over his inherited Kingdom of Naples: Barthélemy’s step-father, the cloth merchant Pierre du Brillant, was also in René’s service at the time and he is documented to have been with him in Naples in 1440.\(^ {16}\) It is possible that Barthélemy was with them, and the trip could account for the Italian influences in his art.\(^ {17}\) By 1444 Barthélemy was in Aix-en-Provence, working with the leading French painter Enguerrand Quarton.\(^ {18}\) It was probably during this period that the *Morgan Hours*, discussed later in this chapter, was created.

From 1447 Barthélemy was René’s painter and personal attendant, assuming the title of valet de chambre.\(^ {19}\) A series of documents of expenses present valuable information for his activities in René’s court. A piece of furniture that would serve as a desk or workspace for Barthélemy was delivered in Tarascon in 1447; the same year, he bought

\(^{14}\) It has been suggested that he might have been the son of Hubert van Eyck. See Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermediary’, 23.


\(^{16}\) Pierre du Brillant was the second husband of Barthélemy’s widowed mother. Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermediary’, 9.


\(^{18}\) The two men witnessed a legal document together, which attests the presence of both in Aix-en-Provence. Collaboration is highly likely. Thomas Tolley, ‘Eyck, Barthélemy d’’, in Hugh Brigstocke, ed., The Oxford Companion to Western Art (Oxford University Press, 2001).

\(^{19}\) Avril, ‘Barthélemy d’Eyck (le Maître du Cœur d’Amour épris), 224.
items for René’s chambers, and he often functioned as a purveyor of artworks for his patron—a practice frequent for court artists at the time. By 1469 he was named valet trenchant and he shared René’s chamber, living in the ‘chambre du petit retrait de roi’. Documents attest that in the room there was a desk ‘en forme d’escabeau’, where Barthélemy would write, and a chair ‘à coffre et à ciel’ where Barthélemy would sit ‘pour besogner’, to work. René rewarded him handsomely and offered him high valued gifts frequently.

Following Barthélemy’s death, around 1475-80, René wrote to his widow asking to receive all the ‘pourtraistures’ that she had in her possession. René’s letter suggests the existence of unfinished drawings, sketches, or other works. Although the term ‘pourtraistures’ implies that the works in question were portraits, it is possible that they were in fact model drawings, similar to the carbon drawings of René, his wife and the Duke of Calabria mentioned in the inventory of 1471-72 in the castle of Angers. Traditionally, such models would have belonged to the artist’s workshop or to their heir, but evidence suggests that Barthélemy died without issue. René’s claiming of the drawings could indicate that he was the one who originally commissioned them, or that they were portraits of René himself. Alternatively, it could point to a desire to have the designs used in other projects by other artists, or it could simply attest to his affection for his painter and the appreciation for his work. Whatever the case may have been, the widow accepted that the drawings in question belonged to René.

The artist was apparently working alongside his patron, sharing the same living space, and the attested details of their interaction imply a close and friendly relationship.

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23 Letter from the widow of Barthélemy d’Eyck, BnF Ms NAF 6658, f. 1r; For a description and transcription of this letter, see Nicole Raynaud, ‘Lettre de la veuve de Barthélemy d’Eyck au roi René’, in Gautier and Avril, Splendeur de l’enluminure, No 22, 274-75.
Consequently, it is argued below that Barthélemy’s works for René were personalised not only through heraldry and traditional references to the patron, but also through intimate humorous references created specifically for the eyes of René. This personal, intimate character and the expressions of visual inside jokes were lost in subsequent copies like the Paris one, where the audience was different. The following analysis provides the necessary context to the modern scholar, in order to understand and experience Barthélemy’s visual humour in its entirety.

3.1 The Vienna Coeur visual cycle
3.1.1 Visual horseplay

The first important observation regarding the Vienna Coeur illuminations is that the only characters to establish eye contact with the viewer are the two horses of the principal protagonists. The animals are not given any special importance in the text, where their role is restricted to their functionality as mounts. The only characteristic of Coeur’s horse is its great force, which is consistent with the fact that it is an incarnation of Free Will. In contrast, in the illuminations the horses are given an expression, an opinion, foresight and the most important task of setting the tone of the visual narration.

Thus, the text narrates that when the companions start their adventure, they first see a tent, inside which there is a jasper pillar with an inscription written on it. After reading it, they see Espérance. In the illumination, Coeur and Désir are approaching the jasper pillar (Fig. 3.2). Although the story indicates that the pillar is inside the tent, in the illumination it is outside and in front of the tent. The readable inscription helps the audience identify the woman standing next to it as Espérance. Indeed, it would be hard to recognise her just from the text’s description, as she is described as ‘already a bit aged in appearance’. Instead, in the illumination she is young and beautiful. She is dressed in blue and she is wearing a crown, recalling Marian iconography, while the text specifies a ‘purple tunic and petticoat, and a vair mantle’. She is wearing her hair down, which further emphasises her youthful

26 ‘[...] qui ja estoit ung pou ancienne par semblance [...]’. René d’Anjou, The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart/Le Livre Du Cuers d’amour Espris, 7.4-7.5.
27 ‘[...] De couleurs de porpre avoit surcot et cotte, sur ses espaullesung manteu de verin [...]’. René d’Anjou, The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart/Le Livre Du Cuers d’amour Espris, 7.7.6-7.7.
appearance. In the text, Coeur sees her immediately, as she seizes his reins so suddenly that she startles him. In the illumination, Désir points at her, drawing Coeur’s attention to her as she assertively holds his large warhorse by its bridle. Free Will is drooling and lowering its head but keeps looking directly at her. While Coeur’s face is hidden, preventing us from identifying any reaction, the text informs us that he is shaking with shame for the fact that a mere woman could thus stop him. In the illumination this reaction is not visible, and instead there is an allusion to a different emotional reaction: the placement of his lance may be suggesting attraction and lust.

In subsequent illuminations, Free Will is represented having more noticeable reactions, indicating that the horse is treated as a character participating in the visual narration. Thus, following the encounter with Espérance the companions arrive to a hermitage and they ask shelter for the night. Jalousie meets them at the doorstep (Fig. 3.3). She is described as a badly shaped dwarf, and discussion will return to her body and form. Her sagging breast can be seen underneath the animal skins that she is wearing. Her hair is tangled, her ears are huge and she is moving her fingers as if she is pointing, calculating, or thinking for the worst advice to give. Désir is gazing at Jalousie, who seems to be addressing him. Coeur is turned towards her with his face hidden behind his helmet. The two mounts look at each another as their masters are taking advice from that strange being. It looks as if the animals are the only creatures that doubt Jalousie’s motives and intentions: is it possible that the heroes are trusting in her words?

A similar reaction is identifiable in the duel with the Black Knight Souci (Fig. 3.4). The characters arrive at the Pas Perileux, where they encounter Souci. The two knights duel on the narrow bridge. In the illumination Coeur is about to climb the bridge to engage in the duel. The text describes ‘a very high wooden bridge spanning the river, weak, frail, old-fashioned, and wondrously narrow, such that a horse could scarcely pass over it’. The bridge represented in the illumination has taken this description to the extreme. It is small and narrow, not wide enough to accommodate both horses and not stable enough to

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support a duel. The rest of the landscape is painted in greens, blues, greys and muted colours. That way, the group at the bottom of the picture, placed near the frame in the extreme left and painted in warm colours, easily attracts the viewer’s attention. Désir is urging Coeur and his horse forward and Coeur is galloping on with his equipment flapping. Meanwhile, Désir’s red horse is looking outside the picture, making direct eye contact with the viewer.

The animal’s face has a masterfully executed anthropomorphic expression, and the connection it establishes with the viewer grants greater immediacy to its reaction. As it is looking under a furrowed brow, the viewer is asked to interpret this expression and connect it to the main characters’ actions: could the animal be criticising Coeur? Could it be expressing an opinion regarding the adventures they encounter? Similarly, Souci’s big black warhorse arrives at the bridge with its head held high and with upturned lips, in what looks like a wicked smile on its face. Could the attitudes of the horses be anticipating the outcome of this battle?

The text then narrates how Coeur lands a terribly strong blow, but ultimately Souci throws both Coeur and his horse into the river. Espérance appears in their time of need, as she had promised earlier. She finds Coeur holding on to one of the poles of the bridge. He is supposed to have bent his sword on the shield of Souci, since he managed to deliver a strong blow during the duel.

In the illumination it is evident that Coeur has lost the fight (Fig. 3.5). However, the horse is not in the river, only Coeur is. He is getting pulled out by Espérance, who finds him grabbing the edge of the river and trying to pull himself out. His lance is intact. Instead, it is Souci’s lance that is broken, indicating that it he was the one who managed to strike Coeur. Coeur’s lance is being carried away by the water, emphasising the fact that he lost it. Coeur’s small victory of landing a terrible blow is not visible at all. The picture suggests that Coeur was thrown down from his horse after Souci broke his lance on his shield, which is a slightly different version of what the text describes. To finish this improvisation on the narrative, Souci seems to be galloping away with his head held high, instead of fleeing when Espérance arrives.
In the two scenes before and after the duel, Barthélemy changed the audience’s angle of view. This choice increases the dramatic effect of his art, and discussion will return to it later. Coeur is being pulled out from the river by a woman much smaller in size than him, not even by his own squire, which highlights his embarrassing circumstance. His horse is looking at the audience from the borders of the frame. Its gaze resembles the one the red horse shared with the audience in the previous illumination, and the change in perspective makes the similarity easier to identify (Fig. 3.4 and 3.5).

Following the duel on *Pas Perileux* the companions resume their quest, and they soon arrive at the Mound of Dejection and the home of Anger, Courroux, and his wife, Tristesse. In the illumination, Paresse, the guardian of the gate, is standing in the courtyard half-dressed, with her eyes open wide and her mouth spread in screams, as the text describes (Fig. 3.6). Courroux is coming out from the top window, waving at the newcomers. Coeur enters the courtyard mounted on his horse, and the horse once again turns its head towards the viewer, gazing outside the frame with a wide eye. In the text, Coeur spurs forward, telling Désir that he will immediately prove to him that his drenching did not soften him, or weaken him in any way. Once more, the horse is the only figure in the illumination to connect with the viewer and perhaps pass a silent comment on the upcoming events.

Courroux does not welcome Coeur and they quickly engage in a duel, represented in the next illumination (Fig. 3.7). Barthélemy describes the horses and the equipment of the two knights in a detailed way, similarly to his work in the *Livre des Tournois* (Fig. 3.8). Courroux’s helmet is decorated with a dog, which almost certainly carried a symbolism. The dog could be an alaunt, a breed of hound that was powerful, aggressive, disobedient, even dangerous, and difficult to train. Gaston Phoebus, in his *Livre de la Chasse*, writes that they were used in boar hunting, and ‘if they be slain by the wild boar…it is not a very great loss’.29 A pack of them may be seen over the carcass of the boar they killed, in the *December* illumination of the *Très Riches Heures*.30

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Alternatively, the dog in Courroux’s helmet could be a smaller sized but equally efficient bloodhound known as the talbot dog. This could suggest a visual reference to John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury. One of the fiercest warriors of the Hundred Years War, John Talbot was infamous for his rage, though famous for his courage. His name allowed for an easy world-play with talbot dogs, and he used the bloodhounds to identify himself visually before officially adding them to his heraldry. One of them is represented next to him in the presentation scene of the Talbot Shrewsbury Book (Fig. 3.9). It is an intriguing possibility that Barthélemy’s intention was to make a visual reference to John Talbot as the personification of Courroux. His reputation would justify it, as he was known to be quarrelsome and quick to anger, and the Talbot dog on the helmet would be immediately recognisable by René.

Returning to the illuminated duel, Coeur’s lance is broken, which means that he landed a blow on his opponent, and they are now attacking each other with swords. Désir is watching passively, without enthusiasm: duels are not his concern. Désir’s horse is averting its eyes, perhaps in a similar display of indifference. Alternatively, its refusal to engage could be foreshadowing Coeur’s defeat, even though Coeur’s side appears to be winning. Despite the good omens, the animal does not appear confident of the duel’s outcome: whether it is averting its eyes from the spectacle or simply biting at its side in boredom, the horse’s behaviour does not match the intensity and emotional charge of the scene.

By representing them with human expressions, Barthélemy is elevating the horses to the status of characters who contribute to the development of the narrative. The choice of these particular animals as comic commentators on the actions of the main characters is highly significant. The horse was the chivalric animal par excellence, ostensibly a knight’s most valuable possession. The French word for a knight, chevalier, as well as the English

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31 Savage, ‘Hunting in the Middle Ages’, 38.
word for chivalry, both indicate the prominent role of the animal.\textsuperscript{34} Larger in size than the usual mounts, knightly warhorses and \textit{destriers} were reserved for battle and tournaments, and they were not used otherwise. To that end, they received a long, expensive and specialised combat training.\textsuperscript{35} Illuminations from the fifteenth century, as the ones in the \textit{Livre des Tournois} illuminated by Barthélemy d’Eyck, demonstrate the difference between a warhorse and a simple mount (Fig. 3.10).\textsuperscript{36} In ordinary horses, the rider’s feet reach under the animal’s belly, almost to the ground. Warhorses were larger and were mounted differently, to facilitate combat from horseback. The reach of the riders’ feet in the illumination indicates the difference in the type of the horse and riding style.\textsuperscript{37} In the Vienna \textit{Coeur}, Coeur’s Free Will is a black \textit{destrier} and Désir, being a squire, rides a smaller red horse.

Alongside the horse, the rider also needed to be trained extensively in mounted combat. A man had to invest time and resources to his preparation as a knight, which accounts for the fact that chivalry was limited to the wealthier social classes that could afford the costs.\textsuperscript{38} A warhorse and its equipment were at once a knight’s attribute and a signifier of his social status. In fact, according to the \textit{De medicina equorum}, the thirteenth-century treatise on hippiatry and horsemanship, a horse is the only factor that determines one’s nobility.\textsuperscript{39}

The knight’s horse was more than a mount, however. Traditionally, the horse has held a unique position in medieval imagination, as it was at the same time a domestic animal and an almost legendary creature.\textsuperscript{40} The horses of great heroes like Alexander the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[34] Marina Viallon, ‘Fiers destriers: images du cheval de guerre au Moyen Âge’, \textit{In Situ}, no. 27 (24 September 2015), 1.
\item[35] \textit{Destrier}: The medieval warhorse, expensive and ‘of noble size’ which means larger than the common horse. For a discussion on medieval horses and their gear see John Clark, \textit{The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment}, C.1150-c.1450 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 7.
\item[36] These would be called \textit{rounceys} or \textit{amblers} and a knight’s retinue would use them. See Clark, \textit{The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment}, 7.
\item[37] Viallon, ‘Fiers destriers’, 4.
\item[38] Viallon, ‘Fiers destriers’, 2-3.
\item[39] Alison Langdon, \textit{Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication} (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 176.
\end{footnotes}
Great, Cesar and Augustus were mentioned by Pliny the Elder, who claimed that they did not allow any other man to ride them. Pliny also mentions other examples where horses have taken revenge for the death of their masters, and they were considered able to understand the concepts of family, honour, sorrow and suicide.\(^{41}\) According to a longer tradition that can be traced back to at least Isidore of Seville’s \textit{Etymologiae}, horses could foresee the outcome of battles: Isidore mentions that soldiers could make such predictions based on the eagerness or not of their horses to engage.\(^{42}\)

In romance literature, a knight leaving on horseback is an indication that he is going on an adventure, and the bond between horse and rider is often emphasised.\(^{43}\) Some horses are presenting anthropomorphic traits, and when they do, these traits are quintessentially human: alongside their intelligence, they can show affection and they can communicate feelings, being particularly eloquent in non-verbal, physical communication.\(^{44}\) They enjoy a unique bond with their masters and they mourn for their deaths: in the lay of Sir Graelant, when the hero dies his horse rides away in grief, it is constantly restless and neighing and it does not accept any other rider.\(^{45}\) Sometimes horses function as their riders’ alter egos, embodying the carnal, vital force while the knight represents the spiritual side of the equation.\(^{46}\)

Barthélemy’s humorous intention becomes clearer if his illuminations are read against this cultural background. Throughout the manuscript the horses are acting independently, with the intelligence and foresight that literary tradition allowed them to.

\(^{42}\) Barney, \textit{The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville}, XII.i.44.
\(^{43}\) For an extensive collection of essays on horses and horsemanship in medieval French literature and culture, see Centre Universitaire d’Études et de Recherches Médiévales d’Aix, \textit{Le cheval dans le monde médiéval}.
\(^{44}\) Dubost, ‘De quelques chevaux extraordinaires dans le récit médiéval’, 190-191. The author presents examples from \textit{Aliscans}, a twelfth-century \textit{chanson de geste} written in Old Picard language, where the relationship between horse and rider is almost metaphysical, and discusses the story of Giraud de Cabrières, a catalan knight who communicated with his horse through their own secret language. For more examples see Andrew G. Miller, ‘“Tails” of Masculinity: Knights, Clerics, and the Mutilation of Horses in Medieval England’, \textit{Speculum} 88, no. 4 (2013): 958–95.
\(^{46}\) In the Bayeux Tapestry, William the Conqueror’s horse is represented with an erection, emphasising that it is a stallion and allowing for direct connections between the virility of its rider. See also Miller, ‘“Tails” of Masculinity, 966; Begoña Aguiriano, ‘Le cheval et le départ en aventure dans Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes’, in \textit{Le cheval dans le monde médiéval}, 11-13.
Coeur’s horse approaches Espérance, acting as the earthy, physical counterpart of pure and aloof Coeur: while the knight has not even noticed the Lady, the virile horse approaches her drooling, and Coeur’s rising lance could be a sexual allusion (Fig. 3.2). In the castle of Courroux, when Coeur’s horse extends a side glance to the audience and when Désir’s mount averts its eyes in front of the duel, each beast is acting according to the tradition that allows it to predict or anticipate the battle’s outcome (Fig. 3.6 and 3.7).

Recent equestrian knowledge confirms the emotional expressivity of horses, and identifies specific physical manifestations of feelings: a tight mouth indicates anxiety, flat ears indicate anger, a high-raised tail can indicate excitement or aggression, a lowered tail indicates fear.47 Fifteenth-century equine representations, like the group of horses on the bottom right corner in Gentile da Fabriano’s Adoration of the Magi, suggest that this physical expressivity had already been observed (Fig. 3.11). The animals are moving away, scared off by the presence of the leopard near them. They are represented in a variety of poses and reactions, all of them consistent with the nature and behaviour of a horse. The same is true about the dog that is stretching at the bottom of the picture, while turning its head towards the noise that the horses are presumably making. There is nothing anthropomorphic about Gentile da Fabriano’s animals.

In the Vienna Coeur, the horses’ dramatized expressions go beyond their observed natural expressivity. Instead, it is argued that they refer to the mythical eloquence in expressing emotions that has been attributed to them in literature and manuscript illumination.48 This anthropomorphism is unique because it appears to be the initiative of the painter, and it does not manifest in the text.

47 Miller, “‘Tails” of Masculinity’, 965-6.
48 Similar animal anthropomorphism is expressed in Yvain, however in that case the anthropomorphic reaction is explicitly described in the text: ‘Now hear what that lion did! Showing his nobility and goodness, he began to make it clear that he surrendered himself to Yvain: placing his front feet together, he stood erect on his hind legs and bowed his face toward the earth. And then he knelt again, and his face was wet all over with humble tears. And my lord Yvain knew without doubt that the lion was offering him thanks and humbling himself before [him]’. (3392–404). The scene has been illuminated, in BnF Ms Fr. 1433, f. 85r. See also Langdon, Animal Languages in the Middle Ages, 242. However, this case is different than the Vienna Coeur, where the horses’ behaviour is not described at all in the text. The anthropomorphic visualisation is exclusively the initiative of the painter.
What does it mean for a knight to be criticised by his own mount? Firstly, it constitutes a clear inversion of power and authority dynamics between the two characters. The horses of a knight and his squire should reflect the character and the personality of their owners and function as their extension. Instead, in the Vienna Coeur they appear to be disobeying, or even criticising them. In a way, they are substituting the audience, and this substitution further highlights the violation of the cultural topos: instead of aligning themselves with the heroes, the animals are siding with the viewers. The two horses assume the recognisable function of comedy characters in the illuminations.

Comic animals that interact playfully with the text are not unheard of, especially in marginalia. There was a long-standing tradition of such representations and Barthélemy was familiar with it. Similar iconography can be found in the Morgan Hours, one of the earliest manuscripts attributed to him (PML M. 358). The marginalia are filled with animals performing human activities, and the theme of animal anthropomorphism is often combined with an inversion of hierarchy. Often, the predatory animal is the vulnerable one and the prey is in a position of power, for example when two wounded dogs are approaching a rabbit doctor, who is wearing eyeglasses and is holding up a jordan (Fig. 3.12). Elsewhere, a horse is riding a man and a merchant pig is holding a man on a leash (Fig. 3.13 and 3.14). Furthermore, in the Morgan Hours marginalia Barthélemy demonstrates that he is familiar with the moral and ethical attributes assigned to real and fantastic beasts, in the Bestiaries and in literature. Thus, a weasel dressed as preacher is preaching from the pulpit to a cock and a hen, another weasel dressed as cardinal is reading a book and a bishop is riding an ass backwards (Fig. 3.15, 3.16 and 3.17). An image of a crowned cock-King in the bas-de-page of John the Evangelist's miniature page could also have a particular allegorical meaning (Fig. 3.18). The cock is holding a sceptre or a baton, connecting it

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49 For the attribution see Avril, Les Manuscrits a Peintures En France, 224. The manuscript is unfinished, and its marginalia are in varied stages of completion: some folia are finished, others are simply sketched with traces of colour and some are just traced and not even designed in detail. This allows for a more accurate identification with Barthélemy's hand, which is recognisable in the marginalia, some illuminations and almost the entire calendar. See also Myra D. Orth, 'What Goes Around: Borders and Frames in French Manuscripts,' The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery 54 (1996): 192.

50 For example, in the Roman de Renart epics discussed earlier in this thesis.

51 Other examples include f. 4v, where a fox cardinal is reading a book; f. 13r, where a mitred animal bishop is riding backwards on a donkey next to the Ecclesiasticus text.
directly to royalty or foolishness. In the *Roman de Renart*, the cock is an animal often condemned for its desire to impress.\(^5^2\) By illustrating a cock King, Barthélemy could be teasing at nobility’s desire to impress by appearances.

Throughout his production, Barthélemy demonstrates a particular love for the natural world, which can be identified both in his landscapes and backgrounds but also in the animals he painted in his pictures. As Gentile da Fabriano’s horses suggest, the attention to the natural world was a characteristic of Early Renaissance art, which justifies partly the careful anatomies of the horses in the Vienna *Coeur*. However, their facial expressions are so well researched that they become unique and hybrid creatures of exceptional modernity. If the *Morgan Hours* marginalia were the experiment, the Vienna *Coeur* was the apotheosis of animal anthropomorphism. Barthélemy’s innovation to use the anthropomorphic horses as two additional characters, who establish a connection with the reader and function as comic relief figures, is enhanced by his ingenious choice to place the horses not in the marginalia but within the main illumination. As a result, the horses are claiming a place in the narrative that did not originally include them and they are contributing to the visual retelling of the story.

### 3.1.2 Scatological humour: the natural world and its foulness

Barthélemy’s love for nature and landscape painting is expressed most eloquently in one of the most impressive illuminations of the Vienna manuscript, the sunset occurring when the companions reach the Hermitage in the Plain of Sorrowful Reflection (Fig. 3.19).

The landscape and background are filled with an explosion of light and shadow as the sun sets behind the trees. The companions are flocking towards the entrance of the small building. Largesse is tending to his grey horse. Its muted colour allows it to stand out against the reds, yellows and greens of the sunset that takes up almost a quarter of the total pictorial space. Against this this lyrical landscape, the horse relieves itself. The white tail of

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\(^{52}\) In one episode in the *Roman de Renart* the cock is tricked by Renart, who panders to his vanity, and asks him to sing with his eyes closed. Renart obviously aims to attack and eat him as soon as he closes his eyes. The cock’s need for admiration overcomes his perception of danger and in the end, he barely escapes with his life. D. D. R. Owen, *Romance of Reynard the Fox*, 53.
Désir’s horse, which is standing next to the grey one, draws even more attention to the brightly-coloured liquid that splashes next to the animal’s feet.

An especially popular theme in marginalia, both with human and with animal protagonists, scatological humour includes images of characters engaging in the act of producing or playing with urine or excrement. Monkeys were especially favoured animals for that type of representations, both because of their similarity to humans and due to their habit to actually engage in such activities (Fig. 3.20). However, this urinating horse is not placed in the margins, and such a visualisation is a novelty in French illumination. Despite the theme’s popularity in marginalia, this is one of the earliest examples of defecating and urinating animals in the main illumination.

Barthélemy’s appreciation for the natural world around him certainly contributed to his anatomically and behaviourally accurate representation of the horses. At this point in the story the travellers had been on the road for a long time, so this would be an expected reaction from the tired beasts. It could be argued that the horse’s casual act was introduced to enhance the realism of the scene. This may be partly accurate; however, it would be superficial to simply attribute the scatological scene to Barthélemy’s love for realism, especially since his subject matter, the text he is illuminating, is not based on reality.

Firstly, the artist here is not painting a scene taking place in the real world. The plot takes place between dream and reality and the illuminations reflect the dream-like quality of the setting. A comparison between the first illumination, representing René’s chamber, and the second one, reveals this most eloquently. When in the first scene the figures are part of the space, in the second the landscape is flatter and the sense of proportion is lost (Fig. 3.1 and 3.2). The atmosphere is treated differently, the light is crispier and colder, and in many of the subsequent illuminations the desire for realism is often sacrificed in favour of an effort to convey a fantastic quality to the represented scene.

Secondly, these are neither real characters nor real horses. The companions are personifications and Coeur’s horse, Free Will, is also a personification. The horse’s name means that any allegory of the characters also extends to the animals. Their food is also allegorical: in the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris, Mélancolie is offering the black bread of Harsh Labour to the companions. Their lodgings are part of the allegory too, as all toponyms
of the story indicate: the *Pas Perileux*, the Forest of Long Awaiting, the Manor of Delight, the Hospital of Love. Personified allegories are not necessarily subject to the same treatment as the humans or animals they resemble to. Their physical dimension exists only to support their allegorical existence. In this context, there is no room for base bodily functions, unless scatological elements are part of the personified allegory, which is not the case here.

From that perspective, it is perhaps significant that it is Largesse’s horse that cannot hold itself: Largesse and his mount are generous with everything. To accentuate this representational incongruity, Barthélemy painted a stunning background: the last trees of the forest are behind the characters and a glorious sunset turns the sky pink and gold as the sun is setting behind the green hills. The lyricism of the landscape contrasts sharply with the triviality of the scene in the foreground. Moreover, the previously demonstrated anthropomorphism of the horses only emphasises the obscenity of the urination, since their distinctly human qualities would be expected to lead them to more refined behaviour.

There are other instances in the manuscript where scatological references are subtler. Thus, in the immediately preceding illumination of the urinating horse, the representation of bird droppings on the window ledge of the Hermitage is an unexpected addition (Fig. 3.21). The same soiled window ledge can be seen elsewhere in Barthélemy’s work. The scene of *Emilie, Arcita and Palamon praying* in the Vienna *Théséide* is taking place in what would be a pagan church (Fig. 3.22). The illumination is crowded and impressive, but one cannot fail to notice the bird excrement on the window, where a black bird is perched. Its presence on the spot only draws attention to the scatological representation and it hints that—as is usually the case with such creatures—the bird will continue soiling the space in the future. Similarly, in the scene of *King David in Exile* found in the *Egerton Hours*, birds have been sitting on the wall sconces behind the three men, who just returned from the occupied Jerusalem bringing water to their King (Fig. 3.23). We can guess this, because

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The *Egerton Hours* or *Hours of René d’Anjou* are today in London, BL Ms Egerton 1070. The manuscript was painted in different phases and Barthélemy intervened around 1442-1443; see Reynaud, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck avant 1450’, 32-35; François Avril, ‘Heures de René d’Anjou’, in Avril and Reynaud, *Les manuscrits à peintures en France*, no. 122, 226-227. The biblical episode is taken from 2 Samuel 23:8-39. It narrates how the dying King David asked three heroes to enter the Philistine camp and bring him water from the well of Bethlehem, which was occupied by Philistines. When the men returned with the water, the King poured it to the ground in homage to God.
they left their white droppings behind, and the excrement has dripped down the wall just like it did in *Théséide* and in the Vienna *Coeur*.

None of these illuminations is presented as comic. The episode of *King David in Exile* alludes to faraway lands that are lost and not anymore under the King’s control, and thus it must have been particularly resonant to René. The symbolism becomes clearer if one considers the illumination’s time of creation: following René’s return from Italy in 1442, his dominion over Naples and Sicily was in name only, just like his heraldic kingship over Jerusalem. Having only a handful of men for support, René could probably identify with the exiled biblical King—especially since, like many French Kings, René traced his genealogy to King David.54 Similarly, the *Théséide* is a large epic poem narrating the love of Palamon and Arcita for Emilie, and the emphasis is on the themes of courtly love and life.55

It is not suggested here that the illuminations in *Théséide* and in the *Egerton Hours* are funny. These scatological elements that appear in the illuminations are understood as artistic liberties of the illuminator, attesting to a playful imagination and a keen eye for realistic representations. The repetition of this scatological motif suggests that Barthélemy considered it a successful representational solution, but although it is thematically relevant, it is not comparable with the urinating horse of the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*.

It is argued here that the inclusion of the peeing horse was a repetition of the familiar motif that was brought to the extreme. Combining subtlety with obscenity and realism with a sense of humour, the illumination emphasises the realistic, earthly side of the horses and highlights their function as comedy characters. Set against the setting sun, in this fantastic plane between dream and reality where allegories are personified, Largesse’s urinating horse attests to Barthélemy’s humorous intentions.

### 3.1.3 Hybrids, dwarves and jesters

The discussion on animal anthropomorphism addresses the interaction between animal and human nature and the possible merging of the two, when parts of human nature

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are combined with the animal one. In extreme expressions, the merging of the two natures results in creatures that demonstrate visible characteristics of both human and animal, human and plant and other combinations. The amalgamation sometimes is so complete that it is impossible to determine a dominant nature. Such hybrid creatures are frequent in marginalia, and in fact the *Morgan Hours* are dense with similar figures (Fig. 3.24). Their appearance covers a wide range from fantastic to absurd. Some of these representations are connected to descriptions found in a literary tradition that describes monstrosity and deformity in detail.\(^{56}\)

Jalousie, the ‘hunchbacked dwarf’ that misleads the characters in the third illumination, is such a character (Fig. 3.3). She is described as a creature of exceptional ugliness, misshapen and animalistic. Her appearance is connected to her evil nature and her ill advice leads the heroes to adventure and misfortune:

[..] a hunchbacked dwarf [...] quite disfigured in face and body, who had hair nearly a foot and a half long, straight and coarse, thick and black, as though the hairs of an old boar. Her eyes were inflamed and glowing like burning coals, her nose was crooked and large, her eyebrows hung over her eyes, her mouth was large and wide, spanning from ear to ear, her teeth large, yellowed and badly tended, her ears hung down more than a palm’s width, her forehead and face were black, lined and repulsive, and her breasts large, soft and hanging down on her belly. Her shoulders were raised up over her ears, and her arms were thick, short and hairy; her hips were twisted, her legs bony and quite scratched by thorns, and her feet wide and webbed like a swan’s. The only clothing she wore were two lion skins knotted at the shoulder. She well seemed an uncourtly creature, ungracious, spiteful and devoid of love [...]\(^{57}\)

An immediate observation when looking at the Vienna illumination is that the representation of Jalousie is not as faithful to her description (Fig. 3.3). This becomes more evident if the illumination is compared to its counterpart in the Paris *Coeur* (Fig. 3.25). In the Paris manuscript, her physical deformities are much more pronounced and there is no doubt that her size is smaller. Her hair is long and standing on her head, her mouth is huge, her nose is large and her eyebrows are hanging, her teeth are big and yellow, her ears hang

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\(^{56}\) The language used to describe monstrosity, deformity and alterity is and has historically been socially and politically charged. In this thesis these terms are used in their historical context, aiming to describe real and imaginary creatures according to the rhetoric of the time of reference. For an in-depth discussion on the subject see Ghadessi, *Portraits of Human Monsters in the Renaissance*, 1-2 and first chapter.

down as described, her sagging breasts are hanging on her belly and her feet are webbed. In
the Vienna Coeur the dwarfish size is not obvious, and Jalousie’s entangled hair and clothing
alludes more to representations of Wild Men (Fig. 3.26).58

The character has parallels in chivalric literature. Similar creatures appear frequently
in romances and they are not benevolent, suggesting that their physical deformity reflects
the deformity of their soul.59 Usually their appearance in the story foretells trouble, and the
encounter leads the heroes to a series of adventures.60 In Chrétien de Troyes’ Yvain, the
hero runs into one, which he describes as a hybrid human with several animal features:

[...] a rustic lout, as black as a mulberry, indescribably big and hideous; indeed, so
passing ugly was the creature that no word of mouth could do him justice [...] his
head was bigger than that of a horse or of any other beast; [...] his hair was in tufts,
leaving his forehead bare for a width of more than two spans; [...] his ears were big
and mossy, just like those of an elephant; his eyebrows were heavy and his face was
flat; his eyes were those of an owl, and his nose was like a cat’s; his jowls were split
like a wolf, and his teeth were sharp and yellow like a wild boar’s; his beard was
black and his whiskers twisted; his chin merged into his chest and his backbone was
long, but twisted and hunched [...].61

Jalousie is recognisably related to the characters of this literary tradition, both
through her monstrous appearance and through her role. Following the encounter and her
counsel the two protagonists will enter a cycle of adventures, as the narrative structure of
Arthurian romances commands. The Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris borrows heavily from

58 For more on the topos of the Wild Man see Richard Bernheimer, Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in
Art, Sentiment, and Demonology (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); Timothy Husband and Gloria
59 Traditionally, disability and disfigurement had connections with sin. Canon law connected the two directly,
and in some cases did not allow people with disabilities to join the clergy; see also Darrel W. Amundsen,
Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
2000), 266. Popular culture and literature shared the opinion and considered natal deformity a sign of
inherited sin: in Marie de France’s Bisclavret the unfaithful wife is mutilated by her husband, who cuts off her
nose; subsequently, her daughters are born noseless. In France, hunchback children were considered the
result of illicit intercourse. For a more detailed discussion see Patricia Skinner, Living with Disfigurement in
Early Medieval Europe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 160 for many examples; see also Tory Pearman,
Women and Disability in Medieval Literature (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 74–83 and Irina Metzler,
Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages, c.1100–c.1400
60 For a discussion on the role of dwarves in literature see Vernon J Harward, The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance
61 Chrétien de Troyes, Four Arthurian Romances, ed. Douglas B. Killings and David Widger (Lanham: SMK
Books), 288–293.
such sources, in particular from *Lancelot en prose* and the *Queste de Saint Graal*. Therefore, the narrative connection is both evident and intentional.

Considering all this background, a viewer could reasonably anticipate an adverse reaction to Jalousie’s presence. Yet despite these negative associations, Jalousie does not appear to inspire doubt to the two companions in the Vienna illumination (Fig. 3.3). Instead, Désir looks at her calmly as she speaks, and Coeur seems equally oblivious to her implied malice. The only characters to react adversely to her presence are the two horses, that avoid looking at her. Thus, the horses reassert their established roles as silent commentators, who understand Jalousie’s malice when the heroes do not.

It is worth comparing the two visualisations for Jalousie, in the Vienna and the Paris manuscripts, for another significant reason. The Vienna Jalousie may have monstrous features, yet these features are not represented in a grotesque manner. This becomes more apparent if compared with other hybrids painted by Barthélemy, especially the ones decorating the margins of the *Morgan Hours*. It is possible that the *Morgan Hours* hybrids were both models and a field of exercise for the painter in this respect, eventually leading him to his rendition of Jalousie. In the Vienna *Coeur*, he created a representation that appears convincingly otherworldly but still familiar, as personification of a recognisably human emotion. This figure is treated with care and could be described as a beautifully ugly creature.

This representation of ugliness and deformity is of further importance because it emerges during a time when people of extraordinary physical features were present at court. They were the court Jesters, also called ‘Fools’ and ‘Dwarfs’. The three words were often used interchangeably when referring to them, although not all Jesters demonstrated signs of dwarfism in the contemporary medical sense. Usually, however, the term indicated some sort of physical deformity that was distinctive enough to make an impression to the audience. ‘Dwarf’, in this context, meant ‘deformed’. The connection

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65 Tietze-Conrat, *Dwarfs and Jesters in Art*, 14.
between physical deformities and deformities of character might have been frequent in literature, but for court fools deformity was an asset praised frequently and openly.\textsuperscript{66} Isabella d’Este’s words in praise of the dwarf she offered as a wedding gift to her son’s wife convey this most eloquently: ‘I have not found another with such wonderful deformity in the relation of her parts’ she writes, ‘that would bring me as much satisfaction’.\textsuperscript{67}

Jokers and court jesters for the amusement of Kings existed since antiquity and they had historically enjoyed a special relationship with the King they served. Tradition indicates that the court fool could speak with impunity, and therefore could tell the monarch the truth when everyone else would not.\textsuperscript{68} Using humour as a vehicle for hard truths, the fool’s traditional function thus would be a most serious one, albeit in a comic disguise. In France, this was emphasised by their attributes, the fool’s cap and the mace or \textit{marotte}, which often had a face on it (Fig. 3.27).\textsuperscript{69} Both items allude to kingship, to a sceptre and a crown, emphasising the role of the Fool as an alter ego to the King.\textsuperscript{70} Both were also the items that the King of Fools carried during the carnival.\textsuperscript{71} In theory, the court fool was a wise counsellor and a useful servant: they were usually close to the monarch, which put them in the privileged position of being both politically informed and with intimate knowledge of their patron.\textsuperscript{72}

During the fifteenth century there was a remarkable rise in popularity of the figure of the court jester, and some of the jesters active at European courts at the time were enjoying immense popularity. Court fools became an asset for the monarch, a symbol of his

\textsuperscript{70} The connection between Fool and King as it is established through their attributes lasts into the sixteenth century, and it is also encountered in the works of Rabelais and Erasmus. See also John Doran, \textit{The History of Court Fools} (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 43.
\textsuperscript{71} See relevant discussion in first chapter.
\textsuperscript{72} Ghadessi, ‘Lords and Monsters’, 503.
own status, and they acquired unprecedented reputation.\textsuperscript{73} Correspondingly, their visual representations changed.\textsuperscript{74}

René’s cultural influence in other European courts had arguably a role to play in this shift, especially if the popularity of his own court jester, Triboulet, is considered. Triboulet served René in the years from 1454-80, and he became so famous that his name was adopted as a title by subsequent jesters, in other French courts.\textsuperscript{75} If the assumptions about his talent as a comedian are accurate, it is not hard to see why he was considered René’s favourite Jester: he is credited with the creation of several sotties for the King, either as a sole author or together with the other favoured court comedian, Jean du Prier. It has even been suggested that he was the creative mind behind \textit{La farce du Maître Pierre Pathelin}, arguably the most popular farce of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{76}

Triboulet embodied the quintessential elements of a court jester of his time, as they have been described thus far. He was likely deformed, although he is assumed to not have been a dwarf in the contemporary medical sense. Descriptions of his appearance vary, but most accounts claim that his head was domed and too small for his body; so small, that it could fit in half an orange cap.\textsuperscript{77} This deformity is highlighted in surviving visual representations of him, such as in the illuminations that accompany his poem \textit{Complainte contre la Mort} (Fig. 3.28 and 3.29). His small, domed head is again visible under the dome of his fool’s cap, in the portrait medal of him created by Francesco Laurana in the 1460s (Fig. 3.30). Laurana’s effigy reiterates the King-Jester analogy: the Latin inscription running around the medal can be translated as follows:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tietze-Conrat, \textit{Dwarfs and Jesters in Art}, 25.
\item Tietze-Conrat, \textit{Dwarfs and Jesters in Art}, 5.
\item Tietze-Conrat, \textit{Dwarfs and Jesters in Art}, 41-44.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The King’s vesture makes mock of me, by giving innocent me the appearance and the office of a King, and clothes me for the sport of Kings. The Jester is clothed as a King, for the amusement of Kings. This was not very far from the truth: René’s accounts demonstrate that Triboulet was clothed sumptuously, in expensive fabrics and furs. Some of the fabrics were acquired by Corpici, the same cloth merchant that commissioned the Aix Annunciation, discussed later. Triboulet was given his own lodgings in the halls of Angers and he was even allowed to have his own servant.

In the medal portrait, Triboulet is holding his marotte and he is wearing the fool’s cap that was typical of his profession. His deformity is described, but the representation does not aim to offend or to mock him. The focus is more on the Jesters’ role. The inversion is not complete, the Fool does not replace the King, but the conceptual cross-dressing indicates a strong connection between the two figures: they are almost represented as two sides of the same coin. Laurana’s medallion thus underlines the role Triboulet had at court and demonstrates René’s appreciation towards him.

In one of the illuminations of Complainte contre la Mort René is shown reading the poem to the dead body of his Jester (Fig. 3.29). Triboulet was the author of the text. Yet, in this scene, the King is the one performing the role of the Jester, by reciting his words. Triboulet, placed in his coffin with his marotte near him, thus becomes the audience instead of the performer, almost swapping places with the King. The inversion is once more incomplete, since Triboulet is dead, but it is arguably a reiteration of the Jester-King dualism.

Among the plays commissioned by René is the Sottie du Roi des Sots, literally translated as the ‘sottie of the King of Fools’. It has been suggested that one of the characters, the King of Fools, had been identifiable to René. The connection with the carnival King of Fools—or Roi des Sots—is obvious. This particular sottie highlights René’s

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79 Lecoy de La Marche, Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René, No 743, 747, 749, 750, 751, 758, 759, 765.
80 Lecoy de La Marche, Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René, No 749.
81 Lecoy de La Marche, Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René, 331.
82 Martin, La Farce de Pathelin, 6-8.
familiarity with the popular culture that included the Feast of Fools. Firstly, he was familiar with the Christmas festivities where such figures were the main protagonists: his family is documented to have attended them and they were sponsored by the Dukes of Burgundy in his lifetime. More significantly, it will be seen further below that some elements from this popular culture found their way into his court, especially as part of theatrical productions he commissioned and sponsored. Therefore, there is strong evidence to suggest that his appreciation towards Triboulet was also inspired by an erudite and nuanced approach towards the latter’s role, his comedic talent and his sense of humour.

Triboulet’s effigy and his illuminations correspond chronologically with another important representation of a Jester. A portrait today in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna is considered to be the likeness of Gonella, one of the three Jesters of the same name who served the d’Este family in Ferrara (Fig. 3.31). The exceptional quality of the work indicates a skilled artist and an expensive commission, and it is evidence of the new, more prominent position that court jesters were beginning to enjoy. It is argued here that there is a direct connection between René, Barthélemy d’Eyck and the portrait of Gonella.

Conventionally attributed to Fouquet, the portrait is dated around 1445. Gonella’s painter was familiar with the art of Jan van Eyck, as indicated by the lines of the face and the detailed expression. The painter used wood from the Baltic area that has been dated to the second quarter of the fifteenth century, which is consistent with the iconographic elements of the picture. However, infrared photography revealed that under the paint there is writing in French, words that serve as a guide to the painter about the colours that he intended to use. The language of these instructions points to a French-speaking artist who was working

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83 Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage Vol II, 312.
84 The three jesters shared the same name but the latter two assumed it as a title, in homage to the first of the name. The represented man is identified as Gonella in the first inventory where the portrait is mentioned, the 1659 inventory of Duke Léopold-Guillaume of Hapsburg. It is described as ‘une petit portrait (...) du fou Gonella, avec la barbe courte et un bonnet rouge en habit rouge et jaune’. Published by Pächt, ‘René d’Anjou-Studien I’, 85–126.
with northern materials, therefore probably away from Italy, and familiar both with the work of Jan van Eyck and with the Italian productions of his time.\textsuperscript{86}

The framing of the portrait is unusual. Gonella is crossing his arms above his chest, trying to fit in a frame that is put very close to him, close enough to cause a distortion.\textsuperscript{87} It cuts out the shoulders and part of his cap, creating a feeling of spontaneity that is accentuated by the realistic representation of his unshaved face, his natural posture and the emotional treatment of his portrait. His unshaven face, easily comparable with René’s sleepy portrait in the first page of the \textit{Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris}, gives out an air of familiarity, domesticity, informality. He looks reasonably well dressed in yellow and red, the heraldic colours of the d’Este family, as would be expected by his position since he would usually be in his lord’s presence. The painter wanted to show that his subject did not prepare to sit and be painted for posterity, he arguably aimed for spontaneity instead of formality.

Conceptually, the idea of distortion, confinement, of breaking the rules and fitting into inappropriate places, is very resonant with the role of the court jester. An embodiment of otherness, a jester is by definition a character that does not fit and for whom rules do not apply.\textsuperscript{88} Gonella seems to be invading the painter’s space, in a staged portrait intentionally made to look like a spontaneous, unofficial, casual representation of a person. These are recurring attributes in the art of Barthélemy. Gonella’s posture, with his arms crossed on his chest, reminds of a miller in the \textit{Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance}, copied after designs of Barthélemy (Fig. 3.32). The miller is also squeezed into a narrow window frame and his head is tilted, as he tries to observe what is happening outside his window. Similar close frames surround the people in the windows in the illumination of the \textit{Triumph of Theseus in Athens}, found in \textit{Théséide} (Fig. 3.33).

\textsuperscript{86} These elements led Pächt to attribute the work to Fouquet. He revealed that Jan van Eyck also followed this practice, but his notes were in Flemish. Northern painters preferred Baltic wood, unlike their Italian counterparts. The dating of the wood is partly consistent with Reynaud’s suggestion, that the work was created around 1440 in Rome. Extensive analysis on the wood panels and the writings was published by Pächt and Kreidl, ‘Le portrait de Gonella’, 1–4.

\textsuperscript{87} Pächt and Kreidl, ‘Le portrait de Gonella’, 1.

\textsuperscript{88} Perry and Schwarz, \textit{Behaving like Fools}, 8-9.
Moreover, the treatment of light and of Gonella’s facial expression is emphasising the idea of distortion, but also that of antithesis and duality. The light enters from the left side of the painting, reflecting on the man’s clothes and on the right part of his face. His raised eyebrows contribute to the immediacy of the portrait, giving him an expression of amused anticipation. He looks like he just cracked a joke or threw a punchline, crossed his arms over his chest and waited for the viewer’s response. At the same time, there is something melancholic in his half smile. The inclined head, sideways glance and sad but smiling face also point to the same artist, as does the unshaven texture of the face and the masterful representation of light and shadow. Barthélemy valued spontaneity and informal representations, as the first illumination of the Vienna Coeur suggests—discussion will return to René’s unshaven face. He also often manipulated space and perspective for dramatic effect, as the changing viewpoints in the Vienna Coeur illuminations testify. Finally, his love for heraldry would account for the clever use of colour in Gonella’s clothes. The dressing of the Jester in the d’Este colours is a return to Laurana’s inscription: the fool is dressed in the colours of his lord, for his lord’s amusement.

Based on the above visual analysis, the present thesis suggests that an attribution to Barthélemy d’Eyck is possible. There is another portrait of Gonella, originally from Ferrara and evidently a contemporary copy of the one in Vienna. The existence of two copies suggests perhaps a common model. Barthélemy could have painted the model when he was in Italy in the 1440s, accompanying René in his travels—his undocumented but suspected voyage could allow the opportunity. He could have received the commission as René’s painter and as a member of his entourage. He could have created a detailed preliminary design while in Italy, as was his practice—discussion will return to Barthélemy’s high quality preliminary designs. The Ferrara copy could be a result of these preliminary drawings. If this is indeed the case, then the Gonella of Vienna was created in France, using the wood that the artist preferred. There is no surviving evidence regarding the patron’s identity, but it would appear reasonable that a member of d’Este family would have commissioned it, especially since the jester is dressed in their colours.

The Vienna portrait and its potential attribution are discussed here because it appears that in the mid-fifteenth century, the princes of two major courts of Europe, Ferrara and Anjou, commissioned works representing the likeness of their jesters. This is a novelty that has many implications. We know that Triboulet was physically exceptional, yet we can see in both representations of him that he is not portrayed as a grotesque creature. On the contrary, and most interestingly, in the Compté de mort illumination, discussed above, his King is reading to him—or rather, his dead body—his own work (Fig. 3.29). Triboulet is honoured and appreciated in these representations, for his role as a comedian and for his function as an entertainer. Equally, Gonella’s portrait does not inspire derision and mockery. His intelligent gaze and his spontaneous posture arguably emphasise his quick wit and his humorous demeanour. Both jesters are represented with attention and care, with the intention to highlight their work and their role as comic entertainers.

It is evident by René’s patronage that he valued and appreciated comic entertainment. He was patron to actors and theatre groups and he sponsored and produced theatrical performances of different types, from morality plays to farces and sotties. Some of these were Triboulet’s creations, and we know he was not the only comedian in René’s service. Correspondingly, performers and creators of comedy found themselves in a new position of respect and value. The most prominent court comedians were the court jesters, and they were usually physically exceptional in some way.

There is arguably a connection between this new appreciation of court jesters and the change in their visual representations. When unusual bodies that did not fit the normative aesthetic standards became worthy of attention, they were approached by artists with curiosity and admiration. The jester portraits discussed here suggest an important shift in perspective. As insensitive as it may be for today’s moral standards, the typical reaction to court jesters was laughter. It was the humorous role of court jesters and the comic—

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91 Another popular comedy and theatre author was Jean du Prier, and Triboulet’s predecessor was a jester called Maître Mouche. René also frequently made payments to a theatre troupe called Gallants Sans Souci. Bianciotto, ‘Passion du livre et des lettres à la cour’; Roy, ‘Ecrire pour le théâtre à la cour d’Anjou-Provence’, 97–114; Arden, Fools’ Plays, 74; Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 166.
92 Perry and Schwarz, Behaving like Fools, 10.
albeit derisive—potential of extraordinary bodies that elevated them to a new status when humour and comedy rose in popularity at court. It was this connection of deformity with humour and comedy that allowed it to enter the literal and figurative stage.

3.1.4 Humorous personalisation: the inside jokes

Barthélemy’s visual humour has been identified, so far, in his anthropomorphic animals and scatological references, as well as in the way he manipulates space, and sometimes the story itself. The latter merits further discussion, because this analysis already identified instances where Barthélemy’s rendition narrates a completely different story to René’s: the illumination where Coeur appears to be losing a battle that he is supposed to be winning is a striking example. However, this is not the only instance that the artist takes liberties with the text in this manuscript. These become more evident when the Vienna Coeur is compared to the Paris Coeur, which contains a complete visual cycle of seventy-one illuminations. The first sixteen illuminations, extant in both manuscripts, have enough similarities to indicate a common visual background. Yet if seen in juxtaposition, their differences stand out clearly.

The first illumination of the Vienna Coeur is an intimate scene, taking place in René’s bedchamber (Fig. 3.1). In the immediate narrative future, the heart will become the knight Coeur and together with Désir they will leave for their noble quest. For now, though, what the viewer sees is René in his bed, in a particularly original representation of a king—even if this was a self-styled title. Not bearing any regal attributes, René is unshaven. He is wearing a nightcap and he is half naked in his nightgown, having just woken up from his tormented sleep. He supports his head with his hand, immersed in sorrow. His eyes are half-closed, since he is not even sure if he is dreaming or if he is awake. René is drowsy, unshaven and undressed, sitting on his bed and lacking any regal demeanour.

It is a highly unusual representation. A noble portrait would traditionally focus on the attributes of authority, celebrating René’s position and social rank.\textsuperscript{93} This is not the case here. This is an intimate, domestic moment and the setting is enhanced by the scene’s warm

\textsuperscript{93} Shearer West, \textit{Portraiture} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 72.
light. This degree of intimacy alludes to the patron’s identity, as it suggests that the painter was close to him, both emotionally and physically.

There is enough documentary evidence to suggest that the representation of René’s bedchamber is quite faithful to reality. In June 1462, the catalogues of the Hôtel de Marseille indicate that Barthélemy’s room, the high chamber, included a bed with white curtains and two benches next to it, as well as a feather mattress. By this time Barthélemy had been appointed valet tranchant of René, and was mentioned in documents as ‘noble Barthélemy de Eyck, écuyer du roi de Sicile’, which means that René had given him almost noble status. The title of valet tranchant, essentially translated as the one who cuts the meat for their lord, was a title both of honour and of confidence, and it also meant living in close proximity to René and his wife. The descriptions of his furnished rooms indicate the same. The white bed of the Vienna illumination, with the small bench and the light under it, appears to have been drawn from life, allowing a look into René’s most private space.

Such level of intimacy also indicates that Barthélemy had first-hand knowledge of what René looked like when he was suddenly woken up. Both the setting and the model, therefore, were familiar to the artist, who had the privilege to be the patron’s valet and friend. This illumination arguably constitutes a rare and personal present to René: it is a portrait of him that depicts him in a way he is not usually represented and, at the same time, the intimacy of the scene celebrates the friendship between the two men.

Within the picture, there are further indications of Barthélemy’s subtly intimate approach. René is supposed to be in deep emotional pain and the text describes his heartache. It is reflected in the illumination by his posture, by the way he supports his head with his hand, as if it is too heavy with tormented thoughts. This is a particularly nuanced representation: connections between melancholia and lovesickness have been made since antiquity. In the Aeneid, the enamoured Dido is described as an unfortunate Phoenician who

[...] cannot sate her senses,
unfulfilled, and vowed as an offering for future destruction, burns as she stares, roused equally both by the gifts and the young boy [...].

In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, the rejected Echo can’t eat or sleep:

[...] Scorned and rejected, with burning cheeks, she fled to the forest to hide her shame and live thenceforward in lonely caves.
But her love persisted and steadily grew with the pain of rejection.
Wretched and sleepless with anguish, she started to waste away.
Her skin grew dry and shrivelled, the lovely bloom of her flesh lost all its moisture; nothing remained but voice and bones; then only voice, for her bones (so they say) were transformed to stone[...].

More examples can be found in other classical writers, as well as in works of medicine. These were all references that René could recognise. Moreover, the ‘melancholic humour’, as it was medically described at the time, was connected to creativity and inspiration. It is no wonder, then, that René’s emotional torment gave birth to a literary work.

Barthélemy sought to represent René’s emotional pain, deep contemplation and heavy thoughts, and he resolved this by depicting him touching his face, perhaps supporting his head, or leaning on his chin, in a gesture expressing both emotional pain and contemplation. Touching the face to place emotions in plain view is recurring in religious iconography and it is usually used to emphasise sorrow or contrition. Among other

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102 See for example Fra Angelico’s Mocking of Christ. Sorrow and contrition were connected to contemplation, and the tears were connected with atonement. This was especially connected with the cult of Magdalen, patron saint of the house of Anjou, who was traditionally represented displaying intense emotions. In her case, her tears of pain were emphasised and connected to divine love. The need to weep during painful meditation was emphasised in some religious writings, especially among the Carthusians, who were favoured by René. For a detailed discussion on Magdalen and her cult see Katherine Ludwig Jansen, The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), especially 207-209 and 307-332. The same gesture can be found in one of the mourning angels in the Well of Moses in Dijon, which Barthélemy would have seen when he was working for the Duke of Burgundy. The angel’s gesture is also an expression of emotional pain and contemplation, albeit connected to prayer and mourning. For more on this see Susie Nash, ‘Claus Sluter’s ‘Well of Moses’ for the Chartreuse de Champmol Reconsidered: Part III,’ The Burlington Magazine 150, no. 1268 (2008), 729.
examples, the same gesture appears in the iconography for *Man of Sorrows*, especially in Northern Europe. Barthélemy’s re-contextualisation of religious iconography was a particularly successful innovation in this case. He represented René without any idealisation, as a man full of sorrow, in a secular context instead of the traditional religious one. This illumination manages to refer to several emotional layers at the same time: Barthélemy simultaneously represents René’s mood, his creativity that gets stimulated by his melancholy, the intimacy that the two of them share and René’s sleepy face, barely awake from his dream.

Would René appreciate such a representation of himself? Evidence suggests that he would. If his literary production is any indication, his love for allegory, symbolism and a personal connection to him are common themes. Coeur’s story is such an example: René’s lovesickness is turned into an allegory and his heart is personified in the protagonist. Similarly, his *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* reflects his anxiety for his eternal soul and his heart is again the protagonist. His eschatological approach may also be echoing in the near-death experience he used as the means to introduce his allegory in the *Livre du Cœur d’Amour Épris*. His *Regnault et Jehanneton* is again self-referential.

His desire to introduce himself into his works was translated visually as well. He did not shy from less flattering representations of himself, especially allegorical ones. He was represented as a crumbling skeleton on his funeral monument, and again in manuscript illuminations. Although such representations are not unusual in funeral monuments of this period, it is significant that René was fascinated with the topic of death in general, and especially later in his life, with the prospect of his own death. A grisly skeletal King of the *Egerton Hours* is placed after an equally grim poem which refers to Vainglory (Fig. 3.34). Another skeletal King opens the Office of the Dead in a Book of Hours, and this time the

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104 A figure of a crowned death, shrouded in a cloth with this coat of arms, was on top his tomb at Angers. It was unfortunately destroyed during the Revolution, but it is known through descriptions, and it was probably similar to the cadaverous figure found in the *Egerton Hours*, also painted by Barthélemy (BL Ms Egerton 1070, f. 53r); Avril, ‘Heures de René d’Anjou’, 226-227; König, ‘Les Heures Egerton’, 206.
inscription reads ‘King of all that lives, come let us adore him’ (Fig. 3.35).\textsuperscript{105} The cadaverous King is an imaginary portrait of René as the protagonist of his own \textit{memento mori}, and his coat of arms is painted on the banner that could also be his shroud.\textsuperscript{106}

The cadaverous Kings testify to the fact that René was not against symbolic portraits that could also be unflattering, as long as they evoked the allegory eloquently. Moreover, his self-referring literary production suggests that he may have not objected, and perhaps actually encouraged representations of himself that were either allegoric, or simply without his regal attributes, and in different roles. Illuminations of him reading to his dead jester, thereby putting himself in the role of a dramatic reader or a court performer, have already been discussed. This suggestion could explain the representation of Jeremiah in the inner right wing of the \textit{Aix Annunciation}, that bears a visible resemblance to him (Fig. 3.36).\textsuperscript{107}

Unflattering, allegorical, dramatic, intimate, all these representations of René suggest that he would appreciate the opening page of the Vienna \textit{Coeur}. The illumination could be testimony of the closeness between him and Barthélemy, who was in the position to witness René’s private life, his pain and his creativity, acknowledge them and represent them. It does not seem too bold to suggest that René would probably smile at his unshaven face.

The many interpretative layers of the Vienna Coeur are lost in the Paris copy of the work. Further comparisons between the two manuscripts reveal that several humorous elements are lost in the Paris copy. More often than not, the lost elements are personal to René and they convey a sense of humour.

\textsuperscript{105}‘Regem cui omnia vivunt, venite adoremus’. BnF Lat. 1160, f. 151r. See also Kathleen Cohen, \textit{Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 89.

\textsuperscript{106}As an allegory, this could be connected to his political death, as well as his advancing age. At the same time, it has been suggested that René’s funeral monument was a parody of the funerary monument of René’s ancestor, Robert the Wise of Anjou, in Naples. See Erwin Panofsky, \textit{Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini} (New York: Abrams, 1992), 65 and 86.

\textsuperscript{107}Nash, ‘Claus Sluter’s ‘Well of Moses’ for the Chartreuse de Champmol Reconsidered: Part III’, 740. It would not be unusual for René to be represented as Jeremiah, especially since the Duke of Burgundy’s likeness was included in the \textit{Well of Moses}, and René would have seen this sculpted portrait. René did not commission the \textit{Aix Annunciation}, but Corpici, the patron, could have asked for his likeness to be included as a gesture to please him. See further discussion later in this chapter.
In the opening illumination, René is shown in his bed but the domestic atmosphere and intimate details that Barthélemy inserted are absent (Fig. 3.37). René is touching his aching heart and he is clearly still asleep. He is not in his nightgown and his room is not described in any particular detail: it is a generic, not a personalised space. Love is not present and Désir does not receive the same lyrical treatment he enjoyed in the Vienna copy: instead of an expensive outfit decorated with flames, he looks like a simple attendant watching over his lovesick King. The scene lacks the warm domesticity and the dreamy quality of its Vienna counterpart. The unshaven, undressed figure of René, the personal and private portrait of the monarch in his waking moment, comes in striking contrast with the much more formal representation in the Paris manuscript. This is evidently not a work personal to René.

Continuing in narrative sequence, the two heroes encounter Espérance. In the Vienna manuscript, Barthélemy transformed the older woman who personified Hope to a young and eligible lady (Fig. 3.2). She is wearing her hair down, indicating that she is unmarried, and her blue mantle and crown refers to Marian iconography. She conforms to all standards of noble beauty. Coeur is seemingly not paying attention to her and Désir has to point her out to him. However, Coeur’s lance is held suggestively by his leg and leaning towards the Lady, and his equipment is covered in winged hearts, an iconographical element which was used as a symbol for desire in vulgar illustrations. These elements arguably contradict the platonic and philosophical dimension of the text and add a very physical layer to the encounter. Combined with the earlier discussion on Coeur’s drooling horse, the picture becomes a subtly sexualised depiction of Espérance.

Perhaps this seductive representation aims to tease René for his own habits in love, which René personally admits in the text. Under his coat of arms that present him as King of Jerusalem in the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris, the verses read:

I am René d’Anjou, who present myself
As love’s beggar, so as to recount
My deeds wholly, omitting nothing,
To the God of Love, who truly tempts me
More than any other of his subjects.

Unterkircher, King René’s Book of Love, 49.
For many ladies came to petition me,
And several maids whom it was necessary to scorn,
Town ladies and shepherdesses caused me to lament
In Italy and France, where I went for amusement
To pass the time, believing to exempt myself
From here placing my arms, which I come bearing
Since I am bound to do so to acquit myself.\textsuperscript{109}

René presents himself as a beggar for love reminiscing the dame, demoiselles and bourgeoises of his life.\textsuperscript{110} There is no reason to believe he was not honest in this description: when he was a guest at the Sforza before his marriage to his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, in 1454, he was teased about his cura mulieribus.\textsuperscript{111} Keeping that in mind, Barthélemy could be winking at his patron by painting Espérance as a Lady he could not resist, instead of an ‘already a bit aged’ woman that would not catch his eye. Perhaps the fact that Coeur does not see her immediately could also be indicating his devotion to his chosen one.

In the corresponding Paris illumination, these incongruities are missing (Fig. 3.38). The pillar is inside the tent, as the text dictates; Coeur’s horse is not drooling, and the proportions of the figures against the background are generally more reasonable. The pictorial space is structured slightly differently and two heroes are seen going on their way in the background. This is a typical spatial construction that includes many narrative scenes in one frame, and a solution that Barthélemy avoided in the Vienna manuscript, treating each miniature as one scene instead. Interestingly, in the Paris manuscript Coeur’s apparatus is still decorated with flying hearts, and Espérance remains young. However, the sexual overtones created by Coeur’s lance are missing. There are similarities between the two illuminations, but there is also a distinctly different approach in spatial composition and in the liberal visual translation of the text.

\textsuperscript{109} ‘Je suis René d’Anjou, qui me viens presenter/ comme coquin d’Amours, a la fin de compter/ Mon fait entierement, sans et riens mescompter/ envers le Dieu d’Amours, qui m’a voulu tempter/ plus qu’autre son subject, pour le vray racompter./ Car maintes dames sont moy venu enhorter/ et plusieurs damoiselles qu’il falloit contempte/ pour radowes et bergieres me faisoient lament/ en Ytalie, en France, ou m’aloye deporter/ Afin de passer temps, moy cuidant exempter/ mettre cy mon blason, lequel viens aporter/ comme je suis tenu, afin de m’acuitier’. René d’Anjou, \textit{The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart—Le Livre Du Cuers d’amour Éspris}, [198,1].

\textsuperscript{110} Unterkircher, \textit{King René’s Book of Love}, 41.

\textsuperscript{111} Unterkircher, \textit{King René’s Book of Love}, 42.
The scene at the hermitage of Jalousie is represented more faithfully in the Parisian manuscript (Fig. 3.25). As discussed, the artist followed the text’s description in the representation of the dwarf, exposing her breasts and giving her the feet of an animal. Following this encounter, the companions enter the Forest of Long Awaiting. The beautiful nocturnal scene of Vienna Coeur is replaced in the Parisian manuscript by a double scene, in which the two heroes sleep on the left side, and drink from the fountain on the right (Fig. 3.39 and 3.40). The layout, the background and the fountain are practically identical in the two manuscripts. The similarity is stronger in the following illumination, although the Parisian version lacks the exceptional use of light that is characteristic of Barthélemy’s art (Fig. 3.41 and 3.42). The scene at the hut of Mélancolie is different, with the hut looking poor and badly maintained in the Parisian version; Mélancolie herself is not visible (Fig. 3.43 and 3.44).

It is in the fight with Souci that the differences are more obvious. In the Paris manuscript, the old lady in the background can only be Mélancolie, who brought them there, as the text dictated (Fig. 3.45). The two knights attack each other on the narrow wooden bridge. Coeur is being hit, as Worry’s lance is on his chin. This is a very dramatic moment, Coeur is losing the fight, and it is represented to the letter. The duel that dominates the foreground bears a strong resemblance to images from Barthélemy’s Livre des Tournois, reflecting a possible influence (Fig. 3.8).

It was seen earlier that especially in this illumination, Barthélemy took liberties with his representation at the Vienna Coeur (Fig. 3.4). The bridge is indeed old and narrow: it is doubtful if there is enough space for one horse and rider and there is certainly not enough space for a duel. Barthélemy has demonstrated with his entire production that he is capable of painting realistic landscapes and buildings and that he can handle proportions with ease. The exaggerated representation of the bridge was a choice, perhaps intending to interpret the description of the Pas Perileux too literally. Barthélemy pushed the boundaries imposed by the textual description, until the bridge, instead of dramatically dangerous, became comically so. This visual hyperbole is missing in the Paris manuscript. More importantly, the horses do not have any role in the scene: they behave as nothing more than normal mounts.
Their eloquent commentary that stood out in the Vienna illuminations is not present in the Paris copy.

Continuing the comparison in narrative sequence, in the next Vienna Coeur Espérance is pulling Coeur out of the river, in an unheroic representation of a protagonist being saved by a girl (Fig. 3.5). Again, the image strays from the text: Coeur should have been holding on to one of the wooden poles supporting the bridge. Instead, he is being dragged out of the water, in full armour, by a woman half his size, resulting in another visual paradox. In the corresponding Paris illumination, Souci rides away as Coeur is pulled out of the water from Espérance and her entourage (Fig. 3.46). The woman on the white horse is probably one of Esperance’s attendants, mentioned in the text but missing in the Vienna illuminations. Coeur’s lance is broken, to represent the fact that he landed a blow. The hero is still saved by a female character, although the broken lance is a faithful representation of the text and of his successful attack. None of the characters connects with the viewer and the horses do not display any anthropomorphic elements, nor do they assume any additional characteristics.

In the next illumination, Courroux’s castle is derelict and badly maintained, and in a much worse condition in the Paris Coeur than in the Vienna representation (Fig. 3.6 and 3.47). The gaping face of Paresse copies the expression of the Vienna Coeur, but not much else is similar. During the very dramatic duel between Courroux and Coeur, Paresse throws her hands in the air like another Magdalen, revealing perhaps what was used as an inspiration for her figure. The duel still recalls of the Livre des Tournois, once more suggesting Barthélemy’s influence (Fig. 3.8). Here, too, the horses do not receive any special attention.

The two illuminations of Désir on his way to the camp of Honneur and his host are similar (Fig. 3.48 and 3.49). A handsome young Désir kneels in front of Honneur in the Paris copy, holding his cap in his hand (Fig. 3.50). The Vienna illumination of the scene has a much lower viewpoint, emphasising the figure of Honneur and showing the back of Désir (Fig. 3.51). Continuing the visual narration, the characters visit derelict buildings, but the scatological references and bird droppings are missing (Fig. 3.52 and 3.53). The urinating horse of the Vienna manuscript is not present in the Paris copy, where the corresponding
scene does not focus on the animals at all (Fig. 3.53). Instead, Coeur is entering the building, Désir follows him and Largesse is tending to his horse, which is not represented fully inside the frame.

An interesting observation can be made in the scene when the group is embarking on the boat for the Island of Love. In the Vienna manuscript, servants are present to help the companions prepare for the trip. Coeur rushes towards the boat, not taking off his armour (Fig. 3.54). This is evidently unreasonable, since the armour’s weight renders it extremely unsafe to wear when travelling by boat: it would be impossible for a person to stay afloat, should they need to, when wearing this equipment. In fact, Coeur is never taking his armour off, and earlier in the manuscript he is shown sleeping in it—again, an unrealistic and impractical decision (Fig. 3.39). The permanently armoured hero could be represented that way to emphasise his role. It is argued here that it could also be a teasing reference to René’s obsession with chivalry and knighthood: Coeur is so dedicated to his cause, that he is wearing his armour even when he does not have to. So far, Barthélemy’s Coeur has been represented as an eager but reckless, clumsy and ultimately ineffective protagonist. Therefore, the image of him jumping on board of a small boat in full armour, instead of walking on a ramp unarmed, arguably emphasises this recklessness. A viewer would be justified to anticipate that in the next illumination, Coeur will be in the water.

All this is missing in the Paris copy (Fig. 3.55). Coeur is still wearing his armour, the attribute of his knighthood. The servants are absent and Coeur, reasonably, steps on a ramp to get in the boat, pointing at his companions to follow him. The presence of the ramp in the Paris illumination makes its absence even more noticeable in the Vienna one. The effect would have been greater if the audience were familiar with both representations of the scene, and there is evidence, examined below, that suggests René had seen them both.

Overall, the Paris Coeur is exceptionally beautiful, much more faithful to the text and a more conventional visualisation of the story. The illuminations of the Paris manuscript that do not have a Vienna counterpart are also heavily indebted to Barthélemy: the tapestry scenes in Love’s castle indicate a strong connection with theatre and performance, discussed further below (Fig. 3.56). The representations of heraldry recall of Barthélemy’s work in the Livre des Tournois (Fig. 3.57). There are twenty-eight illuminations exclusively
dedicated to heraldry in the Paris Coeur and the one in f. 91r is the densest one (Fig. 3.58). In addition, the figure of Courtoisie is strikingly similar to Barthélemy’s figures for the Mortification de Vaine Plaisance, also discussed later (Fig. 3.59 and 3.60).

The visual debt is obvious. The Paris Coeur artist was familiar with Barthélemy’s work, and although it is tempting to suggest that he copied the Vienna manuscript, one interesting detail suggests otherwise. Some of the Vienna illuminations seem to be mirror images of the Parisian ones: the first scene with Espérance, the Cottage of Mélancolie, the Hermitage and the scene when they embark the boat are all inverted. If the Paris illuminator was employed to copy the Vienna Coeur, he would have no reason to change the orientation. Therefore, the suggestion that he was working from a prototype appears convincing. This would be consistent with the artist’s practice, since he often created such detailed prototypes, perhaps in watercolour on paper, that were then used as models. The Livre des Tournois was probably used in such a manner, and there was, in all likelihood, another prototype for the Mortification de Vaine Plaisance, from which the extant manuscripts were copied. The assumed Coeur prototype must have included considerable detail, judging from the similarities between the Vienna and the Paris illuminations. Indeed, both the quality and detail of the Livre des Tournois and the level of similarity between the subsequent copies of the Mortification de Vaine Plaisance suggest that a detailed high-quality model is likely. This prototype was probably used to create the Paris copy, destined to a different patron. It has been suggested that perhaps the Paris Coeur was destined for René’s wife.

If that were indeed the case, it would justify the change in tone of the illuminations, since any humorous intention would be directed to an audience of similar social rank, but different gender. This would be a significant change with considerable repercussions, especially with regards to humour. Traditionally, noble ladies were not encouraged to laugh in public and their amusement was heavily regulated. The Roman de la Rose mentions,

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112 Both manuscripts and their prototypes are discussed later in the chapter.


114 The gendered aspects of humour are a rich and fascinating field of research that reaches beyond the scope of this thesis. For thorough discussion and selected bibliography see Lisa Renée Perfetti, Women and Laughter in Medieval Comic Literature (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).
through the voice of the Old Woman, that a woman ‘should always laugh with her mouth closed, for the sight of a mouth stretched like a gash across the face is not a pretty one’. Similarly, Christine de Pizan suggests that ‘she should not laugh without a cause’ and that ‘her humour also will be discreet’. Later, Anne of France advised her daughter to not make ‘silly faces’ and ‘laugh too much […] for it is very unbefitting to noble girls in particular’, as it would make them look unchaste. The disapproval of unruly laughter, however, does not mean disapproval of humour in its entirety: Christine de Pizan used witticisms and dry humour in her own works to enhance her arguments.

It is significant that the Paris illuminations did not omit humour entirely either. Coeur is still clad in full armour most of the time, he loses battles, he is saved by others. Presumably, such humour would be considered appropriate for the Duchess of Anjou, who must have been in the audience of many of the farces and plays commissioned by and performed for René. However, the question here is not whether the Duchess was amused, but rather the significant difference in the humorous approach between the Paris and Vienna manuscripts. In the Paris Coeur, visual humour never contradicts the text. It emerges from the visual analysis that the Paris Coeur illuminations are more closely connected to the text and more conventional for their genre. It is therefore suggested that the Paris manuscript was probably closer to Barthélemy’s prototype.

Rather than the similarities, it is the differences between the two works that support the common prototype suggestion. The Paris Coeur illuminations do not refer to René in person, while the Vienna Coeur is personal and intimate to the patron. The personal references and inside jokes that fill the Vienna Coeur indicate that René’s copy included personalised iconography. It is proposed here that instead of simply using coats of arms and

117 Les enseignements de Anne de France a sa fille Susanne, 43-45 as translated by Perfetti, Women and Laughter in Medieval Comic Literature, 10.
heraldry, Barthélemy infused the work with visual teasing and inside jokes, tying it to the personality of his patron. Since it was intended for his friend, the artist changed his prototype, making this manuscript personal and unique to him. The mirror-image illuminations allude to this as well: Barthélemy was creating a mirror-image version of his prototype, and his mirror was slightly distorting, making his rendition of the text somewhat different than the one originally visualised.

An inside joke is intended for a specific and usually restricted audience, and the more intimate the joke, the harder it is for outsiders to get it. The suspected common prototype did not include such jokes, as it was destined to a different audience. If the Vienna Coeur is seen as an interaction between Barthélemy and René, the deviations and liberties taken by Barthélemy emerge as evidence of their shared friendship and shared humour. If seen outside this context, the comic effect is either lost, or considerably diminished.

It is only through thorough research that the art historian can understand the details of the relationship between artist and patron, their common visual language, their communication patterns and their sense of humour. Only after having established a good grasp of these, do the inside jokes in the Vienna Livre du Coeur come across as such. Further investigation on René’s personality, taste and patronage, as well as his ways of interaction with Barthélemy, reveals valuable information in support of this hypothesis.

3.2 An ideal Renaissance Prince and an ideal court artist

Heavily romanticised by posterity, René’s historically reconstructed personality appears to have been engaging, artistic and dramatic. He was an erudite writer, a bibliophile and sixteenth-century tradition acknowledges him as a painter trained in the northern style. Exposed to artistic patronage from an early age, he became himself an illustrious patron, assembling around his court some of the best artists, scholars and humanists of his time. He was patron to actors and theatre groups and he sponsored and produced

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120 Both his mother, Yolande of Aragon, and his uncle the Cardinal of Bar who adopted him, were great patrons and art lovers. See also Jacques Levron, Le bon roi René (Paris: Arthaud, 1972), 37-42.
theatrical performances, covering a range that spanned from morality plays to farces and sotties.\textsuperscript{121}

In order to understand his sense of humour, this research investigates his patronage, and tentatively reconstructs—to the degree that historical evidence allows—his personality and intimate emotions. An attempt towards the latter, based on existing evidence, reveals a man who formed deep relationships that he valued throughout his life. He spared no expenses when it came to his loved ones, displaying his affection through gifts, titles and other tokens of his favour. A most eloquent example of his public displays of affection can be seen today in the church of Notre-Dame de Nantilly, in Saumur. A funerary plaque, the only surviving element of the funerary monument René dedicated to his wet-nurse, reads:

Here lies good nurse Théophaine la Maugine, who at great pain foster-mothered in infancy Marie d’Anjou, Queen of France, And then René, Duke of Anjou.\textsuperscript{122}

The original monument included a sculpture by Pons Poncet, created between 1459 and 1462, for which the artist received payment of ‘six escuz d’or’.\textsuperscript{123} Dedicating a funerary monument to a servant is a highly unusual gesture that does not agree with the established protocol of social hierarchy. Thus, it serves as testament to René’s affection for the woman who nursed him as a child, and it is indicative of the intensity of René’s displays of affection for those important to him.

His friendship with Barthélemy was also unconventional. It was expected that court artists would have a salaried position, which provided them with financial security and allowed them a degree of liberty. They often assumed additional duties, functioning as art brokers or even as court ambassadors.\textsuperscript{124} Barthélemy, too, acted as art broker, since in René’s accounts he is documented accepting payment for ‘golden letters made by an Avignon illuminator’.\textsuperscript{125} This suggests that at least in one occasion, he procured items for René. However, alongside this, René appointed Barthélemy as his valet de chambre, and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 157–80.
\item[122] The transcript and translation of the text are provided in Edgcumbe Staley, \textit{King René d’Anjou and His Seven Queens}, (London: John Long, 1912): ‘Cy gist la nourrice Théophaine La Magine, qui ot grant paine A nourrie de let en enfance Marie d’Anjou, Royne de France, Et après, son frère René, Duc d’Anjou.’
\item[123] Lecoy de La Marche, \textit{Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René}, 81, entry 2019.
\item[125] Lecoy de La Marche, \textit{Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René}, entry No 494.
\end{footnotes}
later his *valet trenchant*, which was a title as close to nobility as possible for a man not of noble birth; he offered him expensive gifts, and later the two were sharing René’s personal space.\textsuperscript{126}

This degree of intimacy has not been encountered since the time of Jean de Berry and Paul de Limbourg. It has been seen how in that case, too, patron and artist exchanged gifts, and Jean de Berry provided for his painter luxurious lodgings, resources and even a young bride.\textsuperscript{127} Their gift exchanges, that included pranks and public jokes, were a novelty for artist-patron interactions in the Valois courts. It is only reasonable that the Duke of Berry would be a role model for René: his reputation as a bibliophile and collector was already reaching beyond France during his lifetime and his legacy continued after his death, especially to French royal circles.\textsuperscript{128}

Following Jean de Berry’s death, his collection was auctioned to cover his debts. Yolande of Aragon and her husband were both bidding separately for the *Très Riches Heures*, although the inventory entry does not specify who acquired it. Shortly after the auction, the famous manuscript’s second illuminating phase began.\textsuperscript{129} The illuminator who intervened in the Calendar illuminations for March, June, September, October and December has been conventionally named ‘Intermediate Master’.\textsuperscript{130}

There is strong visual evidence suggesting that this artist was Barthélemy, who probably worked on the manuscript in the 1440s.\textsuperscript{131} In a brief overview of some of the visual evidence, the Virgin in the margin of the *Morgan Hours* resembles the ladies working the fields in the June illumination of the *Très Riches Heures* (Fig. 3.61 and 3.62). The farmer

\textsuperscript{126} Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’, 9.
\textsuperscript{127} Discussed in detail in a previous chapter, see 85.
\textsuperscript{128} The fame of Jean de Berry’s magnificent patronage spread far and wide after his death. In book 24 of Filarete’s *Trattato d’Architettura*, compiled at the Sforza court, the author cites Jean de Berry as the *exemplum* of princely patronage. Furthermore, in his moral treatise *De Splendor* (1492-4), Giovanni Pontano referred to Alfonso the Magnanimous’ ambition to surpass Berry as a patron of the arts. See Maryan Wynn Ainsworth, *Petrus Christus in Renaissance Bruges: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1995), 37.
\textsuperscript{129} Reynaud, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck avant 1450’, 22-43. The author does not identify the master as Barthélemy but places him in the same environment.
\textsuperscript{131} An extensive visual analysis and the most recent and convincing argument in support of the identification of Barthélemy with the Intermediate master is presented in Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’. 158
throwing seeds in the field in the October illumination is found doing exactly the same in the *Morgan Hours* (Fig. 3.63 and 3.64). Moreover, Barthélemy did not only contribute to the *Très Riches Heures*: he also took ideas from the Limbourgs, enriching his own repertoire. The nocturnal scene of *Gethsemane* is analogous to the scene in the Forest of Long Awaiting in the Vienna *Coeur* (Fig. 3.65). Echoes of the sunset of the *Entombment* can be seen in the Hermitage scene in the in the Vienna *Coeur* as well (Fig. 3.66). He apparently also appreciated the Limbourgs sense of humour: a seated boar is playing music in the *Visitation* scene of the *Très Riches Heures*, and similar ones can be found in the *Morgan Hours* (Fig. 3.67 and 3.68).

It is clear that the *Très Riches Heures* played an important role in the shaping of Barthélemy’s artistic identity. It was discussed in earlier chapters how the Limbourgs did not refrain from showing crudeness, representing peasants showing their exposed genitals in the February illumination and giving to their patron both a clear distinction between social classes and something to laugh with (Fig. 2.11). Barthélemy’s intervention in the manuscript exposed him to such expressions of visual humour shared between patron and artist, and he continued on the same path. Thus, in the middle of the September illumination he painted a man busy with grape-picking, which is the labour of the month (Fig. 3.69). He is bending over, and by doing so he is exposing his behind to the audience, in a posture that refers directly to marginalia but also to the type of humour found in farces, as will be seen later in this chapter. A nearby man is casually munching on the grapes he just picked and the woman next to him is adjusting her headpiece. This capture of a spontaneous, casual moment in the illumination is characteristic of Barthélemy’s art.\(^\text{132}\)

The vulgarity of the bending man’s pose comes in stark contrast with the elegiac representation of the castle behind him. The castle of Saumur, the favourite residence both of Yolande of Aragon and of René and Jehanne, dominates the background. In front of the

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\(^{132}\) The lower part of the September illumination is attributed to Jean Colombe; see Jonathan Alexander, ‘Labeur and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Medieval Peasant Labor’, *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 3 (1990): 437. However, the bending man’s undignified position and the casual activities of the grape pickers, are all more consistent with Barthélemy’s representative vocabulary. This could suggest that Colombe was working on designs left by Barthélemy, in the same way he did for the *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance*, discussed later in this chapter.
There is a fence and a quadrangular monument next to it. The monument is recognisable from illuminations of the *Pas de Saumur* which took place in Saumur in June 1446 (Fig. 3.70).\(^{133}\) Barthélemy was in attendance and probably created the prototype for an extant *Pas de Saumur* manuscript, where the same monument can be seen.\(^{134}\) Apparently, he included a reference of the *Pas* in the *Très Riches Heures*, clearly connecting both the manuscript and the castle of Saumur to René. The addition also provides a *termine post quem* for Barthélemy’s intervention in the manuscript.

It is argued here that while the monument from the *Pas de Saumur* is a recognisable reference to René’s chivalric endeavours, the figure of the farmer is more connected to René’s appreciation of comedy and farce. This type of visual personalisation is consistent with Barthélemy’s approach, and it is argued that it would be accepted with enthusiasm by the patron. Barthélemy’s additions to the *Très Riches Heures* highlight the common thought process he shared with René, as well as their common expressive vocabulary and artistic perspective.

It is further argued that *Très Riches Heures* was a highly symbolic commission both for René and for Barthélemy. The manuscript was left incomplete by Paul de Limbourg, who was a close friend to Jean de Berry. For René, asking his own court painter and best friend to continue working on the incomplete manuscript of his ancestor could be an attempt to continue on Jean de Berry’s footsteps. In his eyes, the project would arguably elevate him to his great-uncle’s status. It would be an affirmation of René as Jean de Berry’s worthy successor, as an equally great patron and an ideal Renaissance prince. Barthélemy could only delight in the prospect, as he had an opportunity to enrich his representative vocabulary and grow as an artist alongside his friend and life-long patron. Their friendship copied that of the original patron and artists of the *Très Riches Heures*, and the poetic allegory would not have escaped either of them.

It is further suggested here that the interaction of the two men was collaborative rather than hierarchical, as would typically be expected from patron and artist. Through the

\(^{133}\) Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’, 19.

\(^{134}\) The artist is clearly different, but Barthélemy’s influence is clear throughout the manuscript. See Rose-Marie Ferré, ‘Relation du pas de Saumur tenu en 1446’, in Gautier and Avril, *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, 244-45; and Reynaud, ‘Barthélémy d’Eyck avant 1450’, 38.
present research, René does not emerge as a patron who supervised meticulously the progress of his artist and intervened with specific instructions. Nor does Barthélemy fit the profile of an artist who simply delivered works on commission. Their unusually close relationship, proven by their shared living space, indicates a common approach towards text and image, the result of collaborative brainstorming towards a mutually accepted outcome.  

It is therefore accepted that Barthélemy knew René’s taste very well, and that René trusted Barthélemy’s artistic genius enough to allow him to supervise other artists working in his projects. As court painter, Barthélemy has also been seen to procure art for his patron. Moreover, his style can be identified in a variety of productions, ranging from painting to frescoes and tapestries. A variety of manuscripts copied after his preliminary drawings indicate that he probably produced models of exceptional detail, on paper and watercolour, similar to his Livre des Tournois, which also served as a high-quality model for subsequent copies.

The most prominent such example is the surviving copies of the Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance. Four manuscripts, today in Metz, Berlin, Geneva and New York, were copied from the same prototype by Barthélemy d’Eyck, which was probably created under close consultation with René. The copyists, established artists in their own right, did not make major alterations in the model, which explains the extent of identical details found in all copies. The Pas d’Armes de la Bergère de Tarascon and the Pas de Saumur are similar.


136 See above, and Lecoy de La Marche, Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René, entries No 476-78, 494, 495.


138 The manuscripts in question are, respectively: Metz, BM Ms 1486; Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms 78 C 5; Cologny, FMB Cod. Bodmer 144; New York, PML M. 705. All of them were high commissions: the Metz manuscript probably belonged to René, the Berlin copy to his wife Jeanne de Laval and the Cologny copy probably to the French royal family. Finally, the New York copy contains a dedication miniature where the King offers the manuscript to the Archbishop of Tours. Seeing that the work is dedicated to him, this was probably his personal copy. Rose-Marie Ferré, ‘Le mortifiement de vaine Plaisance’, in Gautier and Avril, Splendeur de l’enluminure, 284-299.
cases where Barthélemy’s hand has been identified, but his original did not survive. Some folia of the *Très Riches Heures* could also fit in this category: just as Barthélemy would have worked on incomplete pages by the Limbourgs, so would Jean Colombe, on pages left unfinished by Barthélemy. Therefore, the lost common prototype for the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris* manuscripts that was assumed earlier becomes a strong possibility.

Barthélemy’s repertoire includes extant and lost models, as well as several incomplete works. The *Morgan Hours* are unfinished, and so is the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*, the *Livre des Tournois* and the *Théséide*. He only contributed some pages in the *Très Riches Heures*, but he left some of them unfinished, which may indicate that he intended to do more and never finished the project. His wife’s letter attests to the existence of more preliminary or unfinished drawings at the time of his death, that René had seen and wanted to acquire.

This practice could be the attribute of an artist full of ideas, but with a short concentration span. It is possible that he enthusiastically embarked on new projects, but either lost his interest quickly and dropped them, or new ones came up and distracted him before the ongoing ones were completed. It is also possible that his position close to René allowed him this flexibility, because it meant that his projects could have been continued by other artists. It is suggested here that this was often the intention. It emerges from this research that Barthélemy had general oversight of most artistic projects sponsored by René. These projects were many and varied, because this court was incredibly active artistically: René paid regularly for actors, jesters, fabric and tapestry makers, painters, illuminators and a series of other artists and artisans, as was expected from a patron of his calibre, a quintessential renaissance prince who sponsored all arts and provided a space for cultural activities to thrive. Barthélemy, functioning as his chief artist, would have contributed and supervised these activities. This could account for his many incomplete projects, for his very detailed models and for the fact that his artistic fingerprint is identifiable in many diverse works created under René’s patronage.

139 The accounts provide interesting details about the variety of items René commissioned, although the names of the people involved are not always mentioned, or they are not always clear as names are spelled in a variety of ways. See Lecoy de La Marche, *Extraits des comptes et memoriaux du roi René*, 168-238.
Out of the entirety of René’s patronage, his love for theatre and performance stands out. This fondness was not only expressed in the production of theatrical plays and dramaturgy, but it also permeated courtly ritual, manifesting in representational events, feasts and public appearances. It is particularly interesting that humour and comedy enjoyed a special position in this context. It is therefore essential to investigate theatre, comedy and performance at court when discussing visual humour in Barthélemy’s works, especially since he appears to have had such a prominent role in most courtly artistic endeavours.

3.2.1 Art and performance at court

René probably inherited the love for dramaturgy from his mother. One of the earliest uses of the word ‘farce’ before 1450s is connected to Yolande of Aragon’s patronage, as she personally sponsored the creation of several farces.\textsuperscript{140} It is possible that René was introduced to theatre and comedy in her court, where these farces were performed. However, René was a much more prolific theatre patron. He maintained theatre writers and performers at court, some of which we know by name: Jean du Prier, Maître Mouche and the already mentioned Triboulet.\textsuperscript{141} These writers produced plays of various genres, from farces and sotties to mystery and liturgical plays—more than forty such works were created under René’s patronage.\textsuperscript{142} Farces and sotties like the aforementioned Sottie du Roi des Sots are comic plays by definition, and as such they are particularly relevant in the effort to understand René’s relationship with humour. It is impossible to establish the exact number of such plays created under his patronage, because they were not usually written down.\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 159.
\item Bianciotto, ‘Passion du livre et des lettres à la cour’, 100; Roy, ‘Écrire pour le théâtre à la Cour d’Anjou-Provence’, 97–114; Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 166.
\item Bianciotto, ‘Passion du livre et des lettres à la cour’, 100.
\item Rose-Marie Ferré, ‘Culture théâtrale et enluminure à la cour du roi René’, in Gautier and Avril, Splendeur de l’enluminure, 181. Those that were written down on René’s commission are a valuable source, and the plays that were printed later in the century can be dated back to his time through evidence they provide within their text.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
However, in the court of Anjou, humour was not reserved for comedies alone. It can also be found in mystery plays, as well as in didactic and religious stories. An example is the Mystère de la Resurrection, where popular songs and funny stories are interpolated in the play, some of which are even bawdy. On this occasion, the author looked at the existing comic tradition for inspiration: the inclusion of a blind character refers directly to the fabliau of the Garçon et l'Aveugle. Similar humour is encountered in other mystery plays created in René’s court. The Mystère du Roi Advener, mentioned earlier, is a religious story written for René’s wedding with Jehanne de Laval. Despite its serious character, which includes battles and executions, the play includes humour, several farcical incidents, and most importantly, farcical vocabulary. A brilliant instance of gallows humour occurs during an execution. The executed person’s feet and hair are bound, a screw is slowly inserted in his head and blood gushes out as it twists. When it does, someone comments: ‘Whoa! I think he laid a fart. His asshole must be coming undone!’ This morbidly comic comment is typical in farces and it indicates that humour and laughter were not confined in the strictly comic performances, but also had a place in serious theatrical productions.

Producing these performances involved a variety of talents. Artists and artisans were working together on a specific project, creating stage tropes, backdrops, costumes and everything else a performance would require. In general, tapestries or painted wood panels would have been used as stage backdrops for performances. There is evidence to suggest that Barthélemy was involved in these productions, as he probably supplied preliminary drawings for tapestries to his stepfather, Pierre du Brillant (Fig. 3.7). Further to these, Barthélemy’s own art is heavily indebted to courtly theatre and performance culture, as elements have been present in his compositions since the early stages of his career his career. His Aix Annunciation has long been suggested to represent a scene from the Missa

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144 Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 166.
146 Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 164.
148 Barthélemy’s stepfather was providing tapestries for René and also served as his valet de chambre. Thébaut, ‘Barthélemy d’Eyck’, 137; Catherine Reynolds, ‘The Très Riches Heures, the Bedford Workshop and Barthélemy d’Eyck’, The Burlington Magazine 147, no. 1229 (2005): 33; Villela-Petit, ‘Le maître intermédiaire’, 11.
Aurea, a liturgical play performed inside the church (Fig. 3.7). Surviving fragments of the play describe a scene with a dialogue between the Virgin and the Angel, occurring probably during the reading of the Gospel. The two figures of the Aix Annunciation are disproportionately large for the space they occupy, which is not consistent with Barthélemy’s art. Similarly, the figure of God on the top left seems out of place, unless one thinks of it in theatrical terms. If Mary and the Angel were actors on a stage, then the space in the background would be part of the scenery and proportions would be re-established. In that case, God would also be an actor using a stage trop, appearing as deus ex machina from above. The representation of the Missa Aurea indicates that Barthélemy was familiar with theatre and performance since the early stages of his career near René, perhaps through his stepfather, who was already in René’s service.

In the arch below the figure of God, where an angel would be, Barthélemy painted a bat. On top of the pulpit next to the Virgin, instead of the usual representation of Moses or of a phoenix, which would allude to the Resurrection, Barthélemy placed the effigy of a monkey. Traditionally, the monkey would symbolise the animal side of the human nature and sometimes the Original Sin. The inclusion of a monkey has been tentatively interpreted as a visual allegory to indicate the Grace of God, coming from the window as light: the light would cleanse Mary of the Original Sin that she had been carrying until that moment, readying her to carry the Child. However, Barthélemy also painted a monkey holding an infant and riding a bridled camel in f. 40v of the Morgan Hours, next to the Office of Mary, in a composition that strongly recalls of the established iconography for the Flight into Egypt.

149 Reynolds, ‘The Très Riches Heures, the Bedford Workshop and Barthélemy d’Eyck.’ In some areas, the Missa Aurea was performed shortly before Christmas, on Ember Wednesday or during the Ember Days that follow the Feast of St. Lucy on December 13th. This is the heart of the season of Advent and it is in close chronological proximity to the Feast of Fools, Christmas festivities and relevant plays discussed earlier in this thesis. See Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), ii, 245-250.


151 There is a similar line in a Tournai mystery play: ‘Spiritus Sanctus Super Veniet in Te’, God will descend to you from above. See Maurice McNamee, Vested Angels: Eucharistic Allusions in Early Netherlandish Paintings (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 132-36. A similar device was used in a play in Aix in 1444, for details see Tydeman, The Theatre in the Middle Ages, 316, E53. The deacons would be impersonating Angel and Mary, and there is evidence that an old man would take his place in the aedicule and impersonate God. See also Young, The Drama in the Medieval Church, ii, 245-250.


(Fig. 3.7). Instead of a visual allegory of religious significance, could these be visual puns connected to the theatre and mystery plays? If gallows and toilet humour can enter mystery plays, it is arguably possible that farcical iconography can do so as well.\textsuperscript{155}

Barthélemy’s visual loans from the theatre world were not limited to liturgical plays. In the \textit{Sottie des Sottes qui Corrigit le Magnificat}, one of the comic plays sponsored by René and attributed to Triboulet, there is a character who is shoeing a goose.\textsuperscript{156} In the margins of the \textit{Morgan Hours}, two men are affixing a shoe to the foot of a bird, which looks like something between a goose and an ostrich (Fig. 3.7). It is likely that an ostrich from René’s personal zoo served as a model for the bird in the \textit{Morgan Hours} marginalia, in place of the most ordinary goose.\textsuperscript{157}

Such compositions would arguably have appealed to René immediately. It is evident from his writings that René liked to combine elements that he enjoyed, and his love for performance permeated his entire creative process and production. His patronage includes the repetition of motifs and references that move from one expressive medium to the next. An example of such a merging can be found in the \textit{Farce de la Pipée} (BnF Fr. 15467), where flying hearts are chased by gallant hunters, in a replicated hunting story with vulgar overtones.\textsuperscript{158} The imagery of flying hearts appears again on Coeur’s clothing in the \textit{Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris}, it is found on the crest of Love that all his servants bear and it is represented in the tapestries of Venus in the Paris \textit{Coeur} (Fig. 3.7). The motif is both described in the text and replicated in the illuminations. Further, there is an entry in René’s

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{155} There is evidence of animals used in liturgical plays. In a version of the \textit{Festum Presentationis Beate Maria Virginis} documented by Philippe de Mezieres, the child actress impersonating Mary entered the church and took her place, hiding a living dove under her cloak, which she released at the appropriate time. After the church had sung the \textit{Laudes}, Gabriel and Raphael push Synagoga out of the stage and Michael brings a howling Lucifer on stage, to humble him before the Virgin. Young, \textit{The Drama in the Medieval Church}, ii, 240-250. If a monkey were used to impersonate Lucifer, that would account for its presence in the painting.
\item\textsuperscript{156} Proverbs relevant to the ‘shoeing of the goose’ were popular in England and in the Continent before the fifteenth century. The theme is found in the early fifteenth century in literature, although visual examples predate it. It has been understood to suggest ‘someone attempting the impossible’, thereby wasting their efforts. A similar proverb, found in France and the Netherlands, is asking ‘Who knows why geese go barefoot’? It is understood to mean that there is a reason for everything, even if that reason is not obvious. In the second case, the people shoeing the goose are unable to see a situation clearly and they are behaving in a foolish and ignorant manner. Either way, the \textit{topos} of proverbial folly remains relevant. See Malcolm Jones, ‘Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art I: Proverbial Follies and Impossibilities,’ \textit{Folklore} 100, no. 2 (1989): 204.
\item\textsuperscript{157} René was fascinated by exotic animals and he kept them as pets. Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 158.
\item\textsuperscript{158} Ferré, ‘Culture théâtrale et enluminure à la cour du roi René’, 185.
\end{itemize}
accounts in 1476, during a trip in Lyon, where René paid a painter for having painted ‘cueurs volans’, flying hearts, possibly for a performance.\(^{159}\)

René did not only enjoy a performance, but he was committed to maintaining it in written form. This practice provided additional opportunities for interactions between expressive mediums and different artistic practices. The Mystère du Roi Advenir is one such play turned into a manuscript.\(^{160}\) In the introduction, the author Jean du Prier states clearly that the manuscript was created on René’s request, ‘pour le regarder’: he wanted to look at it.\(^{161}\) Presumably this would refer both to the play, that René would watch in performance, and to the manuscript that he would be looking at while reading the text. Reading while looking at the illuminations would turn the reading experience into a visual performance.\(^{162}\)

Similarly, the para-dramatic Pas d’armes and tournaments he organised were documented and bound into manuscripts that commemorated the entire experience, instead of simply presenting a written chronicle. The surviving manuscript of the Pas d’armes de la Joyeuse Garde is a copy from a lost original, but Barthélemy’s influence is evident in the illuminations.\(^{163}\) The Pas took place in 1446, it lasted for forty days and it included twenty-one days of jousts, as well as performances and other spectacles inspired by Arthurian imagery: the chronicle mentions dwarves, musicians, servants in costume and two of René’s lions.\(^{164}\) The much smaller Pas de la Bergere, organised in Tarascon, was also documented in manuscript form (BnF Fr. 1974).

The two Pas d’Armes demonstrate René’s appreciation of theatricality, both in a performative and in a representational context. The same importance on visuality is also

\(^{159}\) Ferré, ‘Culture théâtrale et enluminure à la cour du roi René’, 186.

\(^{160}\) Bianciotto, ‘Passion du livre et des lettres à la cour’, 100.

\(^{161}\) ‘Il est vroy que le noble roy/ René, que Dieu vueille garder,/ fist mettre ce fait par arroy/ en prose pour le regarder;/ s’avisa, pour plus augmenter/ la vie du roy Avenir,/ qu’ung mistaire en ferait ouvrer/ pour jouer ou temps a venir’. Quoted as found in Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 164.

\(^{162}\) This is consistent with the reading practices that were popular in French courts at the time and were discussed in the introduction. For details see Karlyn Griffith, ‘Performative Reading and Receiving a Performance of the Jour Du Jugement in MS Besançon 579,’ Comparative Drama, 2011, 99–126; and Desmond and Sheingorn, Myth, Montage & Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture, 2-8.

\(^{163}\) Ferré, ‘Relation du pas de Saumur tenu en 1446’, 244-47.

encountered in René’s writings. In the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris* he dedicated entire
pages to descriptions of coats of arms, buildings, castles and decorations, equipment,
actions and landscapes, indicating that he was thinking visually when he was composing his
stories. In the *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance*, he described the heart’s crucifixion in
explicit detail, including the instruments of torture and even the clothes of the characters.
He focused particularly on the dripping blood, which he used as a potent symbol of
purification, of the Vaine Plaisance leaving the heart. Thus, the illuminator had a detailed
description to work with. Barthélemy painted the heart’s blood dripping on the body of the
cross, in what is essentially a scene of bloodied torture (Fig. 3.7-3.8). The artist was
translating René’s mental images into actual images, and his visualisations exist in symbiosis
with the text: not next to it, but as an integral part of it. It was this intimate connection
between text and image that led scholars to the suggestion that artist and author were the
same person.

The visual narration in the *Livre des Tournois* is an excellent example of this text and
image symbiosis. Nine out of eleven illuminations develop in double pages, which
Barthélemy treats as a unified pictorial space of larger dimensions (Fig. 3.8, 3.10 and 3.79-
3.86). The absence of marginal decoration enhances the visual impact of the images, that
follow the sequence of actions during a tournament: the two fighting parties are shown
arriving at the tournament site, the empty arena is described in detail and then it is
gradually filled with people. Barthélemy did not follow the narrative sequence of the text,
which describes the particulars of a tournament in sections. Instead, he included all
necessary information in his pictures, in order to provide a complete image of a
tournament; the reader can understand the image completely only after having read the full
text. They turn the pages of the manuscript and view the double-paged illuminations as

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165 Blood-letting, either by cutting or leeching, was a popular medical practice at the time, believed to purify
the body of unclean fluids and disease. See Schwam-Baird, ‘The Crucified Heart of René D’Anjou in Text and
Image’, 235.  
166 See Pächt, ‘René d’Anjou-Studien I’, 85–126.  
167 The manuscript in question is the *Traicte de la Forme de Devis d’un Tournoi*, Paris, BnF Fr. 2695. For the
most recent and complete study on the manuscript see Sturgeon, ‘Text & Image in René d’Anjou’s’ *Livre Des
Tournois*.  

screenshots of the tournament, in a very theatrical representation of events. The *Livre des Tournois* reads like a contemporary comic book, or like pictures from a kaleidoscope.

Barthélemy’s role as court artist and his apparent involvement with all these performances and plays allowed him to develop the audience awareness he demonstrates in the Vienna *Coeur*, and they account for the way he manipulates his audience’s perspective. The changing viewpoints when the companions are in the forest and later in the castle of Courroux are eloquent examples of such experience. The lower viewpoint that emphasises the figure of Honneur and the backgrounds that look like painted backdrops to a stage, are similar cases of his visual experience being transferred from stage to manuscript page. In these painted backdrops, the inclusion of bird excrement and urinating horses fits a very specific, farcical pattern and it is part of a narrative perspective that was most popular at René’s court.

3.2.2 A chastised, love-smitten Heart

The *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* merits a closer look for several reasons. Firstly, it is the most important literary precedent of the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*, surviving in eight manuscript copies; secondly, although all these copies were high commissions, none of them is a prototype. The extant manuscripts were copied after a very detailed and currently lost prototype, to which copying artists stayed largely faithful. The dramatic illuminations are referring to religious iconography, since references to religious material are also obvious in the text. René’s heart is accused of being attracted to Vain Pleasure. To be delivered, it is nailed on a cross and tortured by four personifications. Possibly, the figure embracing the cross in the scene of Heart’s Crucifixion was inspired by representations of Magdalene, like the one in Simone Martini’s *Crucifixion* (Fig. 3.78 and 3.87).

The Heart was a very strong symbol for René, both culturally and personally. There was a strong folk precedent in venerating the heart independently of the rest of the body.

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168 The work was not widely distributed outside princely circles. For details on the manuscripts see earlier footnote and Ferré, ‘Le mortifiement de vaine Plaisance’, 284-299.

169 The cult of the Sacred Heart, although not officially recognised before the sixteenth century, had already begun in the Late Middle Ages. Soon it was merged with the cult venerating the instruments of Jesus’ martyrdom. Schwam-Baird, ‘The Crucified Heart of René D’Anjou in Text and Image’, 230-1.
Moreover, it was traditional for French Kings to have their heart buried separately than the rest of their remains. In the detailed instructions that René left for his funeral arrangements, he specified that he required two separate processions, one for his body and one for his heart, thus emphasising his royal lineage and his connections to the Crown. At the same time, it has been seen that hearts were included in vulgar farces and they were frequently represented with wings, alluding to explicit sexuality. The *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* is using religious drama and symbolism to address the purification and cleansing of René’s heart. Correspondingly, the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris* is looking at chivalric and secular literature to describe René’s heartache.

If the heart is both sacred and vulgar, how does this duality connect with Coeur, René’s heart personified? It has been seen that in religious and mystery plays, drama and comedy coexisted. Farcical elements entered serious texts and this did not undermine their seriousness or their didacticism. In the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris* Désir defends the need to joke and laugh, emphasising the need for comic relief. At one point in the narration, he is urging Coeur to not get upset when his friends tease him:

> Heart, if we no longer wish to joke, we shall not endure our sorrow; For God’s sake, do not take this ill!

If the insecure but determined Coeur is a counterpart to René’s chastised heart in the *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance*, it is argued here that the painted Coeur is his parodied equivalent. Barthélemy painted a humorous retelling of the text, where knightly mounts emerge as commenting comedy characters and where scatological humour alternates with comic references specific to his patron. The interpolated visual humour arguably counterpoints the text’s romance character. Based on the above analysis, there is no doubt that such a conversation between moods and expressive mediums fascinated René.

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171 Unterkircher, *King René’s Book of Love*, 49.

3.2.3 A turning point for French comedy

The proposed interpretation of the iconography of the Vienna Coeur is highly significant in relation to humour and its visual representation. It is argued here that, as was the case with the Berry Terence, theatre was once more the vehicle that brought humour from text to image, from the margins to the main space of the illumination. The patronage of René d’Anjou exulted the comic experience, both in its verbal and its visual form, and ideally in a combination of both. His sense of humour and his attitude towards comedy are evident in his writings and in his patronage.

René’s contribution in the development of French comedy and theatre is unquestionable. The genre of the sottie and farce became popular in his court. The Farce de Maître Pierre Pathelin, also created in his court, was arguably the most popular comic work of the fifteenth century, especially after it was printed around 1486. Shortly afterwards, the printer Antoine Vérard also printed the Mystère de la Resurrection, and collections of farces and sotties followed. In following years, the genre of the sottie gained popularity and the number of acting troupes, like the Gallants Sans Souci that René sponsored, increased exponentially.

This is highly significant because, contrary to the comedies of Terence, these comedy genres and types of humour are quintessentially French. They draw inspiration from a long-standing popular tradition that dates back to the Feast of Fools and folk festivals. The legitimisation of French folk humour, not only in word but also in image and spectacle, is heavily indebted to René’s sponsorship. A final interesting observation comes from the Aix Annunciation (Fig. 3.72). On the side panel of the altarpiece, the figure of Prophet Jeremiah bears a strong resemblance to René (Fig. 3.36). Since he was not connected to the work’s commission, his presence is unexpected. The Missa Aurea represented in the main panel could be pointing to a seductive possibility. Could this be a representation of René, acting

174 Vérard misattributed the work to Jehan Michel, while the real author was more likely Jean du Prier. See Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 166.
175 Runnals, ‘René d’Anjou et le théâtre’, 176.
the role of the prophet Jeremiah in a liturgical play? René often assumed leading roles in his re-enactments and tournaments. It is not suggested here that he was constantly joining his actors on stage, but it is not unlikely that he participated in plays on occasion. The sotties that marked the opening of the festivities could not receive a stronger legitimisation, and René would have the opportunity to play with the dichotomy of King and Fool, embodying the philosophical concept in a very physical manner. Viewed from this perspective, the illuminations of him reading to the dead Triboulet can be convincingly interpreted as a representation of René assuming the role of the entertainer and court poet.

If Jean de Berry’s patronage marked a turning point towards a reconsideration of humour’s legitimacy and function, then René’s sponsorship and Barthélemy’s art took it one step further. Consciously pursuing as patron what was his inclination and instinct as an artist, René continued on the footsteps of his great uncle, at least in terms of establishing a culture for humour and comedy in literature and the visual arts. René’s lavish lifestyle, his nostalgia for a chivalric age, his own production as a writer and his patronage of the arts indicate that he envisioned himself as an ideal Renaissance prince. Having next to him a highly skilled artist supported this image.

His relationship with Barthélemy redefined the figure of the court artist: the two were working in collaboration and harmony, within a court that loved theatre, performance and comedy. René’s artistic vision was fulfilled in the art of Barthélemy, and it is possible that his own writing style was influenced by Barthélemy in return. Essential elements to the comic experience were represented with care, attention and lyricism. The theatricality of the Aix Annunciation, the unrestrained drolleries of the Morgan Hours, the spontaneity of Barthélemy’s figures, the naturalism in his facial expressions, actions and postures, are all elements that enhance the comic experience.

In the illuminations of the Vienna Coeur it is their shared sense of humour that is highlighted: Barthélemy knew what would make René laugh and applied it to his

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176 Nishino suggested something similar but only in passing, in Nishino, ‘Le triptyque de l’Annonciation d’Aix et son programme iconographique’, 71. More traditionally, Nash finds similarities with the sculpted portrait of the Duke of Burgundy in the Well of Moses, which was the obvious inspiration for the Aix Jeremiah, which she interprets as an indication that René wanted his portrait in a similarly public place. See Nash, ‘Claus Sluter’s ‘Well of Moses’ for the Chartreuse de Champmol Reconsidered: Part III’, 739.
illuminations. Often, the represented humour is scatological or otherwise indecorous, but it is never grotesque. Both would probably enjoy the visual treatment of Coeur’s text in the same way that they—almost certainly—shared jokes as part of their everyday interaction, and in the same way they enjoyed getting involved in comic performances.

By the end of the fifteenth century, this new visual vocabulary and representational perspective reached Paris and the artists working there: some illuminations of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles demonstrate distinct similarities with some interior scenes of the Paris Coeur, discussed in detail in the following chapter (Fig. 3.88). Interestingly, Antoine de la Sale, the humanist contributor of some tales in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, was also working in René’s service.177

Perhaps the most striking visual reference to the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris can be identified in the Petit Livre d’Amour by the Master of the Chronique Scandaleuse, today in London (BL Stowe Ms 955, f. 13r; Fig. 3.89). The two women trying to catch flying hearts with a net also appear in the Paris Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris in an almost identical setting (Fig. 3.75). It is possible that scenes from the Paris Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris and from the Pas de la Bergère served as inspiration for some of the illuminations of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. Barthélemy’s iconography, originally intended for René and pandering to his sense of humour, was diffused from this private quarters to a much more public sphere. Visual humour had now a much broader audience.

177 Antoine de la Sale served as tutor for René’s son Jean II, writing for him La Salade. He also wrote a treatise on tournaments, to which René makes explicit references. He left the Anjou court in 1448. See Françoise Robin, La cour d’Anjou-Provence: La vie artistique sous le règne de René (Paris: Picard, 1985), 211-12.
4 THE CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES

To my most revered and dread liege, His Grace the Duke of Burgundy, of Brabant, et cetera;
Among all worthy and profitable diversions, the very delightful practice of reading and studying is to be highly and especially commended—a practice to which you, my most esteemed Lord, without flattery, are singularly devoted. As your most obedient servant, desiring, as is my duty, to comply with all your most worthy and illustrious projects to the best of my ability, I dare and presume to present and offer you this little work, compiled and completed at your request and command, and I am beseeching you to accept this work with pleasure. As it contains and relates one hundred stories, very similar in content to the Cent Nouvelles—although lacking their subtle and ornate language—it could be entitled the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. The incidents described in the aforementioned Cent Nouvelles took place for the most part within the confines of Italy, a long time ago; yet they still retain the title of Nouvelles. Most of the stories related here took place in France, Germany, England, Hainaut, Brabant and other countries; but as the matter, manner, and fashion of these stories is of recent memory and of a very novel appearance, the present book may truly and legitimately be called the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.¹

Few manuscripts can rival in humour, visual or otherwise, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles of the University of Glasgow’s Hunterian Collection. Its one hundred illuminations are spread across 207 parchment leaves measuring 255 x 183 mm (GUL Ms Hunter 252 (U.4.10)).² The dedication page, quoted above, reveals that the work was created under order of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. The text of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles is a collective work, attributed to several members of the Duke’s court. The hundred comic tales claim to have been narrated by their respective narrators at court and in the Philip the

¹ 'A mon treschier et tresredoubté seigneur monseigneur le duc de Bourgoigne de Brabant etc Comme ainsi soit qu ’entre les bons et prouffitables passe temps le tresgracieux exercise de lecture et d’estude soit de grande et sumptueuse recommendacion (duquel sans flaterie mon tresredoubte seigneur vous estes tres haultement doe) je, vostre tresobeissant serviteur, desirant comme je doy complaire a toutes voz treshaultes et tresnobles intencions en foron a moy possible ose et presume ce present petit oeuvre (a vostre requete et advertissement mis en terme et surpiez) vous presenter et offrir, suppliant que agreeablement soit receu que en soy contient et tracre cent histoires assez semblables en matere sans attaine le subtil et tresorné langage du livre de Cent Nouvelles, et se peut intituler le livre de Cent nouvelles nouvelles. Et pour ce que les cas descriptz et racomptez ou dit livres de Cent nouvelles advinrent la pluspart es marches et metes d’Italie ja long temps a, neantmains toutesfoiz portant et retenant nom de nouvelles se peat tresbien et par raison fondee en assez apparente verité ce present livre intituler de Cent nouvelles nouvelles, jasoit que advenues soient es parties de France, d’ Alemaigne, d’ Angleterre, de Haynau, de Brabant et aultres lieux aussi pource que l’estofe taille etfasson d’icelles est d’assez fresche memoire et de myne beaucoup Nouvelle’. Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, 13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

² F. 137 has been replaced by a paper copy at a later date. Discussion follows later in the chapter.
Good’s presence.³ One person, identified in the text as l’acteur—the author—allegedly collected and bound them all in a manuscript. He prefaced them with the above dedication, beseeching the Duke to receive his work ‘with pleasure’.

Based on the names and geographical whereabouts of the historically identifiable narrators, the text is conventionally dated in the 1460s.⁴ The Hunterian manuscript is the only known fifteenth-century illuminated copy of the text.⁵ It is conventionally dated two decades later.⁶ New evidence, discussed below, revisits that dating. The manuscript contains one hundred illuminations, one preceding each tale, executed with skill, inspiration and expensive materials (Fig. 4.1).

Destined originally for a specific audience close to the Duke of Burgundy, the text became popular after it was printed in Paris in 1486.⁷ The first publisher, Antoine Vérard, also ensured that his publication would be visually engaging: it is decorated with a hundred woodcuts, forty-two of which are originals, created specifically for this text. The printed edition allowed for the text’s diffusion. Known publishers such as Olivier Arnollet in Lyon (BnF Fr. 15115), and Nicolas des Prez, Jean Trepperel and Michel and Philippe Le Noir in Paris reprinted it—at least nineteen editions were in circulation by the sixteenth century.⁸

The text makes direct references to Boccaccio’s Decameron. The title itself is a wordplay on the Cent Nouvelles: translated in English as ‘A Hundred Tales’, this was the title of the Decameron’s French translations. The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles claims to be of similar

⁵ There is mention of one Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles manuscript in the 1469 Burgundian inventory. This was probably the first manuscript of the work, the original that was presented to Philip the Good in the early 1460s. See Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, LVIII and 265, as well as Blieck, ‘The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Text and Context’, 81. More recently, Ricci reiterated Rossi’s suggestion to look for the manuscript in Flemish and Austrian libraries, as it is possible that the ducal manuscript was inherited alongside the Burgundian collection by Margaret of Austria. However, it does not feature in the inventory of her possessions made in 1536, after her death. Ricci suggests that the manuscript was unnoticed or forgotten about between 1487 and 1536, when the inventories were compiled. Another copy of the text can be found in a Brussels inventory from 1487, describing a manuscript ‘historié et intitulé: Les Cent Nouvelles’. This indicates that yet another manuscript existed, which was part of the Brussels collection in the 1480s. If this is true, then that manuscript is also unaccounted for today. See Ricci, ‘Illustrer les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, 84.
⁶ Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, CXVI.
style and subject matter and highlights that the stories it contains are ‘of recent memory and of a very novel appearance’, so they can legitimately be called ‘A Hundred New Tales’. Alongside the witty wordplay, the connection to the Decameron is testimony of the lasting impact that Laurent de Premierfait’s translations had in French literature and culture, an impact strong enough to give birth to the literary genre of the nouvelle.\(^9\) It is argued here that the Hunterian manuscript visual cycle is the natural continuation of the artistic premises initiated in the translations of Boccaccio’s Decameron.

The refreshing wordplay in the title also attests to the comic function of the text. The dedication letter also illustrates the comic intention, pleading the patron to accept this work ‘agreeablement’, with pleasure, with delight. This is conscious and careful phrasing: it will be seen that the author is never at a loss for words, neither in the text nor in his dedication. His goal is to delight, amuse, entertain. In the pages of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles humour intersects with pleasure, obscenity, pain and emotion. Correspondingly, the visual cycle is the work of a talented illuminator who tried to convey the text’s humour and translate it pictorially, aiming to amuse the viewer’s vision as well as their mind.

The manuscript’s iconographic programme is studied here in juxtaposition to the woodcuts of Vérard’s first publication. The analysis addresses the different types of visual humour present in these two visual cycles, illustrating their complexity and artistic excellence in both media. The comparison reveals the ingenious and varied ways in which the text’s humour was represented visually, and the differences in the treatment of humour when it was destined for the public, as opposed to the private sphere. Furthermore, this research presents new evidence regarding dating, provenance and patronage, leading to a tentative localisation of the previously unidentified illuminator. It is suggested here that the main artist belonged to the circle of a known and well-studied workshop active in Paris, and he probably collaborated with other illuminators active in the same workshop.

The type of humour in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles is generally recognisable to this day, and several Tales would probably amuse today’s viewers and readers effortlessly.

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\(^9\) This is also highlighted in the dedication letter. When the author describes these tales by saying that the ‘matter, manner, and fashion of these stories is of recent memory and of a very novel appearance’, which justifies their denomination as Nouvelles, he is arguably defining the genre of the nouvelle. See also Dubuis, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Âge, 1-3.
Tricksters are frequently present, either as the main characters or as a plot device: a licentious priest in Tale 14 tricks the woman who caught his attention into accepting him as her lover, and the illumination visualises the story to the letter, producing an image of both trickery and sexual humour (Fig. 4.2). The latter is very prominent throughout the manuscript: most of the stories are of sexual nature or have a bawdy subplot. As a result, many of the illuminations feature nudity, sexuality and explicit scenes (Fig. 4.3). More than thirty of them represent some type of sexual activity and eighteen illuminations feature complete nudity. Exposed genitals are represented in eight miniatures and there are several voyeurs and two cross-dressers. Most Tales use someone’s lust as the main plot device, returning to familiar themes like licentious members of the clergy and adulterous affairs. However, the naked human body is not represented exclusively in a bawdy context. Bodily functions, scatological and toilet humour are also frequent and often feature complete or partial nudity. Nudity is also present in some instances of slapstick humour, revealing scarred bodies and bleeding wounds to the viewer. Finally, bleeding and sick bodies illustrate the two stories that are discussed here as the non-comic Tales: Tales 69 and 98 are dramatic stories, arguably included in the manuscript as entertaining, but not as funny contributions.

Past scholars have described the illuminations as bawdy, pornographic, lewd, shocking and obscene.10 Champion hesitated to publish them, as he found them ‘assez libres’.11 The entire manuscript has been presented as ‘a museum of fifteenth century obscenities’.12 It is suggested here that the main intention of the illuminations was to translate visually the humour of the text, and this humour is usually provocative. For analytical convenience, it is discussed under the broad categories of sexual, toilet, slapstick and trickster humour. This classification applies to both text and illuminations, although there are examples where the text uses one type of humour and the illumination a different one. Additionally, it often happens that more than one type of humour is used to construct the story. This is particularly frequent in trickster stories, where the plot usually combines

11 Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, 265.
12 Vaughan and Small, Philip the Good, 158.
trickster humour and sexual or other types. The two cases where humour is absent will be discussed separately, to understand better what this absence means and how these Tales are treated visually.

4.1.1 Nudity and sexual humour

The manuscript opens with the striking and sensual illumination of the first Tale (Fig. 4.3). In the story, a man who lived next door to a married couple fell in love with his neighbour’s wife, whose ‘eyes, like the archers of the heart, shot so many arrows’. To seduce her he befriended her husband, and it worked: as soon as the husband was out of town, the two lovers arranged to meet. The text describes their date and the subsequent seduction in detail; everything was going well, until the moment when the husband returned earlier than planned and decided to pay a late-night visit to his friend. He walked into his friend’s bedchamber and realised that his friend was not alone, so he started teasing him. Meanwhile, his terrified wife was hiding under the covers. The husband refused to go away before getting a glimpse of the woman in his friend’s bed; the friend conceded, but only revealed to him the woman’s backside. Thus, the husband was found looking at the naked back of his wife, which he found strangely familiar. He left and returned to his home furious, suspicious, but unable to prove his claims. Meanwhile, his wife dashed out of the lover’s house and into her own through a shortcut, so she was already at home when he arrived. She defended her honour against his accusations so furiously, that the man was convinced he had made a mistake. He apologised profusely and promised never to doubt her again.

The deceived husband fell victim to his friend, who initially befriended him with an ulterior motive. The friend then deceived him again, in plain sight, by revealing to him the back of his wife—although when the husband got suspicious, it seemed that he would be able to see through the trickery. In the end he was deceived once more, this time by his wife. This sequence of trickery, manipulation and recurring deception reminds strongly of

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French farces of the same period.\textsuperscript{14} The husband, tricked three times and cuckolded, becomes an archetypal farcical protagonist. Moreover, the emphasis on the seductive potential of the woman’s eyes enhances the voyeuristic element of the story, as well as the comic effect of the visual deception.

The manuscript illumination represents the body revelation scene (Fig. 4.3). The bed takes up most of the pictorial space, with a bathtub visible in the top right corner and the table with the leftovers of the couple’s feast in the foreground. The existence of the private bathtub next to the bed would be a strong enough suggestion of eroticism and seduction.\textsuperscript{15} The bed itself commands attention: the red bedding has many visual precedents, from the bed in Jan van Eyck’s \textit{Arnolfini Portrait} to the bed of the opening illumination of the Vienna \textit{Théséide}, or the bed of René in the Parisian \textit{Livre du Cœur d’Amour Epris} (Fig. 3.1). The red drapes of the bed are drawn, and both men are pulling the covers to reveal the naked back of the lying woman. The adulterous couple’s anatomical definition is represented with skill and care. The shadows that define the man’s torso and the woman’s backbone, as she lies on her side, indicate an experienced artist. The sensual naked female body, displayed in full view, is juxtaposed to the figure of the husband. Bearded and dressed, he looks older than the lover, but they share the same rosy cheeks. He is pulling the cover from the side of the bed, holding a candle to see better. This candle functions as a source of light, but potentially also as a visual pun: the man uses the candle to see better in the dark, but he ends up being completely blind to the actual events. The visual references to chaste or royal beds add a layer of irony in the impact of the miniature: the adulterous couple is lying on a luxurious

\textsuperscript{14} In the \textit{Farce de Maître Pathelin}, written in the mid-fifteenth century, a series of deceptions leaves an innocent cloth seller tricked twice, and the trickster protagonist tricked as well. Pathelin, the protagonists, tricks Joceaulme, a cloth merchant, into selling him on credit an expensive piece of cloth and runs to his home. When Joceaulme calls into Pathelin’s home to collect his payment, Pathelin and his wife pretend that Pathelin has been sick for months. Joceaulme eventually quits trying to get paid. Pathelin then has to represent at court a shepherd, whom Joceaulme has summoned to justice. He advises the shepherd to play the fool to escape punishment, but in the end the shepherd also plays the fool when Pathelin asks to be paid for his services. For a translation of the text see Maurice Relonde, \textit{The Worthy Master Pierre Patelin} (Cambridge: In Parentheses, 2000). For a discussion on the use of deception in the play, see Donald Maddox, \textit{Semiotics of Deceit: The Pathelin Era} (London: Bucknell University Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{15} Diane Wolfthal, \textit{In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 146.
bed, caught in an unchaste act, and the as-good-as-blind husband cannot see what is happening in front of his eyes, despite holding a candle.

In the Vérard woodcut, the subject is treated differently (Fig. 4.4). The image unfolds in two sections. On the right, there is the scene of the woman revealing her back to the audience, which in this case includes both men: her lover is not in bed with her. The two men are pulling the bed drapes open, putting the naked woman on display. The pulled-back drapes emphasise the feeling that the viewer is looking in a private space: they bear a close resemblance to representations of dukes and noblemen in their clotets, the enclosures made from wood and fabric that were usually used to grant privacy for prayer.\footnote{Marguerite Keane, \textit{Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-Century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331-1398)} (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 122-124; also Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, \textit{Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe} (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2005), 68-70.} In illuminated representations of clotets, the drapes are either pulled back by chords or held back by servants to reveal to the audience the praying patron. Both the Duke and Duchess of Berry have been represented this way, as well as the Duke of Burgundy (Fig. 4.5 and 4.6). The representation of a clotet indicates privacy, and thus the pulled drapes in the woodcut emphasise the fact this is an intimate scene. The sensuality and eroticism that was created by the amorous couple in the illumination is lacking in the woodcut, while the voyeuristic element is emphasised.

On the left side of the woodcut, the husband has returned and he is kneeling in front of his wife. She is holding a broom and she is raising her hand in what looks like an angry gesture. It is implied that the man is begging his wife to forgive him for accusing her, and she furiously defends her honour, clutching the broom that she managed to grab in time, to make sure she looks busy upon his arrival.

The ingenuity in the representation is remarkable, as the woman in the woodcut has staged a perfect deception: she will be found with her broom at hand, working hard on her house chores. Any evidence of physical exhaustion can be safely attributed to her cleaning. Moreover, the emphasis on the broom, a symbol of domesticity and wifely virtue, enhances the comic effect: it is known that her behaviour has been anything but appropriate. The husband cowering under the menacing household tool is reminiscent of several marginalia,
where husbands become the victims of their wives who beat them with their brooms or distaffs (Fig. 4.7). In the woodcut, the broom functions as a mockery of the virtues of the wife, as a demonstration of her quick wit and as a weapon to match her fake fury. The theatrical posture and gestures of the two figures arguably enhance the comic effect.

The illumination’s humour is more subtle. The artist took special care to represent the interaction between the two lovers: all items of seduction are included in the picture, creating an atmosphere that evokes the same feeling of pleasure as the text. Sexuality is treated differently. There is a voyeuristic element in both cases, but in the woodcut, it leans more towards the display of a female body than towards a passionate moment between two lovers that has been interrupted. The woodcut focuses more on gender humour and voyeurism, on the *topos* of the Woman on Top in the guise of the wanton wife who would stop at nothing to get away with her adultery. In contrast, the manuscript presents sexuality in full view and its visual humour is highly sexual. The visual pun of the candle-holding yet blind-sighted husband is exclusive to the illumination.

This differing attitude towards sexual humour is not consistent between the two works. Tale 12 is an example where the visual treatment is very similar, yet the differences are worth discussing (Fig. 4.8 and 4.9). In the story, a newly married couple was going for a walk in the countryside. According to the text, as soon as the man got married his desire awakened with a surprising intensity, and that pleasant walk with his wife stirred it once more. Looking for a suitable location, he led his equally eager wife under a tree. When they arrived, he started talking loudly as he undressed her and celebrated the beauty of her body parts, which he named and described, professing his happiness that he will soon enjoy them. Meanwhile—and that is key to the story, as the narrator explicitly states—a countryman who lived in the area had lost his calf and went looking for it. Trying to find a better viewpoint, he had climbed on that same tree; but instead of his calf, he found himself unwillingly spying on the eager couple. So, when the husband started talking about the different parts of his wife’s body, exclaiming ‘I see this, I see that’, the countryman asked:

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17 Davis, ‘Women on Top’, 158.
Do you not see my calf, good sire? I think I see its tail! The narrator proceeds to explain the joke, because the audience was not familiar with Dutch women’s grooming habits: her pubic hair was too long, and he thought this was the tail of his calf. The text makes another pun in the end, referring to the event taking place under the tree and saying that the calf ‘might be hidden inside, along with the other things’.

Both woodcut and manuscript have a similar layout in their visual representation of the scene. In the illumination, the couple is embracing under a tree and the second man is visible up on the tree (Fig. 4.8). The background is a countryside landscape, with some buildings outlined that indicate a town; the illumination also includes the calf, shown grazing on the right side. The calf is missing in the woodcut (Fig. 4.9).

There is a clear parallel between earlier Tristan iconography and this illumination. The iconography of Tryst beneath the Tree, where King Mark spies on the adulterous meeting of Tristan and Isolde, could have inspired both the woodcut and the miniature (Fig. 4.10). In the Tristan legend, King Mark is informed that the adulterous couple has arranged a rendezvous in the forest. He intends to catch them in the act, so he makes sure to arrive to the meeting point ahead of time and hide on a tree. However, when the lovers arrive, they see his reflection in the water of a nearby pond. Aware of his presence, they act aloof and they talk casually; the King is therefore convinced that the pair are not lovers. This episode of the story has been frequently represented in different media (Fig. 4.11).

In the Tristan legend, King Mark became the trickster tricked. He climbed on the tree on purpose, hoping to catch the couple in flagrante delicto. His presence was betrayed and instead of deceiving the lovers, he was the one deceived. The roles are reversed in Tale 12:


19 ‘Et qui me demanderoit qui le laboureur mouvoit a faire ceste sa question, le secretaire de ceste histore respond que la barbe du devant de ladite femme estoit assez et beaucop longue, comme il est coustume a celles d’Hollande; si cuidoit bien que se fust la queue de son veau; attendu aussy que le mary d’elle disoit qu’il voyoit tant de choses, voire a pou tout le moande, si pensoit a soy mesmes que son veau né pouvoit gueres estre esloigné, et que avec autres choses leans pourroit it bien estre embuché’. Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, 45. My translation: ‘And if you ask me what moved the countryman to ask that question, the writer of this story would reply that the hair in front of this woman was very long and thick, as is usual with the Dutch women; and he thought that this could well be the tail of his calf; and having heard also her husband saying that he could see so many things—nearly everything there was in the world—the countryman thought to himself that the calf could hardly be that far away, but might be hidden inside along with the other things’.
the man on the tree did not consciously wish to assume this role, and he had to announce his presence to the couple below him. This inversion of Tristan’s episode in the text is reflected in the illumination, which re-contextualises the Tristan iconography to enhance the comic effect.

The Tale 12 illumination includes the calf in the background, which connects the image to this specific context (Fig. 4.8). The man on the tree is serious, displaying his frustration for the curious position he is found in. The emphasis is also on the way the eager husband lifts the woman’s skirts and spreads her legs open, an element directly connected to the text but absent in the woodcut, where the two are simply embracing. Moreover, the calf is missing in the woodcut and its absence highlights the image’s voyeurism: the image is now exclusively a couple and a person on a tree. In the woodcut, the man on the tree is looking at the woman and he is smiling, further enhancing that voyeuristic effect (Fig. 4.9). The illumination highlights the couple’s sexuality and the figure of the unwitting Peeping Tom, which parodies known figures of courtly literature, in order to present a bawdy image. The woodcut appears to only rely on the latter.

The same woodcut is used for Tale 46, which has been treated very differently in the manuscript (Fig. 4.12). In the Tale, Sister Jehanne, a nun, and her monk lover Brother Aubry, had agreed to meet in secret under a pear tree. A man that overheard their plans decided to ruin their meeting, so he hid up on the tree and waited. When the couple arrived, they spent some time looking at each other’s nakedness and talking to each other:

They both wanted to do what they had come for, and each of them got ready, and in so doing the nun began to speak: ‘Heavens, Brother Aubry, I would like you to know that have today for your mistress and at your disposal one of the most beautiful bodies in our religion. And I make you the judge. You see my body. Look at these breasts, this belly, these thighs, and for the rest, there are no words to describe it’. ‘By my faith’, said Brother Aubry, ‘Sister Jehanne, my dear, I know what you are saying. But you can also say that you have for a lover one of the most handsome monks of our Order, and as well equipped with what a man should have as anyone in this kingdom’. And with these words, taking in his hand the weapon with which he was about to fight, he brandished it before his lady’s eyes, boasting to her, ‘What do you say? Is it not worthy?’ ‘Certainly it is’, she said. ‘And you shall have it’. ‘And you
shall have’, said the man who was up in the pear-tree, ‘all the best pears on the
tree’.\(^{20}\)

In that moment, the voyeur on the tree decided that this will have to be enough, and he
started jumping on the tree, making pears rain on the couple. The monk ran away and the
man on the tree got to finish what the monk had started.\(^{21}\)

The choice of the tree is interesting, because the pear was a common phallic
symbol.\(^{22}\) Moreover, literary precedents suggest that an arranged meeting under a pear tree
would indicate an illicit affair, even if this had not been made explicit otherwise. A voyeur on
a pear tree appears in the twelfth century elegiac comedy *Comoedia Lydiae* and another
one appears in the Ninth story of the Seventh Day in the *Decameron*.\(^{23}\) In both cases, the
cuckolded husbands are tricked to watch as their wives have sex with their lovers under the
pear tree on which they are sitting. Yet, in Tale 46 the voyeuristic fruit seller is not the
tricked character, but the trickster. The connection with King Mark is once more distorted
here. The voyeur climbed the tree willingly, but in this case his deception worked: he
discovered the affair and stopped it, profiting himself in the process. His final words when
he asks Sister Jehanne to ‘pay the fruit seller’, become a pun when the fruits in question, the
pears, are also a metaphor for his genitals.

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\(^{20}\) ‘Ilz vouldrent faire ce pour quoy ilz estoient venus: et se mist chacun en point, et en ce faisant commence a
dire a la nonmain: ‘Pardieu, mon amy frere Aubry, je veil bien que vous sachez que vous avez aujourd’uy a
dame et en vostre commendement ung des beaulx corps de nostre religion; et je vous en fais juge. Vous le
voiez: regardez quelz tetins, quell ventre, quelles cuisses, et du surplus ul n’y a que dire’. ‘Par ma foy, dist frere
Aubry, seur Jehanne m’amye, je cognois ce que vous dictes. Mais aussi vous povez dire que vous avez a
serviteur ung des beaulx religieux de tout nostre ordre, aussi bien fourny de ce que un homme doit avoir que
nul de ce royaume’. Et a ces motz mist la main au baston don’t il vouloit faire ses armes, et le brandissoit
voyant sa dame, en luy disant:’Qu’en dictes vous?’ – Certes oy, dit elle. – Et aussi l’arez vous. – Et vous arez,
dist lors celui qui estoit dessus le Poirier, sur eulz, tous des meilleures poires du poirier’. Champion, *Les Cent

\(^{21}\) ‘Et la nonnaon, qui fut autant ou polus effrayee que luy, ne sceut si otst se mettre au chemin que le galant
qui estoit sur le Poirier ne fur descendu, qui la va prandre par la main et luy defendit le partir, et luy dist:
’M’amye, ainsi n’en yrez vous; il vous fault bien premier paier le fruictier’. Elle, qui estoit prinse et soupprinse,
vit bien que le refus n’estoit pas de saison, et fut contente que le fist ce que frere Aubry avoit laisse en train’.
Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, 146. My translation: ‘The nun was just
as frightened [as brother Aubry], if not more, but she couldn’t get away before the gallant came down from
the tree, held her by the hand and prevented her from leaving, saying: ‘My dear, don’t go away like this: you
must first pay the fruit seller’. Seeing that she was captured and surprised, she realised that refusal was not an
option, and she allowed him to do what Brother Aubrey had left undone’.


\(^{23}\) The full text of *Lidia* was published in James Crawford, *The Secular Latin Comedies of Twelfth-Century France*
Vérard recycled a woodcut that is relevant to the main line of the story, but the specific details, like the rain of pears, are not included. On the contrary, the illumination includes the story’s details and repeats the Tristan iconography (Fig. 4.12).24 It is one of the most explicit representations in the manuscript. The couple are wearing the upper half of their clerical vestments and they are both naked from the waist down. Their genitals are outlined in detail and they are both shown touching themselves. The man on the tree is jumping, making pears fall like rain on them, and the garden is closed by a fence that runs all the way around it, encircling the entire area.

The artist this time set the image against the background of an enclosed garden resembling an hortus conclusus.25 The image also bears a resemblance to illuminations of lovers in a secret garden according to the topos of Locus Amoenus of the romance tradition.26 The implication of enclosure, chastity and pure love is juxtaposed with the vulgarity of the image in the foreground. The illumination appears bawdy in the first instance, but there is a second, more sophisticated layer, which transcends the text. It is strongly visual, intentionally humorous and it is seeking to engage the viewer’s intellect. The manuscript’s owner is likely to have recognised these visual references, and probably appreciated the parodying of courtly love stereotypes.

This illumination is one of the two attempts to cover or destroy phalluses in the manuscript, the second one being the one immediately preceding it. Several other representations of the same subject are left undisturbed (Fig. 4.13). The attempt did not fully erase the man’s genitals, which are unreasonable large compared to his hand; it can be argued that the opposite result was achieved, as it only draws more attention to the afflicted area. The reasons behind this selective erasure could be attributed to changing standards on modesty, and on what was understood as permissible to be represented. Potentially, the Marian associations of the hortus conclusus appeared incompatible with the monk’s oversize phallus for some audiences. It is also possible that the erasure is

associated with the fact that both protagonists are members of the clergy, still half-dressed in their clerical vestments. The popular story of the two lovers, Abelard and Heloise, who both ended up being members of the clergy, could be relevant. Abelard was castrated as punishment for his passionate affair with Heloise, which resulted in a pregnancy and a child; they both took the cloth and spent the rest of their lives as monk and nun, and later abbot and abbess. Abelard compared his castration to Origen’s self-castration in his writings. 27 Their story was interpreted as a tale of a unique, tragic love, and it is repeated in the Roman de la Rose (Fig. 4.14). 28 In some illuminations Abelard’s castration is merged with Origen’s self-castration, as Origen castrates himself while a nun watches (Fig. 4.15).

The visual reference to Abelard and Heloise would not go unnoticed by a learned fifteenth-century reader. A connection between Abelard’s castration and the removal of Brother Aubry’s painted genitals is possible; even the names Aubry and Abelard are vaguely similar. Brother Aubry boasted about his virility in the beginning of the story, but he was chased away as soon as the pears started falling from the tree and his lover was claimed by another man, who took his place. This, arguably, constitutes a metaphorical castration: his manhood was taken from him when his lover was taken. The cancellation of his genitals from the illumination could allude to the cancellation of his virility. Possibly, a viewer who identified a visual parallel to Abelard and Eloise castrated the painted Brother Aubry. Discussion will return to the damaged genitals, as the decision to eliminate them from the illumination could be connected to how the manuscript was used.

Tale 38 is an example that demonstrates the artist’s familiarity with the artistic achievements of his time (Fig. 4.16). The story narrates the machinations of an adulterous wife who had an affair with a Cordelier. One day, her husband brought home a lamprey and ordered her to prepare it for dinner. She ignored him, and instead she cooked it and enjoyed it with her lover. Knowing that her husband would punish her, she came up with a cunning plan: she convinced a neighbour to swap places with her for the night. Predictably, when the husband found out that there was no lamprey for dinner, he was furious; he went

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to bed intending to punish his wife, but the neighbour was in her place, and since he was too furious to look, he beat the neighbour bloody. After his rage was spent and he left the room, the neighbour left as well; as soon as she was gone, the wife changed the bedsheets. The husband returned and found his wife naked and unscathed on clean bedsheets, at which point he started to question his own sanity. She managed to convince him that he imagined both the lamprey and the beating, and he ended up apologising profusely.

Vérard does not use an original woodcut for this Tale, so the one assigned to it is not directly relevant to the story (Fig. 4.17). With some imagination, one could suggest that the left scene represents the couple, and the two other scenes represent the wife and the neighbour, but the woodcut lacks the narrative qualities of the illumination. The manuscript, however, is completely different (Fig. 4.16). The illuminated space is separated in three different sections. On the left, the adulterous couple is enjoying the lamprey in a private dinner. In the middle, the husband is beating the neighbour with a bunch of sticks, and on the right his wife is displaying her naked body, free from bruises and wounds. The bedding is changed, as the story indicates, to make sure that no bloody stains can betray the deception. The husband, who aggressively holds down the woman in the middle scene, is shown surprised on the right. The two female nudes are both represented semi-frontally. The unlucky neighbour is trying to cover herself up, hiding her private parts with one hand and trying to cover her breasts with the other; streaks of blood are shown in her arms, thighs and torso. In contrast, the adulterous wife is seductively displaying her nudity to her husband and the viewer. Her genitals are outlined and her breasts are uncovered. The arching of her back and her open arms complete an inviting image.

Tale 38 is exceptional, also because its humour is not necessarily recognised as such today. The story features a husband who is, by his own description, extremely violent towards his wife and he takes pride in it. Everything about this mentality goes against modern day sensibilities. However, domestic violence was not regarded in the same way in the fifteenth century, and a representation of a beaten and vulnerable female would arguably not detract from the allure of the image. An example regarding attitudes towards a wife’s punishment can be found in Le Ménagier de Paris, where it is implied that the wife asked her senior husband to punish her for her mistakes, but do so in the bedroom, instead
of in public in front of other people. The wife’s concern was not the actual physical punishment, but privacy. In the Tale’s text, the characters bypass the beating as an inconvenient incident, but not as something outrageous. The focus is placed on the skilled plot laid out by the naughty wife, who ingeniously managed to have her way despite all difficulties. The illumination highlights this, taking additional artistic liberties to present a beautiful image to the viewer, in the form of two female nudes. This is an excellent example of a combination of sexual, trickster and slapstick humour.

The beautifully executed female nudes deserve some additional attention. The figure of the wife, who invitingly opens her body up to the viewer, arching her back and revealing her genitals, reminds strongly of the iconography of Bathsheba Bathing and tempting King David. The scene is one of the most frequent penitential representations of King David and one of the most eroticised biblical characters. Its iconography has been commonly connected with sexual indiscretions and adultery and it has been particularly popular in French Bibles Moralizées since the thirteenth century. In earlier representations, Bathsheba is shown taking a bath in her house, sometimes aided by servants as the King watches from his caste (Fig. 4.18). The scene became progressively more popular, and progressively more sexualised, throughout the fifteenth century, appearing more frequently in French Books of Hours. Perhaps reflecting a change in patron tastes, Bathsheba started being represented naked more frequently and her anatomy became more defined. In illuminations from the last quarter of the century, she is represented standing and bathing in a fountain located in a garden; the King looks from above, admires her beauty and points his guards to her (Fig. 4.19). This Bathsheba is naked and partially immersed in the water, looking away from both the King and the viewer. The anatomical details are even more

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32 For a discussion on Bathsheba’s iconography see Monica Ann Walker-Vadillo, Bathsheba in Late Medieval French Manuscript Illumination: Innocent Object of Desire or Agent of Sin? (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).
pronounced in Maître François’s Bathsheba, illuminated in Paris slightly later (Fig. 4.20). This last version is strikingly similar to the adulterous wife of Tale 38.

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* artist probably re-contextualised the iconography of Bathsheba, a visual reference to adultery and seduction, to represent an adulterous, cunning wife. The layout of the image almost implies that the wife’s tempting nudity is what seduces her husband out of his wit, making him susceptible to her deception. The explicit representation of her genitals alludes to her sexual promiscuity, following the established visual innuendo associated with the biblical character.\(^{33}\)

In contrast, the tricked neighbour is represented after a different model. Her attempt to cover her nakedness with her hands recalls of classical representations of Venus (Fig. 4.21). Although this is not how Venus was represented in medieval art, the subject’s iconography was being revisited by Renaissance artists: Botticelli’s *Venus* is dated in the mid-1480s. Figures modelled after classical art have appeared in manuscripts since in the early years of the fifteenth century and the works of the Limbourg Brothers in Paris (Fig. 4.22).

Furthermore, the open wounds in the woman’s body refer to known images of tortured Saints, as well as images of the bleeding body of Christ (Fig. 4.23), adding to the dramatic effect of the episode. In the *Belles Heures de Jean de France*, St Agatha is being tortured, though she does not display open wounds (Fig. 4.24).\(^{34}\) On the contrary, her body is unblemished as the pincers highlight, rather than harm, her breasts. In the same manuscript, the illumination of *St Catherine Tended by Angels* does not display any wounds at all (Fig. 4.25). The Saint’s body is again free from blemish and the angels seem to pamper, rather than cure her.\(^{35}\) Both representations are modelled after classical models and


\(^{35}\) Easton, ‘Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence’, 98. See also the dedicated publication of Husband, *The Art of Illumination*, 100.
representations of Venus. There is arguably a voyeuristic element in the represented female nudity, which is perfectly in line with the known tendency to merge sensuality and spirituality in the art produced in Valois France.

Evidently, the artist of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles was familiar with these representations. He used them with ingenuity, re-contextualising the old iconography but maintaining a conceptual relationship with his prototype. This resourcefulness indicates a mature artist who both able and confident enough to improvise and create an original visualisation that stimulates his audience in several, nuanced ways.

Having discussed some examples of the manuscript’s visual cycle, it is tempting to question whether their function, as well as the function of the manuscript as a whole, was pornographic. The sensitive and careful treatment of the naked female form suggests that both aesthetical and sexual stimulation is likely. All the above illuminations might function as images deliberately intending to arouse the viewer, and it is possible that they have had this effect to several people who looked at them over the centuries. However, it is suggested here that solely this interpretation would be problematic. The text of many Tales is bawdy, sexual, even vulgar, but principally they are presented as entertaining. The visual representations are both humorous and sexual, following the example of the text where the humour is sexual. In the case of Tale 46, the falling pears are a strong visual indication that the couple’s desire will be interrupted and their mutual stimulation will remain unsatisfied. The illumination combines sexuality and humour masterfully. In Tale 38, the illumination represents the adulterous wife following the iconography of Bathsheba, alluding to seduction and sexuality. Her beautiful nudity works in support of her lies, clouding her husband’s judgement to the point that he doubts his own mind. The unlucky neighbour’s body is her naughty friend’s exact opposite. She is treated as a modest Venus, a tortured martyr, a bleeding figure punished unjustly, contrasting the wife’s sinfulness. At the same time...

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time, her body remains well formed and her curves are as exposed to the viewers’ eye in the same way as her wounds.

Looking past the nudity, the connection between the visual prototypes and the characters of the story adds another layer of interpretation that once again demands the attention of the viewer, who would have recognised the references. The additional intellectual stimulation enhances the illuminations’ comic effect. The sensual treatment of the female forms supports the function of the representations: they aim to stimulate and amuse. Throughout the manuscript, the main purpose of the illuminations is to provide a visual narration that would enhance and compliment the text. When the visual narration called for it, the artist did not refrain from representing nudity, explicit sex scenes and bare genitals.

However, there are just as many examples where the opportunity to paint such an image was bypassed, in favour of a different representation that emphasises other elements of the story. Such an example can be found in Tale 55, where the protagonist is a girl with a voracious sexuality, whose appetites killed two men and almost slew a third one. She is represented in bed, under her blankets, not showing nude flesh at all. Her victims die off, scattered in the landscape on the left (Fig. 4.26). This is a story of lethal sexuality, but the illumination does not represent any sexuality. The illuminator’s focus is neither on the girl’s naked body nor on her sexual encounters, but on the fact that she drained the energy of three men and she was still not satisfied. Her sexuality is not expressed through her nudity but through its consequences, shown on the left. Similarly, in Tale 36 the male genitals are implied, but not represented explicitly (Fig. 4.27). Overall, in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles nudity and sexuality are used as expressive instruments for the illuminator, not simply as something to treat the viewer’s eye.

Finally, there are examples of nudity with an explicitly comic function and just an allusion to sexuality. In the illumination for Tale 80, a husband bares his genitals on the dinner table, next to the cutlery and the dinner plates (Fig. 4.13). In the story, his young wife had been complaining that his member was not of adequate proportions. Offended, he invited her entire family for dinner and exposed himself to them, asking his guests to confirm that this was not the case. Everyone commented that this is more than most
women could ask for, but the wife started crying bitterly; she told the group that their donkey was only six months old and already looked more endowed than her husband, who was twenty-four years old. Everyone laughed, and the wife’s mother made sure to instruct her on the matter afterwards. In the illumination the husband’s member looks unnaturally large, but his wife is still unimpressed: her hand gesture serves as an indication of the standards she had in mind. The Tale receives a recycled woodcut which is not directly connected to the text in Vérand’s printed text (Fig. 4.28). The text’s humour is built around the wife’s simultaneous sexual inexperience and sexual appetite. However, this is only indicated by her gesture. Nothing else in this illumination alludes to her sexuality: the table is set, the house interior and the guests look completely normal, she is fully dressed and her husband’s partial nudity is arguably not treated in a sensualised manner. This suggests once more that the main intention of the artist was an image that conveyed successfully the text’s comic effect.

4.1.2 The ugly side of nudity: toilet humour and marginalia precedents

The illumination for Tale 2 features partial nudity not for sexual, but for toilet humour purposes (Fig. 4.29). The Tale is attributed to Phillip the Good. The story narrates how a young woman was tormented by haemorrhoids, and after many failed attempts her family accepted the help of a one-eyed Cordelier. This physical deformity is a reflection of the deformity of his ways, since the Cordelier was a false doctor motivated by lust. The Cordelier savoured the opportunity to gaze at the private parts of a young girl, yet he was poetically and comically punished: as he inserted the caustic substance he presented as medicine in her sore body, she farted it back into his one functioning eye, blinding him.

It was discussed in earlier chapters how doctors have been represented in marginalia drolleries, some of which painted by Barthélemy d’Eyck (Fig. 3.12). The typical representation of a doctor holding up a jordan of urine is popular in visual representations, probably because of the parodic connotations and the connection with scatological humour (Fig. 4.30). Haemorrhoids and other diseases of the bowels, connected as they are with

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39 For connections between physical deformities and character see earlier discussion.
defecation, were ideal for a great scatological comic story. The iconography of haemorrhoid removal in medical manuscripts either included the burning of the area with hot iron, or the pouring of a certain liquid inside the anus (Fig. 4.31 and 4.32).

The illumination of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* appears to have been inspired directly out of marginalia iconography (Fig. 4.29).\(^{40}\) The girl is crouching over the couch in a familiar position for her ailment. However, the illumination leaves her provocatively exposed, while text describes how ‘the patient was put on the couch [...] and as best as they could, women removed her clothing and then quickly covered, enveloped, and draped her with a white damask cloth, finely embroidered. In the region of this concealed malady, they made a big opening in the cloth, through which Dom friar could clearly see’.\(^{41}\) In the illumination the girl is not allowed such dignity. The picture combines a sexually teasing position with the poetic punishment to the trickster.

Vérard’s woodcut is focusing more on medical and less on toilet humour (Fig. 4.33). Still in an urban interior, the girl is lying in her bed but this time she is aided by two women. The false doctor is not visibly one-eyed, as in the story. He inspects his instruments carefully, as the women are turning the girl on her side. The scene alludes to the painful procedure made popular by medical manuscripts and prints, but the girl is spared the shame of having to crouch and expose her ailing parts to the male audience that is in attendance in the miniature. The false doctor’s punishment, which is the most comic element of the text, is not alluded to in any way.

In Tale 79, another doctor became very successful due to his method of giving enemas for any ailment. Soon he rose to a fame that exceeded his medical skills: for the common folk, he became the person who could answer any question. One day he was visiting a town where a man had lost his ass. The man thought that the good doctor might know where the animal went, so he decided to pay him a visit. The doctor, busy and

\(^{40}\) See also Boneau, ‘Obscenity Out of the Margins’, 15; the author does not make the connection with the manuscript’s humorous visual function, although she recognises parodic elements.

The man did not question the doctor’s advice and endured the procedure. On his way home, the enema took effect and he ran to relieve himself in a nearby field. The release was violent and loud. By coincidence, his ass had strayed in the same place and was startled by all the noise; as the man emptied his bowels, the animal appeared suddenly and started braying. The surprised man started praising God and the good doctor, whose enema resulted in him finding his donkey again. Naturally, the doctor’s reputation rose more than ever.

The illumination narrates the story in two parts (Fig. 4.3). On the left, the doctor oversees his servant who is administering the enema to the man. On the right, the ass appears in the background as a result of the noisy release happening in the foreground. Both sides of the illumination bear a strong resemblance to marginalia. In contrast, any scatological emphasis of the illumination is missing from the woodcut, as does any reference to medical procedures, enemas or clysters. Vérard treats this story with an original woodcut, representing the man paying the doctor in the foreground and the man finding his donkey in the background (Fig. 4.3). The presence of the animal connects the woodcut to this specific story, but neither the enema nor the defecation is represented.

In a rather sophisticated way to insert marginalia humour to the illumination, a nun is bringing a urine sample of the sick prioress to the doctor to get a diagnosis in Tale 21 (Fig. 4.3). This visual version of toilet humour that has been too frequent both in past French literature and in earlier marginalia, some of which were already discussed (Fig. 4.30). Once more, Vérard’s original woodcut avoids any reference to doctors or urine pots, representing the nun in her bed and her fellow nuns conversing in the next room (Fig. 4.37).

4.1.3 Trickster stories

Most stories in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles involve trickster figures. The comic trope of the trickster was apparently particularly loved in Burgundy, the birthplace of the
text, and Tale 63 is a testament to its popularity.\textsuperscript{42} The narrator, Montbleru, is a historically identifiable member of the court of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{43} He is the trickster protagonist of his story, which is a narration of a practical joke he played on his friends. Montbleru presents his actions as a refreshing narrative, indicating a culture in which practical jokes, tricks and pranks were acceptable and permissible, instead of punishable. The illumination shows the trickster Montbleru in action: he is taking away his sleeping friends’ clothes (Fig. 4.38).

Vérard is re-using the same woodcut as in Tale 7, which is not connected with the story (Fig. 4.39).

It has been seen that most tricksters in the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles} are motivated by lust, which they are trying to sate through ingenious plans. Thus, the Scotsman in Tale 45 cross-dressed as a laundress to get access to the ladies’ houses. In the illumination, the Scotsman is represented as his sex is being revealed publicly, in what was intended as a public shaming (Fig. 4.40). In the vandalised miniature it is possible to point out that, as per the text, the revelation of the highly endowed Scotsman’s member has caused considerable shock to his all-male audience. Incidentally, this is the second instance of vandalised male genitals in the manuscript, and it will be discussed further below. Vérard’s woodcut is, once more, recycled from another Tale, making comparisons impossible (Fig. 4.41).

A trickster lord met his match in a trickster miller in Tale 3, an old story narrated by Monseigneur de la Roche, Chamberlain to the Duke of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{44} The said lord seduced the miller’s good-looking but gullible wife, by telling her that he needed to sleep with her to cure her, because her genitals were about to fall to the ground and they needed to be fastened back in place. She accepted his treatment, and then she innocently admitted it to her husband. Furious, the husband saw through the deception and created an opportunity to seduce the lord’s wife. The two men ran into each other shortly afterwards, and each admitted to the other that they were aware of the reciprocal cuckolding.


\textsuperscript{43} Blieck, ‘In Search of the Comic Hero’, 248.

\textsuperscript{44} The story is taken from the \textit{Facetiae} of Poggio. It has been imitated by Straparolo, Malespini and others. Champion, \textit{Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion}, Note on Tale 3.
The difference between manuscript and print is remarkable. Two scenes of sexual intercourse are shown in the manuscript (Fig. 4.42). One of them takes place in a mill, the other in the castle, connecting the image to the text. Nothing else betrays the identities of the participants and the particulars of the story are not represented. The illumination strongly reminds of *Decameron* iconography (Fig. 4.43).

In contrast, the miller’s wife in the woodcut has left the water she was carrying on the ground; she clasps her hands in despair as she hears the lord, who is dressed in a very recognisable fashion, explaining to her that he has to sleep with her to cure her from her unfortunate problem (Fig. 4.44). In the background, the miller is seen at the lord’s mansion, speaking with the lord’s wife. Although sexual scenes are not depicted, Vérard still created a narrative image and treated his subject in a pictorial manner. It is not hard to imagine the woodcut translated into an illumination, and it is tempting to think that the woodcut was inspired by an illumination. It is certain, though, that the illuminator and Vérard made different choices regarding what part of the story to represent.

The publicity of the printed edition is not an excuse for Vérard’s choices in this case. He has represented couples naked in bed in other instances. Tale 11, another trickster story, is an example where the protagonist is the original trickster, the Devil himself. In the story the Devil played a prank on a man in his dream: playing on his jealousy, he gave him a ring saying that his wife will be faithful for as long as he felt the ring around his finger. The man woke up feeling the ring, only to find that what he felt was his finger in his wife’s anus.

Vérard’s woodcut is split in two parts (Fig. 4.45). On the left, the man prays to the Devil at St Michael’s feet, asking to be rid of the jealousy that torments him, exactly as in the story. The same scene is repeated in the right section of the manuscript illumination, only this time the man is assisted by a servant (Fig. 4.46). On the right side of Vérard’s woodcut, the man has woken up to the smiling face of his wife and his hand is in her private parts (Fig. 4.45).

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45 The text reads: ‘Certes, m’amye, j’appercoy bien que si vous cheminez gueres avant, que vostre devant est en tresgrand dangier de cheoir; et vous ose bien dire que vous ne le porterez gueres longuement qu’il ne vous chiege, tant m’y cognois je’. Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, p. 22. My translation: ‘Honestly, my friend, I see well that if you walk a bit further, your ‘front piece’ is in great danger of falling off; and I dare say that you will not keep it much longer before it falls off, that’s what it looks like to me’. 196
Both are naked and only partially covered by the blankets. Evidently, nudity and sexual allusions were not thought to work against the book’s popularity.

While Vérard represented Tale 11 faithfully, the illuminator went one step further. Instead of painting the revelation of the joke, the waking up moment or the equivalent of a visual punchline, he painted the joke’s setup. On the left side of the illumination the couple is sleeping in their bed and the Devil is standing next to it. He is shown taking the hand of the sleeping man and placing it in his wife’s bottom (Fig. 4.4).

It is one of the principles of comedy that the audience knows what the characters ignore. The text of Tale 11 does not put the audience in such position: the punchline is revealed in the end, both for the characters and for the reader. Vérard followed the comic devices of the text, but the illuminator did not. Instead, he recruited a different comic device and used it to reconfigure the relationship between comedy and audience, allowing for an additional level of appreciation of the comic material.

4.1.4 Slapstick humour

Slapstick humour, involving exaggerated physical actions, beatings, trips, falls and similar gags, has already been encountered and discussed in conjunction with other types of humour that appear in the illuminations. Pain and beatings like the ones in Tale 38 are frequent in the manuscript. Usually, the beatings and injuries are delivered as punishment, with varying levels of brutality.

One of the most violent incidents of slapstick humour is found in castrations, usually occurring to punish illicit relationships with married women. There are two such examples in the manuscript, and in both cases the person undergoing the castration is a priest who had an affair with someone’s wife. In Tale 64 the husband used the priest’s own vanity to coy him (Fig. 4.47). He invited him in his house for dinner, with him, his wife and a friend of his, who was a livestock castrator by profession. The priest got drunk and started boasting about the size of his member, so the husband dared him to be tied on the table and examined by the castrator, who would be able to confirm the size of his genitals. Then, on the husband’s command, the castrator cut off the priest’s genitals. In the illumination, the priest is tied on the table and the castrator holds his genitals in one hand and the knife on the other. Vérard
reuses the woodcut for Tale 2 for this story, resulting in an image where someone will receive some sort of medical treatment, but the details remain unclear (Fig. 4.33).

Tale 85 is even more cruel (Fig. 4.48). As a punishment for the affair between the priest and his wife, the furious husband dragged the priest in his workshop and nailed his genitals on a wooden bench. Then he set his own workshop on fire, allowing the priest the choice to run for his life and leave a precious part of him behind, or to stay and be burnt alive. The illumination develops in narrative layers, allowing us to peek in the home and workshop: upstairs, the priest climbs naked on the wife’s bed, and she waits for him, presumably also naked under the blankets. The husband and his assistant are working in the workshop below. On the right side, the priest is being tied up and nailed down on the bench. The assistant, who was the one to reveal the affair, is shown handing the nails to his master. Vérard recycled the woodcut for Tale 4 in this case, using an image of a furious husband and a hidden lover that is not directly relevant to the particulars of the Tale (Fig. 4.49).

Closer to contemporary standards for slapstick humour, in Tale 60 a group of priests is being beaten with sticks, for seducing the wives of the town (Fig. 4.50). In the story, the women shaved their heads to be able to come and go unnoticed when they were meeting with their lovers. In the illumination, they are shown standing on the side, with their bare heads tonsured and their headdresses on the floor. Vérard reuses the woodcut for Tale 2, which is irrelevant to the story (Fig 4.33).

Similarly, in the background of the illumination of Tale 39, a sequential beating occurs: the wife is beating the maid who slept with her husband, and the husband is beating the wife who slept with someone else (Fig. 4.51). Apart from the beating scene, the illumination is very similar to many others of the manuscript. This inclusion of this beating in sequence differentiates it from the others and it appears to serve the sole purpose of being amusing. Vérard again recycles an image in this story (Fig. 4.52).

Continuing with illuminations of violent behaviour, the illumination of Tale 92 represents two women fighting over a man’s token of love (Fig. 4.53). His handkerchief has become a tug of war, as each one clutches it and claims it for herself. Any sense of modesty is gone as they are grabbing each other’s hair in the middle of the street and their
headdresses are on the ground. Once more, this is Tale receives a recycled illumination in Vérard’s edition.

The manuscript treats slapstick humour narratively, while Vérard chose to recycle prints for these stories. This could be attributed to the different taste of the prospective audiences: perhaps Vérard considered the violent scenes of castration to be less friendly for the wider public. The manuscript’s prospective owner, on the contrary, appears to have favoured a visual narration equal to the text in quality and detail.

4.1.5 Absence of humour: the serious stories

There are two stories in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles that appear to be intentionally not comic, even for the narrators’ and acteur’s standards. Tale 69, narrated by Philip the Good, mentions the battle of Nicopolis, during which a Flemish knight was taken captive by the Turks. His wife was under pressure to remarry although she did not want to, out of respect and faith to her husband. After several years she reluctantly yielded and she got married to another knight; soon after, she heard news of her first husband, who was returning from Turkey. She died of grief, unable to cope with her own actions.

This is obviously a very dramatic story. The illumination ignores completely the second husband and focuses instead on the knight, who is seen approaching a castle. On the top floor, his wife is watching him arrive through the castle window; in the adjacent room, the wife is seen in bed, as she has taken ill from grief (Fig. 4.54). The iconography is reminiscent of courtly literature, which fits the attitude of the text. The Vérard woodcut is completely irrelevant, as it repeats the representation of Tale 70’s fight with the devil, to which we will return (Fig. 4.55).

The second dramatic tale is Tale 98, narrated by the acteur. It is a retelling of Antoine de la Sale’s Petit Jehan de Saintré, which attests to the acteur’s learned background. It narrates the unhappy end of two young lovers who ran away to be together, escaping a prearranged marriage. It was not meant to be: they were attacked in an inn, the young man was killed by a group of thugs and the girl cut her own throat to avoid being raped by them.

Despite its narrative potential, this Tale is not treated with a woodcut in the Vérard book, and a woodcut from another story is recycled instead (Fig. 4.56). The illumination, on
the other hand, shares the dramatic qualities of the story (Fig. 4.57). The first part is represented on the right side. The young man is bleeding heavily on the town street, as his murderer pulls the bloodied sword from his body. The rest of the thugs are looking with derisive smiles and one of them enters the inn room. His figure is duplicated inside the room, in the usual way that the illuminator chooses to establish narrative continuity; he is seen approaching the girl and raising his hand towards her, either to strike her or to stop her. She is cutting her own throat with an expression of despair in her face and her blood flows to the ground.

The concept of suicide to preserve one’s honour is reminiscent of the story of Lucretia, who committed suicide after her rape. The scene is represented in the *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, where she is driving a dagger in her chest. Such illuminations appear in the first French translations (Fig. 4.58). The scene is also represented in *Cité de Dieu* manuscripts (Fig. 4.59). In the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, the iconography is slightly changed to fit the story, so instead of stabbing her chest the heroine cuts her own throat. However, the dramatic tension of the visual representation remains. The artist of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* reused an older iconographic model, taking full advantage of the narrative potential of the story and of the fact that, contrary to most other Tales, this one could be considered to have a moral.

The two non-comic stories were treated in a non-comic manner. It is noteworthy that only the manuscript presents original iconography for them, and they both received recycled woodcuts at Vérard’s publication. Vérard may have considered them of less commercial potential, and therefore chose to recycle his woodcuts. Alternatively, financial reasons could have obliged him to take this solution. The illuminator, on the other hand, enjoyed greater freedom and he applied his repertoire of courtly representation to what could be considered a courtly pair of Tales. This choice demonstrates both his skill and his ability to adapt his talent and vision to the requirements of the text he was working from.

The illuminations do not parody the text at any point. Most of the time, they do not need to: the text is comic enough and its overwhelming humour would make any exaggeration redundant. The illuminations of the two non-comic Tales indicate that the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* are not representing humour and obscenity randomly. Humour is an
integral and organic part of the work and an important narrative instrument, and so is its absence.

4.2  Who laughed with the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles?

4.2.1  The narrators and their inside jokes

The dramatic Tale 69 is followed by a story of a fight between the narrator, Philip the Good, and the Devil, taking place in the middle of the night in the narrator’s toilet. After loud prayers and fighting with moans and groans, he managed to defeat the Beast; immediately, he summoned all his servants to show them the horn that he took from the Devil, and everyone looked at the item with amazement.

At first read, the story looks more like a supernatural horror story than a comedy. Both the illumination and the woodcut are equally non-comic, representing the protagonist brawling with the Devil in front of a toilet stand (Fig. 4.60 and 4.55 respectively). However, some context regarding Philip the Good and his own sense of humour might reveal something different.

Philip the Good contributed fourteen stories in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, that vary in themes and humour styles. If his personal correspondence is any indication, he also appreciated toilet humour: he is known to have closed some of his personal letters using the phrase ‘Farewell, turd, I do not have more time to write’.46 Considering his known preference for this type of jokes, it is argued here that this Tale is a story of toilet humour, presented in the disguise of a supernatural threat. Thus, the fight with the Devil could stand for a severe case of midnight constipation, and the Devil’s horn refers to the outcome of the night’s efforts over a toilet stand.

It seems that the illuminator did not get the joke, but it would be impossible for him to get it. The definition of an inside joke is that its humour is only evident to the members of a specific group. The pun of Tale 70 would be obvious only to those people close to the Duke. It cannot be assumed that the illuminator, or anyone else outside the circle of narrators and their peers, would have enough familiarity with Phillip the Good to know his sense of humour, and therefore get this joke and visualise it accordingly. It is proposed here

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46 Vaughan and Small, Philip the Good, 131.
that instead of a non-humorous story, Tale 70 could be interpreted as a case of an inside joke that was already beyond the illuminator’s comprehension at the time of the manuscript’s creation.

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is a collective work. As such, it includes the humour of all its narrators, who were members of the Philip the Good’s court, and therefore expresses the overall humour culture of Burgundy’s court. Most of the narrators are historically identifiable, since most of them were political people who were generally familiar, if not friendly with one another.\(^\text{47}\) The illuminator was evidently not part of that group, although the *acteur* was. Although the order of the Tales in the manuscript is unlikely to have been their original narrative sequence, the fact that Tale 70 was placed after a dramatic story could indicate the *acteur’s* intention to alleviate the dramatic tension.

The text implies that the stories were narrated in company. Sometimes it is inferred that the protagonists of the tales are known to the audience: in Tale 81, the hero is introduced as ‘a knight that most of you, my good lords, will recognise’.\(^\text{48}\) At times, the text gives the impression of gossip stories circulated between a close circle of participants, or of inside jokes shared between people who know one another: in Tale 27 the narrator starts by saying that ‘there was a most noble lord, whom we could place among the princes, but whose name shall not come out from my pen’, yet their identity is recognisable through the story and the narrator closes by imploring ‘any reader who may know him, to take care not to show it [this book] to him’.\(^\text{49}\) Another case is Tale 47, where a nobleman caused the death of his wife by feeding salt to her mule. The animal rushed to the river as soon as it saw water, drowning the Lady who was riding it. Humorous or not, there is evidence that this

\(^{47}\) A thorough historical research and identification of the narrators can be found in Blieck, ‘The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Text and Context’, chapter 3.


\(^{49}\) The tale begins: ‘A ce propos, n’a pas long temps que ung tresgentil homme qu’on peut mectre ou renc et du compte des princes, dont je laisse le nom en ma plume...’ and ends: ‘Si prye aux lisans qui le cognoissent qu’ilz se gardent bien de lui mostrer’. Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, publiées par Pierre Champion, 87 and 91.
was based on a real incident known to the audience.\textsuperscript{50} In this process of transcribing the jokes narrated in company, the figure of the \textit{acteur} is fundamental.

4.2.2 \textbf{The acteur in his own words}

The anonymous \textit{acteur} is only defined as such in the text and his dedication letter. In contemporary terms ‘editor’ would be a more appropriate title than ‘author’, considering that he did not actually author the Tales: his creative participation is limited to the stories that he contributed, and he simply edited and collected all he Tales in one manuscript. However, authorship was defined differently in the fifteenth century and the person who wrote the dedication letter considered it appropriate to self-identify as the \textit{acteur}, without claiming to be the creative mind behind all the tales.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, he is not identified as the scribe. Instead of a question of establishing intellectual property as it is understood today, the title of the \textit{acteur} is used to indicate the editor and responsible for the project by order of the Duke of Burgundy.

It is implied in the text that the Tales were narrated in the \textit{acteur’s} presence. To emphasise their special character, he maintains elements of orality in his written edition. He addresses his audience directly and adopts colloquial language, making the text feel like it is being narrated in company. Trying to emulate the narrative structure of the \textit{Decameron}, where the stories were narrated to a group of people, he tries to make it clear that in the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles}, each story is narrated in front of an audience. As mentioned, he likely intervened in the order of the Tales, and consciously edited out names and attributes that would identify some of the protagonists. This could indicate a sense of courtesy and a desire to protect the reputation of all involved parties.

Although the \textit{acteur} did not sign or date his work, his personality is imprinted on the text and some conclusions can be extracted through careful examination of evidence found

\textsuperscript{50} Douglas mentions archival evidence that he does not cite, but he identifies the Lord of the story with Caffrey Charles, President of the Parliament of Grenoble. He mentions that he ‘was skilled in Latin and ‘the humanities’—in the plural only it would appear—and was chosen by Anne of Brittany, the wife of Louis XII, to teach her daughter, Renée’. See Douglas, \textit{One Hundred Merrie and Delightsome Stories}, note 47.

within the text. Tradition identified him as Antoine de la Sale, until Pierre Champion suggested either Philippe de Loan or Philippe Pot, leaning towards the latter; his position has been adopted by many scholars.\(^{52}\) An identification with Philippe Pot would be consistent both with the language, style and eloquence of the dedication letter. It would also account for the erudite references in one of his own Tales: it was already mentioned that Tale 98, which he claims to have narrated, is a retelling of Antoine de la Sale’s *Petit Jehan de Saintré*. Similarly, some tales attributed to him either as the *acteur* or as Monseigneur de la Roche are retellings of Boccaccio, Poggio and other writers, and the original ones are following the same style.\(^{53}\)

Philippe Pot, Lord of La Roche and Knight of the Golden Fleece, was very close to Philip the Good, who was also his godfather. He served as a diplomat for the court of Burgundy and as the Duke’s Grand Chamberlain. His storytelling skills were unquestionable and appreciated by Philip the Good.\(^{54}\) He was a very educated and very eloquent man, and a highly skilled orator, to the point that later in his life he was referred to as ‘the mouth of Cicero’.\(^{55}\)

He also had a quick wit and a sense of humour, which was greatly appreciated by Philip the Good, as a documented episode indicates. Following a quarrel with his son, Duke Philip had left Brussels alone during the night and got lost in the woods. On his return, Philippe Pot was the only man at court eager to undertake the delicate task of switching Duke Philip’s mood. Diplomatically, Pot greeted Duke Philip with a pleasantry: ‘Good day, my liege, good day! Art thou playing King Arthur now, or Sir Lancelot?’\(^{56}\)

After the death of the last Duke of Burgundy in 1477, Pot allied himself with King Louis XI against Mary of Burgundy, the Duke’s heiress. He managed to limit her territories to the Netherlands, securing the dominion of the Crown over the rest of Burgundy. Louis XI

\(^{52}\) Douglas presents his *One Hundred Merrie and Delightsome Stories* as the work of Antoine de la Sale. For other suggestions see Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, LVII; Sweetser, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Xii- Xiv; Blieck provides an overview of attributions in ‘The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Text and Context’, 65.

\(^{53}\) Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, XIII-XVI.

\(^{54}\) Robbins, *The Hundred Tales*, xiii.


expressed his gratitude through titles: he made Pot his first counsellor, he named him Knight of Saint Michael, Governor of the Dauphin Charles and Grand Seneschal of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{57} These positions convinced many other former Burgundian officials to act similarly, abandoning their older allegiances and placing themselves closer to the French Crown, to the scorn of Chastellain and their former allies.\textsuperscript{58} In the last decades of the fifteenth century, this group of people was probably the last echo of the old Burgundian court that was the birthplace of the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles}.

\subsection*{4.2.3 Dating: the scribes and the text’s layout}

To properly contextualise and interpret the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles} manuscript it is essential to discuss its dating and any other detail concerning its creation. Considering that archive or other information is scarce, any conclusions need to be drawn through careful study of the evidence found in the body of the manuscript.

At the end of the dedication letter, a different hand, identified as the third scribe, added a colophon that reads \textit{de dijon l’an Miiijc xxxij}.\textsuperscript{59} This is added at the end of the page, in the form of a signature (Fig. 4.61). It would date the manuscript in 1432. However, the manuscript’s historical background, as well as its palaeography and iconography, do not agree with this dating. The text was written in the 1460s, which is thirty years later than the indicated date. Furthermore, the indicated location is significant: although Dijon was considered the capital of Burgundy, in the 1460s the Duke would be more likely found in Brussels or Bruges, where he spent most of his time.\textsuperscript{60} It is unlikely that a manuscript presentation actually took place in Dijon, if such a ceremony took place at all.

\textsuperscript{58} Vaivre, ‘Un primitif tiré de l’oubli’, 826.
\textsuperscript{59} Blieck was the first to discuss the three different scribal hands in ‘The \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles}, Text and Context’, 491.
\textsuperscript{60} Vaughan and Small, \textit{Philip the Good}, 50.
It has been suggested that the colophon was a scribe’s copying mistake, pointing instead in a dating closer to 1482, which is a more plausible suggestion. This assumes that the third scribe was copying from a prototype. A look at the three scribal hands suggests otherwise. It is evident that the first scribe, who wrote most of the text, was copying from a Burgundian text, but he was probably not Burgundian himself. He wrote in in black ink, in gothic bastardă cursive characters. The text is written in one block, and its format and style indicate a Burgundian-style writing of the second half of the fifteenth century.

The table of contents is written by a different hand, indicating that it was perhaps added later, which was not an unusual practice at the time (Fig. 4.6). In the table of contents, the two last tales are given in reverse order, compared to their current position in the manuscript. This switch could be attributed to a subsequent rebinding of the manuscript. The third scribe was the last one to work on the manuscript and he was the one to interfere the most with the text. He made additions at an unspecified date, writing in red ink and interfering with the Tale rubrics. These alterations occur more frequently towards the end of the manuscript, where he changed titles and added narrator names, sometimes going against the manuscript’s original rubric. For these alterations he often had to erase the end mark that the previous scribe used at the end of his own rubrics.

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61 Champion suggested that an i is missing from the first part, which would give a date of 1532, or an l from the second part to make it 1482; see Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, LVI. The second date is more likely, as it agrees with the manuscript’s palaeography. This position was reiterated by Blieck, ‘The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Text and Context’, 46.

62 Linguistic analysis reveals uncorrected linguistic mistakes, that indicate a lack of familiarity with Burgundian idioms and titles. This suggests that the scribe was copying in a language or a dialect that was not his own. These mistakes are not corrected at a later date, indicating that they were not perceived later in the manuscript’s history either. See also Blieck, ‘The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Text and Context’, 44-45. For a thorough linguistic analysis of the manuscript’s text, see also Roger, ‘Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles: A Linguistic Study of MS Glasgow Hunter 252’ (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011).

63 This is admittedly a significant time span but writing styles tend to change slowly, and a more specific dating based only on the writing can be problematic. For details on writing styles see also Scot McKendrick, ‘Reviving the past: Illustrated Manuscripts of Secular Vernacular Texts, 1467–1500’, in Thomas Kren and Scot McKendrick, eds., *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 64.


65 Vérard’s published edition gives the tales in the same order in the table of contents. The manuscript’s inconsistency could be related to the fact that at some point in its history, it was cut and rebound in its current binding, that dates from the sixteenth century. It is possible that during this rebinding, the two last tales were probably repositioned in reverse order. These issues are discussed later in the thesis.


interesting that the added names do not agree with the ones given in Vérard’s edition; the third scribe did not use the printed edition as his model, nor did the two have a common model.68

The third scribe’s interventions, thus, do not appear reliable. However, it is argued here that his choice of date and place are highly symbolic. The Duke’s presence is confirmed in Dijon in 1432, which was a key date for the Duchy of Burgundy. In 1432 Philip the Good became officially the Count of Hainaut, Holland and Zeeland, annexing these territories in his Duchy after Jacqueline of Bavaria’s abdication.69 This was probably the reason behind Franco-Burgundian hostilities at the same year and behind the wars waging in Auxerre. The Burgundian expansion was evidently making France nervous. Furthermore, in 1432, the Burgundian authorities had revealed a plot for a secret attack in Dijon.70

Moreover, in 1432 the seat of the recently established Order of the Golden Fleece, the Chivalric Order of the Burgundian court, was fixed in Dijon.71 The Order soon became a model for other courts and chivalric orders, and although it was itself inspired by the Order of the Garter, it soon surpassed it in prestige.72 Still in 1432, Duke Philip’s sister, Anne of Burgundy, who was married to the English Duke of Bedford, passed away. Her death marked the moment in time when Burgundian relations with the Duke of Bedford and the English started deteriorating.73

In short, 1432 determined in many ways the relationship between Burgundy and France. The year and location given by the third scribe allude to the time when Burgundy was strong and expanding, slowly distancing itself from England and coming closer to France, and progressively becoming a model court for the rest of Europe. It might not be an accurate date for the creation of this manuscript, but ‘1432 in Dijon’ is an accurate date and place if one is seeking to celebrate the apogee of the Duchy of Burgundy.

73 Vaughan and Small, Philip the Good, 21.
The text of the Hunterian *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is written in one block, in Burgundian style, yet linguistic analysis establishes that the scribe was not Burgundian. Each Tale is completely separated by the previous one, and it is preceded by its rubric in red and its illumination, which is not necessarily placed on the top of the page. This indicates a later dating, perhaps even later than the 1480s and into the 1490s. Flemish tradition would require border decoration at this date. Yet, the Hunterian manuscript is borderless.

The first *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* manuscript would have probably been created in the early 1460s, in close chronological proximity to the narration of the Tales. This manuscript’s current whereabouts are unknown, but it has been tentatively connected to the workshop of David Aubert in Brussels. Aubert was active until the mid-1460s and he collaborated often with Loyset Liédet, creating borderless manuscripts and grisailles for the Dukes of Burgundy. It is possible that the first *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, too, was a borderless manuscript. It is known that Philip the Good had a preference for secular texts written in one column without border decoration, and his commissions popularised borderless manuscripts. The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is a secular text, and although it is not a historical work, the Tales claim to be drawn from real life events. Perhaps the marginally chronicle character of the text allowed for it to be written in the style of other chronicles, like the works produced for him by Loyset Liédet in the 1460s, that are also borderless (Fig. 4.63).

It is proposed here that the absence of marginal decoration in the Hunterian manuscript was a choice, an attempt to connect the manuscript to Burgundy’s past when it

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74 Roger, ‘Les *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*’, 116-126 and 331.
75 McKendrick,’Reviving the past: Illustrated Manuscripts of Secular Vernacular Texts’, 66.
76 Around the 1470s the manuscript page layout changed and illuminations did not have to be placed on top of the page. Therefore, the image was treated more freely and the scribes and illuminators were not afraid to break the body of the text. See Kren and McKendrick, *Illuminating the Renaissance*, 17 and McKendrick,’Reviving the past: Illustrated Manuscripts of Secular Vernacular Texts’, 66.
81 McKendrick,’Reviving the past: Illustrated Manuscripts of Secular Vernacular Texts’, 63-64.
was in full splendour. This manuscript does not follow the Flemish tradition contemporary to its time, nor was it created in Flemish territories. It is proposed here that its creation is connected to the members of the Burgundian court that were in Paris at the end of the century, having offered their services to Louis XI. It is possible, considering the specific background of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and the political status of its narrators, that the manuscript was commissioned by a patron who may have seen the first *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* manuscript and still held nostalgic attitudes towards the Burgundian past. It is also possible that the presence of former Burgundian officials in Paris influenced the decision of Antoine Vérard, then at the early stages of his career, to print the text.

4.2.4 Vérard’s printed edition

What could have inspired a young editor, as Vérard was in 1486, to print the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*? The text, created two decades earlier for a specific audience, was not particularly popular. The stories were explicit and full of personal references and inside jokes, which meant that the text had to be heavily edited to appeal to the wider public. The fact that there were political people involved in the production of the text could have contributed to its commercial potential: the writings of politicians and public figures generally tend to draw an audience. However, by the 1480s most narrators had died and the Duchy of Burgundy no longer existed. Even the King to whom Vérard attributed the entire work, Louis XI, had passed away. Former Burgundian officials were in Paris and Philippe Pot was serving as Great Seneschal of Burgundy, but it is unlikely that simply their presence could ensure the success of a publication. The choice of text, in retrospect, appears risky as an investment.

Vérard is known to have had a keen entrepreneur’s mind. The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* was probably a calculated risk that he assessed carefully and decided that it would

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83 There are other known examples of the same period, of manuscripts that were illuminated with a sentimental eye to the Burgundian Netherlands. The *Roman de la Rose* for Englebert of Nassau one such example (BL Harley Ms 4425, c 1490-c 1500). Englebert of Nassau was at the service of the Burgundian Dukes and he followed Mary of Burgundy after the death of Charles the Bold, so his nostalgia is understandable. McKendrick, ‘Reviving the past: Illustrated Manuscripts of Secular Vernacular Texts’, 73.

likely pay off. Some credit may be due to the edition’s sponsor and overseer, Nicole Gilles. Gilles was a historian, chronicler, secretary to Louis XI and notary to Charles VIII of France.85 He also concerned himself with providing secular works for the palace, and for that purpose he was working closely with people from royal circles, who often oversaw his works. 86 Through his position he is certain to have interacted with Philippe Pot and, considering Pot’s humanist background, it is likely that they had interests in common. Gilles could have been interested in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles as a historian and chronicler, if not simply as a secretary collecting secular works for the royal library. Since he sponsored the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles publication, the entire endeavour had his approval.

Vérard edited the text significantly, omitting the obvious inside jokes and the obscure Flemish administration titles. These alterations are part of his attempts to make his edition attractive to the wider public.87 For the same purpose, he omitted noticeable references to the chivalric world, since at the time of publication these references would have been outdated and would not make sense to his prospective readers.88 Finally, he edited the dedication letter, giving it the form of an editor’s prologue. In the dedication’s end, he added a disclaimer:

And note that for all the Tales mentioned to be by Monseigneur, it is intended to be Monseigneur le Dauphin, who later succeeded to the crown of France and he is King Louis XI; because he was in the lands of the Duke of Burgundy.89 This false attribution was probably considered commercially profitable, since it connected the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles to a political personality of recent memory for the Parisian public.

This editing of the dedication is of particular significance. Vérard’s prologues preceded the author’s and he often replaced the original ones with edited versions, using them as a way to take ownership of the texts he was printing.90 The only exceptions were

86 Winn, Anthoine Vérard, 19.
89 ‘Et notez que par toutes les Nouvelles où il est dit par Monseigneur il est entendu par Monseigneur le Dauphin, lequel depuis a succédé à la couronne et est le roy Loys unsieme; car il estoit lorses pays du duc de Bourgoingne’. Champion, Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion, 269. The translation is mine.
90 Winn, Anthoine Vérard, 37.
when he dedicated his works to the King: in these cases, the patron stood out more than the
author. It is evident that he used this method to appeal to his patrons, since his payment
also depended on it. Receipts show that he would give out items with an indication of costs,
but not with a fixed price. This means that he could not be sure of his payment, especially
from royalty. This probably made him very careful and selective with what he was printing:
his payment would be delivered after the book was finished and it was largely depending on
the patron’s good graces and pleasure, so he could not take many chances.

Gilles’s sponsorship almost certainly diminished the business risk for the printer and
it could point to a royal connection. An intriguing possibility could be that part of the
sponsorship was connected to the attribution to the late King Louis XI. The King was not
particularly popular to his subjects. It is possible that a post-mortem publication of a
collection of funny stories aimed to switch public opinion to his favour, which would add a
propagandistic character to the first publication of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.

As seen, Vérard’s publication contained forty-two original woodcuts, most of which
are used more than once throughout the manuscript. This was a large-scale, expensive and
ambitious endeavour, especially since Vérard is documented as a printer since 1485, so this
would be one of his early ventures. Although he often worked with illuminators, in this
case he did not recruit one to paint a frontispiece. Instead, he used two woodcuts. The first
represents a scene where the Tales are narrated, and the borders are decorated abundantly
with fleurs de lys. The Duke of Burgundy, the Dauphin and other attendants are holding
parchments or paper rolls, presumably containing the text of their respective Tales (Fig.
4.64). The second woodcut is a presentation scene in which Louis XI is receiving the book,
but it is uncertain if the person giving it is the text’s author or Vérard in person (Fig. 4.65).

Despite the fleurs de lys, judging by its overall appearance, this edition does not
seem to have been a royal commission. Vérard usually illuminated his woodcuts when they

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91 Winn, Anthoine Vérard, 47.
92 Winn, Anthoine Vérard, 30.
93 Philippe de Commynes admits that, among other things, heavy taxation and constant military campaigning
had exhausted Louis XI subjects; see Philippe de Commynes, Memoirs: The Reign of Louis XI 1461-83, trans.
94 Winn, Anthoine Vérard, 15.
were destined for distinguished patrons, or print on vellum which he then had illuminated.\textsuperscript{95} These luxurious editions were destined mostly to noble patrons, in order to convince them that printed books could be as beautiful as the manuscripts; they were also presented to wealthy citizens that had financial means but were not of noble birth, and they were mimicking the habits of the nobility.\textsuperscript{96} For his most eminent patrons who would not abandon the manuscript tradition, he is even suspected to have created manuscript editions.\textsuperscript{97} Consequently, he collaborated with several illuminators active in Paris at the time, and some of them will be discussed later.

However, Vérard’s woodcuts for the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles} are not painted, and the book does not have other illuminated decoration. Compared to his known royal productions, it looks surprisingly bare. The presence of \textit{fleur de lys} in the two opening woodcuts could be connected to the direct reference to the King, but the rest of the book does not have similar identifiers. It is possible that there was some connection with the palace regarding the production, considering Gilles’ sponsorship, but Vérard was targeting at a larger, more diverse readership.

This could account for the different ways humour was treated visually compared to the manuscript illuminations. It is possible that Vérard worked from a manuscript prototype, but it is impossible to establish a connection between that prototype and the Hunterian \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles}. As discussed above, the printer kept an eye on the manuscript tradition of the past, which he was familiar with. At the same time, he was aware of the particularities of his audience and of his new medium. As one of his first ventures, the \textit{Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles} were undoubtedly an opportunity for Vérard to establish himself, so he needed to make the book commercially successful. A manuscript would have been destined to one person and it would be seen by the patron and their close circle. A printed book would be more widely visible and certainly more accessible, therefore that the images would have to be friendly to a broader audience instead of appealing to one patron’s tastes.

\textsuperscript{95} Winn, \textit{Anthoine Vérard}, 32.
\textsuperscript{97} Winn, \textit{Anthoine Vérard}, 33-36.
Vérard reprinted the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* in 1495 and 1499, which indicates that it remained popular until the end of the century, at least in Paris. Its several reprints and subsequent editions indicate that his entrepreneurial instincts were correct: the book was indeed a success, and it is argued here that the printed edition preceded and inspired the manuscript.

### 4.2.5 The artist

The illuminations of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* have been discussed so far as the work of one individual. However, after close inspection it becomes clear that more than one hand worked on the manuscript. This thesis proposes that the illuminations can be attributed to illuminators connected to the workshop of the Chief Associate of Maître François in Paris. The atelier of Maître François was one of the most prolific in Paris in the second half of the fifteenth century, run by Maître François in person until the 1480s and subsequently by his Chief Associate, whose artistic personality dominates the workshop’s productions from that period until the end of the century.

Recent archival evidence has argued convincingly that the Chief Associate, who inherited the atelier, was actually the son of the older master and they shared the same first name. Mathieu Deldicque recently identified Maître François as François le Barbier the Elder, who rented a house on the bridge of the Notre-Dame in Paris from 1455 until at least 1460. This date corresponds to the beginning of his career as a workshop master and the

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98 Copies of the subsequent Vérard editions can be found in Brussels: BR Inc. B 521; London: BL IB 41194; Oxford: BodL Douce N 291; Paris: Arsenal Rés 4-Bl-4389; Petit Palais Musée des Beaux-Arts Dutuit 496; BnF Rés Y2-175; New Haven: Yale University Library BEIN 1974 +39.

99 Blieck mentions two different suggestions proposed to him by art historians but not published: he cites Dominic Vanskijnsberghe who placed the illuminator at Tours around the 1480s, and Ludovic Nys who compared it to works from Holland in the 1470s. Blieck, ‘The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Text and Context’, 493.


location of the house indicates his connections to book trade. His son, François le Barbier the Younger, inherited his workshop in the 1480s, in the same tradition followed by other illuminating families in Paris. François le Barbier the Younger is probably the person documented to be a parishioner in the church of Saint-Denis-de-la-Chartre, in a parish in great proximity to the Notre-Dame and the book-trading centre of the city. He is present in the church documents until 1500. The illuminator François and his wife were members of the Confraternity of St Augustine since 1485, which testifies to their social position: apparently, he was successful in his trade. His donation records indicate that he was probably religious as well. Church records indicate that he died in 1501, which coincides with the period where his production stops.

The son’s formation took place in his fathers’ workshop, which explains the similarities in style. They both ran a prolific business that allowed them access to a wide variety of models and there is evidence that the entire family was connected to book trade in general, as several people with the surname ‘Barbier’ are identified as librarians and printers. The Barbier family was familiar and perhaps active in the printing industry, which could explain some illuminated frontispieces for Vérard’s printed books early in his career. They were among the first collaborators of the young printer. Among the works painted for Vérard there is a Lancelot du Lac (BnF Vélins 614) and a Des nobles et cleres femmes (BnF Vélins 1223). The workshop was favoured by King Charles VIII and by illustrious patrons like the Dukes of Nemours, Bourbon, Bretagne and others. The Barbier workshop had great influence in the Parisian illuminating scene, and illuminations that follow its style appear often in the last twenty years of the fifteenth century in Paris.

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104 Another workshop that went from father to son was the one ran by André d’Ypres, whose son, Colin d’Amiens, inherited. See also Sterling, La peinture Médiévale à Paris, 133-166 and Philippe Lorentz, ‘Le retable du Parlement de Paris et son peintre: Trois hypothèses récentes’, Bulletin Monumental 156, no. 3 (1998): 311.
111 Sterling, La peinture Médiévale à Paris, v. 2. 228.
112 Nicole Raynaud, ‘Le Maître de Jacques de Besançon’, 256.
This research suggests that Barbier the Younger was the chief artist of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. The attribution is made on visual evidence and it is supported by the workshop’s popularity among noble patrons: in the illumination for Tale 49, the background of the room is covered in *fleur de lys* (Fig. 4.6). This indicates that the manuscript’s commissioner was probably connected to royalty.

Barbier the Younger probably planned and oversaw the work, as the atelier’s master. He would have been responsible for the iconographical programme, but it is evident that he collaborated with at least one other illuminator, with whom he has probably worked before. This was common workshop practice in Paris at the time: a master would often employ others to work on illuminations of his design, resulting in illuminations that share similarities, although they were obviously executed by different artists.\(^\text{113}\)

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* illuminations are considered original creations for this work, although inspiration was drawn from older motifs. The images represent details and particular elements that are unique to each story. There is visible attempt to fit inside the small frame all the details of the plot. It is obvious that Barbier painted stories that were known to him, either because he was already familiar with them, or because he was reading the stories as he was painting them. His collaboration with Vérard suggests that he may have been already familiar with the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.

Further evidence in support of this attribution can be found in the illumination of Tale 74. It represents a church scene, where the priest is elevating the host. The church interior is simple, only the altar with a chalice on it is visible, with the altarpiece and a green drapery in the background behind it (Fig. 4.67). It is the shape of this altarpiece that gives away the Parisian provenance of the manuscript. The Sacred Conversation takes place under the elevated crucified Christ; the semi-circular detail on the top and the fact that one of the figures is missing its head mirror the figures and layout of the *Crucifixion of the Parliament*.

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of Paris, painted around 1454-55 for the Parliament’s Grand Chambers (Fig. 4.68). The work has been copied in Parisian illuminations since then.115

The altarpiece miniature replica appears in other works by the Barbier workshop. One example can be found in the Vita Christi, dated to the 1480-90s, also part of the Hunterian collection (Fig. 4.69). In the presentation page, the King Charles VIII is kneeling with reverence at his prayer desk, ready to receive confession. His devotion is witnessed by a great number of attendants, including three red-clad cardinals that are standing next to the altar. The resemblance of the Vita Christi altarpiece, with the one found in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, is evident. This Vita Christi is attributed to the workshop of Barbier the Younger, who probably collaborated with another illuminator.116 Interestingly, this manuscript also came to the possession of the Hunterian Library through William Hunter’s bequest, and Hunter acquired it at the same auction as the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles.117

Further comparisons between these two manuscripts reveal more similarities: the treatment of the faces and hair and the ample use of gold in the Vita Christi’s Annunciation, as well as the domestic scenes that can be found in the latter manuscript, are very similar to many of the comic manuscript’s illuminations (Fig. 4.70).

The first element to indicate more than one illuminating hand in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles is the variation in the decorative elements of the illuminations. Some of them feature a golden decorative lace around the illumination border (Fig. 4.60). The design

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114 The Crucifixion is attributed to the Dreux Budé Master, tentatively identified by Avril as André d’Ypres, originating from Amiens and active in Paris after the 1450s. He ran a successful workshop which his son, Colin d’Amiens, inherited; the workshop was active until the end of the fifteenth century and it had considerable influence to Parisian illumination. See Nicole Raynaud, ‘Le Maître de Dreux Budé, in Avril and Reynaud, Les manuscrits à peintures en France, 53-59; Sterling, La peinture Médiévale à Paris, v. 2, 117-133; Lorentz, ‘Le retable du Parlement de Paris et son peintre, 311.


116 Nigel Thorp, The Glory of the Page: Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts from Glasgow University Library (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1987), no 60; The present research suggests that the hand of the second artist of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles is also identifiable.

117 William Hunter bought three manuscripts in the Gaignat auction, all of them dating from the late fifteenth century. The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles was one of them, bought for £100. The Corpus Christi discussed above was the second one, and it was illuminated by the same hand. The price can be seen written next to De Bure’s catalogue, that Dessain, Hunter’s middleman, also sent to Hunter. In his letter of the sale, he describes the competition that took place between collectors. See C. Helen Brock, ed., The Correspondence of Dr. William Hunter, 1740-1783 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), Letters 179 and 182.
sometimes follows the border, other times it runs under the illumination’s architecture and sometimes it is absent completely (Fig. 4.71-73, 4.16 and 4.8 respectively). Its presence or placement does not follow a specific pattern. In Tale 31 there is no gilded gold decoration (Fig. 4.75), but in Tale 34 the openings in the walls are gilded with gold (Fig. 4.71). Similar decoration can be found in several other works of the same workshop (Fig. 4.59).

Women tend to be pale-white throughout the work, while men can be pale or rosier. Figures are elegant although somewhat static at times; gestures and poses are repeated frequently in the manuscript. People in the background are usually represented in yellow or bronze hues, unless they are important to the story; in this case they receive a tiny representation (Fig. 4.73; bronze figures in the background in Fig. 4.74). The colour palette includes a lot of gold, but also blues, reds and greens.

More importantly, there are visible differences in artistic technique and style. Some illuminations are executed with great skill, like the first and second ones in the manuscript (Fig. 4.3 and 4.29). However, the difference in artistic approach between these and Tale 42, for example, indicates that more than one hands worked on the same manuscript (Fig. 4.76). This is especially prominent in the way artists treat human profiles. One of them is more skilled, resulting in more convincing representations (Fig. 4.77, 4.78). The second one prefers straighter noses, shorter foreheads and less sculpted features (Fig. 4.79, 4.80). The latter’s sense of perspective is not consistent either, especially in some landscapes, which is unusual for the period. This could indicate an older person at work, who was potentially not as well-versed in perspective and spatial construction. It is especially perceivable in the illuminations of Tales 43 and 71 which are similar (Fig. 4.81 and 4.82). In Tale 43 proportions are less perfect, colours are brighter and the standing figure entering the room looks different than the ones on the bed (Fig. 4.81). In Tale 71, the proportions and perspective are more studied, the person entering the room moves more naturally and the colour palette is more muted, although still full of gold (Fig. 4.82). It is also possible that more than one illuminator worked, at times, on the same image.

It is argued here that the first, more capable hand belongs to Barbier the Younger. The second illuminator could be tentatively identified as the illuminator known as Jacques
This artist has been connected mostly to border decoration, although recent research has also attributed to him several illuminations in collaboration with the Barbier workshop (Fig. 4.83). He also worked with Vérard and he could have been responsible for the calligraphy of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, although the remaining evidence that survived the manuscript’s cropping cannot allow a conclusive answer.

Barbier the Younger and Jacques de Besançon have collaborated before, most notably in the Office of St John the Evangelist (Bibliothèque Mazarine Ms 146). The illumination of St John the Evangelist is the hand of Barbier the Younger (Fig. 4.84). It features a wall in the background that appears quite often in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles and a familiar treatment in the face's shadows, hair and gesture of hands. Similarly, the miniature of St John in the isle of Patmos is attributed to Jacques de Besançon, and the treatment in the face and hair of the figure, as well as in the background landscape, is greatly reminiscent of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles (Fig. 4.85). At times it is very hard to distinguish between the two artists, giving the impression that both were working in the same illumination; this effect occurs in the Hunterian manuscript as well.

Generally, Barbier the Younger and Jacques de Besançon worked on Missals, Books of Hours, a Légende Dorée, a Cité de Dieu and Psalters. Compared to these productions, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles appears out of context. Why, then, did the unknown patron choose this workshop for the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles?

The workshop was popular in noble and royal circles, but it is possible that the commission was connected to Barbier’s treatment of domestic and genre scenes, which he

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120 It is not possible to determine at which point in the manuscript’s history the manuscript was cropped and rebound, or if these two interventions happened at the same time. It is evident that the cropping destroyed the calligraphy that decorated the top of the pages. Blieck, ‘The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, Text and Context’, Appendix.
123 Deldicque attributes this to Jacques de Besançon; see Deldicque, ‘L’enluminure à Paris à la fin du XVe siècle’, 14.
included in his religious works (Fig. 4.70). Additionally, the workshop had a vast
iconographic repertoire, which would give them an advantage in creating a new
iconographic cycle. Apart from the already discussed references to the works of the
Limbourgs, there are similarities between illuminations in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and
the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*, especially in interior scenes with random domestic
objects. Thus, in Tale 52 the specific items mentioned in the text are seen hanging from the
ceiling (Fig. 4.86). A similar illumination can be found in the Parisian *Livre du Coeur d’amour
Épris* (Fig. 3.88).

Illuminating the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* must have been an interesting challenge to
the workshop master and an excellent opportunity to showcase his inspiration, his ability
and his artistic virtuosity. Barbier’s desire to create an original visual cycle becomes
apparent especially in the illuminations of Tales that are connected or directly borrowed
from the *Decameron*. As discussed, some Tales are essentially retellings of the older text.
Fully illuminated copies of French translations of the *Decameron* existed since the beginning
of the century; John the Fearless possessed the one illuminated by the Cité des Dames
Master, as seen in the first chapter. Therefore, these stories had a visual precedent and the
Barbier workshop was certainly familiar with *Decameron* iconography, which they could use
as reference.

Tale 16 is the counterpart of *Decameron*’s sixth story of the seventh Day. In both
tales a married woman has an affair and her lover has to escape unnoticed by the husband,
who returned unexpectedly and interrupted an adulterous meeting. However, the two
illuminations are far from identical in every respect (Fig. 4.87 and 4.88). The same
observation can be made for Tale 28 and its Boccaccio counterpart, the eighth story of the
seventh Day (Fig. 4.89 and 4.90). The pair of Tale 78 and its counterpart of *Decameron*’s
seventh day, fifth story is the one where the two images are most connected (Fig. 4.91 and
4.92).

Missing walls, eavesdroppers, people in their beds and in several other curious
positions are typical in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, and the similarity is obvious.
Comparing, for example, the illumination from Tale 95 and the one from the first Day,
fourth story of the *Decameron*, it is evident that the figure of the priest, his posture, the
triangle of his robe’s hood as he climbs on the bed are clearly similar (Fig. 4.93 and 4.43). Incidentally, in the Decameron there are more explicit representations than in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, as penetrating rape is represented in an illumination (Fig. 4.94). In the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, although there is an abundance of nudity and genitals, such an explicit representation of the sexual act cannot be found. In the many cases where sexual activity takes place, the participants are dressed, hidden under the covers or otherwise covered, or they are not engaging in the actual act.

This further supports the suggestion, advanced earlier, that Barbier’s focus was not explicit sexuality in for its own sake, but in connection and in support of the image’s humorous function. This artistic choice was combined with the artist’s effort to move away from the Decameron iconography, indicating that he was determined to produce an original, exceptional manuscript. It is argued here that his motivation was at least partly due to the existing printed edition and its success. The two versions of the visualised text appeared in chronological proximity, and the manuscript arguably followed the printed edition. Apart from showcasing his talent, this manuscript could also have been an opportunity for Barbier to differentiate his work from the printer’s.

The late fifteenth century and the introduction of printed books signalled the beginning of the end for manuscript production, yet illuminated manuscripts remained popular. The Barbier workshop had been active and successful in Paris for decades. Evidence of its activity suggests that it continued to thrive until the first years of the fifteenth century, notwithstanding the competition from the printing industry. This suggests a master who is both a skilled artist and a skilled entrepreneur, a suggestion further confirmed by the fact that Barbier collaborated with the printing industry later in the century, not missing the chance to expand his business to new ventures. The advent of printing, however, raised the competition significantly, making it essential for such an artist to want to stand out. Arguably, the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles presented a unique opportunity to do so.

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125 Andrew Pettegree, The Book in the Renaissance (Yale University Press, 2010), 16.
4.2.6 Original and subsequent owners

This research has tentatively placed the manuscript’s commissioner close to some former Burgundian officials active in the Parisian court. The lack of archival evidence makes a more specific identification problematic. The manuscript does not display any elements to indicate ownership, as there are no signatures or recognisable coats of arms. Its whereabouts are unknown before the seventeenth century. Its current binding dates from the seventeenth century and it is impossible to determine if the original binding carried any elements that indicated its patronage. Any information on the patron’s identity will therefore have to be extracted by the physical object.

This was an unusual manuscript commission. The printed *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* was probably already in circulation, so acquiring a copy would have been a less expensive choice for someone who just wished to have a copy of the text. A patron with a taste for illuminations could have their printed book illuminated afterwards. The choice to commission a manuscript could indicate a patron related to old nobility, for whom the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* was a text worthy of the expense.

Furthermore, there are hints at the personality of the patron inside the visual cycle. The manuscript frequently contrasts the ideal with the bawdy. There are nuanced visual references in romance literature and Tristan iconography, in the *hortus conclusus*, in classical and religious art. There are also references to marginalia and older models from classical, religious and secular art. This combination of visual references was used with the intention to represent humour pictorially, and while some representations are more explicit than others, the manuscript’s visual humour remains intellectual. In order to be understood and appreciated, it requires an erudite patron who can understand the visual references.

Based on the patron’s identity and—potentially known—tastes, it is argued that Barbier included in his illuminations visual puns that accompanied the literary ones, and the result was a manuscript that followed the tradition of the two previous case studies of this research: it was personalised through a shared sense of humour and a common taste for a

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127 On the spine of the current, seventeenth-century binding, there is a monogram resembling GG surrounded by four dexter, langued and rampant lions, which is what Champion used to connect the manuscript with the d’Estrées family. See also Champion, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, publiées par Pierre Champion*, CXVI-CXVII.  
particular type of comedy, one that confirms that the patron belongs to a specific circle. This manuscript could not be compared to any version of the text available to the masses.

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* patron is therefore understood to have been an educated and learned person, potentially related to royalty, as the *fleurs de lys* indicate. This person preferred to undertake the expense of a fully illuminated manuscript instead of buying a printed copy of the text. This could point to someone of an older generation, or simply to a personal preference shaped within a specific social background. It is impossible to establish if the patron had any input in the visual cycle. However, it is argued that a successful workshop master would have investigated what his patron’s tastes were. It is tempting to connect the personality of Philippe Pot with the Hunterian manuscript, especially considering the misdated colophon in conjunction with his own membership in the Order of the Golden Fleece and his subsequent change of allegiance. However, despite being based on evidence, this suggestion cannot be substantiated.

Subsequent owners of the manuscript have left evidence on its body that reveal the various ways it has been appreciated in its history. Its current condition is not optimal. Most pages are stained at the lower end, where the fingers of its consecutive owners touched it to turn the page (Fig. 4.95). In some pages the pigment has smudged and leaked in the opposite page, as if the manuscript was drenched with something that loosened the pigments (Fig. 4.96). In other instances, smudges are visible in the margins and around the images, indicating that someone was touching the pages frequently (Fig. 4.97).

In terms of invasive interaction, there are two instances where genitals were erased from the images (Fig. 4.12 and 4.40). It is uncertain when this damage occurred, but the specific targeting of genitals indicates that it was intentional. Several other explicit images were left unharmed, which suggests that the defacement of the two illuminations cannot be attributed to a censorship attempt for reasons of general modesty. There is only one

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129 Blieck suggests that the manuscript was produced quickly and finished in a hurry, so much so that the ink in the illuminations did not have time to dry; see Blieck, ‘The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Text and Context’, 494. This has to be dismissed as implausible: the illuminations are of great quality, they are decorated with gold and they were created *ex novo* for this manuscript, which means that the commission would have been rather expensive. It does not stand to reason that the illuminators would go under such detail work, only to ruin the manuscript before even delivering it. Furthermore, it is almost certain that such a practice could affect their payment, so it is doubtful that they would take the risk.
occasion where a piece of text was cancelled, in Tale 28 (Fig. 4.98). At some point in the manuscript’s history, someone wrote the name ‘Lannoy’ in one margin, circling it; however, this does not appear to indicate provenance or to have any obvious function, other than a scribble (Fig. 4.99). Possibly during the rebinding process, the folio and illumination for Tale 62 were replaced (Fig. 4.100).

The staining and deterioration of the manuscript suggests that it was not locked and forgotten in a library. It was read, touched and appreciated, enough to ultimately damage some illuminations. The miniatures could have been destroyed due to frequent touching of specific parts. Considering their sexual representations and their discussed erotic elements, a relevant function cannot be excluded. The subject matter of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* allows for speculations of a more casual use.

4.2.7 From private to public audiences

The *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* is a manuscript created for entertainment and amusement, and it maintained this role throughout its history. It is not hard to imagine its owner leaning over the illuminations with a group of friends and laughing in company, amused by its humorous illuminations. In doing so, they would experience the manuscript in the same way as the Duke of Berry appreciated his comedies of Terence, that turned the pages into painted theatre, and in the same way as René of Anjou shared visual and other jokes as he was looking over the shoulder of Barthélemy when he was working on the *Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris*.

However, this was now a different cultural reality. King Louis XI’s piety was being expressed in Bourdichon’s devotional art. Jean Bourdichon, a pupil of Fouquet, had been appointed court painter, and he retained this position for almost forty years, dominating the Parisian pictorial landscape. Combined with an imported taste for more Italian styles of painting, this created an environment within which the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* appear irrelevant. Domestic scenes of everyday life could still be found in Books of Hours, but the

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131 Tolley, ‘Monarchy and Prestige in France’, 145-146.
secular subject matter, the bawdy, fabliaux-type humour and the refreshing illuminations of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles emerge as the last expression of an older style, that targeted a specific audience.

When Vérard printed the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles he was acutely aware of the importance of pictures and of their potential to stimulate the reader. Following his entrepreneurial instinct, he invested in humour to promote his fledgling industry. The several reprints that followed validated the choice. This is the strongest possible indication of the existence of a wider audience with a taste for the comic and the bawdy in Paris towards the end of the century.

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5 CONCLUSION

Et auersus emisit clarum ventris crepitum ante faciem alterius.
And, turning his back, he let out a loud fart in the face of the other man.
Erasmus, Convivium Fabulosum, 1524

The three case studies of this thesis present new and overwhelming evidence indicating that visual humour not only existed, but it was appreciated and celebrated in all levels of society. Contrary to its marginalised position in earlier times, in fifteenth-century France humour left the margins of the painted page in the same way that it left the margins of society, and with the support of early humanists it assumed a central role in visual representations.

It started under the patronage of Jean de Berry and the circle of early humanists working for and around him. Under his sponsorship, they found unprecedented opportunities to explore their ideations of classical antiquity. In so doing, they reaffirmed humour’s position and function. In the manuscripts of Terence created for members of the Valois family, humour was treated as a rhetorical device in text and image. The visual cycles in both the Berry Terence and the Terence des Ducs were organically connected to the text and carefully planned by Laurent de Premierfait, who used humour to achieve the ‘rhetoric of the image’ identifiable in his works, especially his translations. The artists stepped up to the new challenge: they had to work with new texts, and they were given enough creative freedom to allow them to come up with unprecedented representative solutions in non-marginal manuscript illumination.

The influence and impact of the Duke of Berry’s patronage was fundamental, both for the visual arts of his time and for posterity: he was possibly the only patron of his time who combined a sense of humour, a fascination with the lives of those socially inferior to him, an unusual flexibility in his social interactions, a love for classical antiquity and an undeniable enthusiasm for the visual arts. The convergence of all these attributes of his personality resulted in the creation of the Berry Terence for him, and possibly—through his reputation and some Valois rivalry—in the creation of the Terence des Ducs as well. As

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1 Bowen, One Hundred Renaissance Jokes, 56.
would be expected of a patron of his calibre, Jean de Berry redefined how the visual arts were enjoyed and appreciated, at first within Valois circles and later more widely.²

In many ways, the Duke of Berry’s reputation enabled the patron and the artist of the Livre du Coeur d’Amour Épris to form and maintain the special relationship and creative dialogue that allowed the creation of the Vienna manuscript. In this case, visual humour was used to personalise the manuscript to René through inside jokes and specific references obvious only to those very close to him. The work has a strong personal dimension that reveals the connection between René of Anjou and Barthélemy d’Eyck, while reflecting the complex creative interactions taking place in the court of Anjou, interactions in which both patron and artist participated. The particularly rich theatrical tradition of the Anjou court, that favoured humour and parody, also informed the creative process of Barthélemy d’Eyck, and of René as well. This new reading of the evidence allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the sixteen illuminations and reveals an intriguing, new aspect of the art of Barthélemy, who evidently had a sense of humour.

Moving from the intimate and private to the public, the visual analysis of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles explores the ways bawdy, popular and in many ways transgressive humour was translated from text to image, with a particular attention on the way its visual representation changed to accommodate different audiences. Alongside seductive suggestions regarding the identity of the artist and the dating and location of the manuscript’s creation, the investigation reveals that in the final years of the fifteenth century, humour expressed visually was popular enough to be considered a successful business venture in Paris. Evidently, there was a reasonably wide audience for it, especially if it was combined with provocative visuals: several other examples of engraved nudity that were in circulation at the time attest to the same.³ Yet the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles had an unexpected and lasting cultural impact. The influence of the text can be identified in the works of Rabelais: Tale 10, the Eel Pasties, appears as Hans Carvel’s Ring in Pantagruel.⁴

² Kren, ‘Christian imagery and the development of the nude in Europe’, 29.
³ Wolfhartal, ‘From Venus to Witches’, 84.
Although it is usually the starting point of discussions on historic humour, the literary production of Rabelais belongs in the end of this thesis’ period of interest. Rabelais was the outcome of the cultural shift that took place during the fifteenth century and the dramatically different attitudes towards humour and wit that permeated fifteen-century France. His works include two direct quotations from Terence, and the *farce of Moïtre Pathelin* is either quoted or explicitly referred to.\(^5\) His characters, villagers and bourgeois of the lower social classes, are prominently present. The language, purposefully farcical and heavily relying on wordplay and linguistic gymnastics, becomes another vehicle for humorous expression.\(^6\)

At the time *Pantagruel* was written the religious wars had not officially started, but persecutions of ‘heretics’ had already begun and attitudes towards humour were starting to shift once more.\(^7\) Pontano’s treatise on joking had been published in 1502 and presented a categorization of jokes both rhetorically and morally.\(^8\) Pontano condemned obscenity, but at the same time he admitted that the best jokes are the obscene ones; he suggested concealing the obscenity with witicism.\(^9\) By 1557, witicism was an attribute of the model ruler and Alfonso’s witicisms were being published, idealising him for posterity.\(^10\) Despite the fart joke quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Erasmus, too, condemned obscenity in the works of others.\(^11\) However, alongside Thomas Moore, he appreciated laughter—and therefore humour—as an essential attribute of life.\(^12\) In his *Apophthegmata*, published in 1531, he considered festivitas essential to civilised living.\(^13\) He even went so far as to admit that humour builds community, and suggested that laughing together is a way for a husband and wife to bond.\(^14\) Joubert’s *Traite de ris* appeared in 1579 in France, and once more repeated the references to Cicero and Aristotle.\(^15\)

\(^6\) Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, 63.
\(^7\) Ménager, ‘Les plaisirs du rire dans la litterature de la renaissance’, 6.
\(^8\) Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, 85.
\(^9\) Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, 86
\(^11\) Bowen, *One Hundred Renaissance Jokes*, 57.
\(^12\) Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*, 21.
\(^13\) Bowen, ‘Ciceronian Wit and Renaissance Rhetoric’, 418.
\(^14\) Rayfield, ‘Rewriting Laughter in Early Modern Europe’, 77.
\(^15\) Bowen, ‘Ciceronian Wit and Renaissance Rhetoric’, 416.
Following the Council of Trent (1545-63), if humour was not being condemned, it was being moralised and sanitized, as leading figures of the Counter-Reformation were keen to reduce its scope. Jokes about the clergy were no longer considered appropriate, and audiences were restricted, as women and men—especially men of status—were excluded. Public festivities and town festivals were also more regulated. The boundaries of humour had changed and they were, once more, heavily controlled. Some things remained: prints and woodcuts that perpetuate the *Power of Women* theme survived well into the following centuries, although their moralising function distinctly differentiates them from the case studies of this thesis, that aimed to entertain rather than teach (Fig. 5.1). Printed books were destined for wider and more generalised audiences, therefore the nuanced humour of the manuscript illuminations discussed in this thesis soon became irrelevant.

If there was an assumption that painted visual humour was a representative solution for the higher ranks of French society, it needs to be corrected. The manuscripts studied in this thesis may have been created for those in the highest possible positions in the social hierarchy, but those who created the visual cycles did not share the same status. They were coming from different, considerably more humble backgrounds. Their own experience of folk comedy and an overall culturally specific sense of humour allowed them to rise to the task, when they were given the opportunity and expressive licence. The illuminators created visual cycles with the intention to entertain, representing as many different shades, types and functions of humour as they could reasonably get away with, often allowing their own sense of humour to emerge. The popularity of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* suggests that by the end of the century there was a wider and more socially homogeneous taste for comic images.

For Jean de Berry and his humanist milieu, visual humour’s function was entertainment and a desire to connect and appropriate of the classical past. For René and Barthélemy it was again a means of appropriation, but this time it was personal to René, the

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17 Peter Burke, ‘Frontiers of the comic in Early Modern Italy’, 72.
manuscript’s owner. For the owner of the Hunterian Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles it may have been a way to celebrate the apogee of the Duchy of Burgundy when it was most powerful. At each case, humour created a sense of community, and this important nuance allows for the case studies to be understood in their full potential. The discussion is by no means exhausted: more examples, some already mentioned in this thesis, need to be examined to create a more thorough mapping of the different expressions of visual humour, from the most obvious to the subtler ones.

This thesis created a framework and a methodology for researching visual humour, and these can be used to investigate visual humour in different expressions and more varied cultural contexts. It is hoped that art historians will be able to look at these and other representations of humour in the visual arts with a more informed eye and less of the existing reluctance in engaging with humorous themes. It has been seen earlier in this thesis that often, discussions on humour—visual or otherwise—have been met with hesitation, if not with immediate denial. This has been especially the case with non-marginal art. One can only hope that the wealth of evidence presented here will serve as inspiration for more exciting and amusing reconsiderations of late medieval and early renaissance artistic production.

Some of the humorous stories of the case studies have been presented to contemporary audiences and the ensuing discussions highlighted the shocking contemporaneity of some of the topics. Humour can be pervasive and evasive, rebellious and oppressive, soothing and violent. Understanding it and acknowledging it—even without finding it funny—broadens the scope of discussion for the humanities, embracing the full range of the human experience and expression. By extension, Humour in Fifteenth-Century France: A Study of Visual Evidence opened a new window into fifteenth-century French culture and widened our perspective on the historic reality of the time.

As a final note, if this thesis managed to dissect humour without killing the joke, the reader is invited to look again at these illuminations, this time with the gaze of an insider to

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20 Stories from the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles have been presented by me in the Scottish Storytelling Centre in February 2019 and in the International Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo in 2021.
the joke. Having transcended time, their humour will allow us to share a smile with the same restricted community that they were originally destined for.
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6.4 Websites and online resources

www.archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/
Contains descriptions, links to digitisations and bibliography for manuscripts of the BnF and related Parisian libraries.

http://www.umilta.net/terence.html
Contains primary and secondary sources on Terence, collected and curated by Julia Bolton Holloway.

https://www.arlima.net/index.html
Contains bibliographic information on medieval texts and authors.

https://manuscripts.kb.nl/
Detailed descriptions and images from medieval and renaissance manuscripts in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

http://www2.atilf.fr/dmf/
Dictionnaire du Moyen Français, online dictionary of middle French.

https://www.lesenluminures.com/
Detailed descriptions, images, exhibitions and sales catalogues of medieval and renaissance manuscripts.

http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm
Detailed descriptions and images from medieval and renaissance manuscripts in the British Library.

http://corsair.themorgan.org/
Contains historical curatorial records and images of manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library

6.5 Performances


APPENDIX

A. Classic and Early Christian thoughts on humour


‘Those who carry humour to excess are thought to be vulgar buffoons, striving after humour at all costs, and aiming rather at raising a laugh than at saying what is becoming and at avoiding pain to the object of their fun; while those who can neither make a joke themselves nor put up with those who do are thought to be boorish and unpolished. But those who joke in a tasteful way are called ready-witted, which implies a sort of readiness to turn this way and that; for such sallies are thought to be movements of the character, and as bodies are discriminated by their movements, so too are characters. The ridiculous side of things is not far to seek, however, and most people delight more than they should in amusement and in jesting, and so even buffoons are called ready-witted because they are found attractive; but that they differ from the ready-witted man, and to no small extent, is clear from what has been said.’

To the middle state belongs also tact; it is the mark of a tactful man to say and listen to such things as befit a good and well-bred man; for there are some things that it befits such a man to say and to hear by way of jest, and the well-bred man’s jesting differs from that of a vulgar man, and the joking of an educated man from that of an uneducated. One may see this even from the old and the new comedies; to the authors of the former indecency of language was amusing, to those of the latter innuendo is more so; and these differ in no small degree in respect of propriety. Now should we define the man who jokes well by his saying what is not unbecoming to a well-bred man, or by his not giving pain, or even giving delight, to the hearer? Or is the latter definition, at any rate, itself indefinite, since different things are hateful or pleasant to different people? The kind of jokes he will listen to will be the same; for the kind he can put up with are also the kind he seems to make. There are, then, jokes he will not make; for the jest is a sort of abuse, and there are things that lawgivers forbid us to abuse; and they should, perhaps, have forbidden us even to make a jest of such. The refined and well-bred man, therefore, will be as we have described, being as it were a law to himself. The buffoon, on the other hand, is the slave of his sense of
humour, and spares neither himself nor others if he can raise a laugh, and says things none of which a man of refinement would say, and to some of which he would not even listen. The boor, again, is useless for such social intercourse; for he contributes nothing and finds fault with everything. But relaxation and amusement are thought to be a necessary element in life.

The means in life that have been described, then, are three in number, and are all concerned with an interchange of words and deeds of some kind. They differ, however, in that one is concerned with truth; and the other two with pleasantness. Of those concerned with pleasure, one is displayed in jests, the other in the general social intercourse of life.


That the Suggestions of Philosophers are Precluded from Having Any Moral Effect, Because They Have Not the Authority Which Belongs to Divine Instruction, and Because Man’s Natural Bias to Evil Induces Him Rather to Follow the Examples of the Gods Than to Obey the Precepts of Men.

But will they perhaps remind us of the schools of the philosophers, and their disputations? In the first place, these belong not to Rome, but to Greece; and even if we yield to them that they are now Roman, because Greece itself has become a Roman province, still the teachings of the philosophers are not the commandments of the gods, but the discoveries of men, who, at the prompting of their own speculative ability, made efforts to discover the hidden laws of nature, and the right and wrong in ethics, and in dialectic what was consequent according to the rules of logic, and what was inconsequent and erroneous. And some of them, by God’s help, made great discoveries; but when left to themselves they were betrayed by human infirmity, and fell into mistakes. And this was ordered by divine providence, that their pride might be restrained, and that by their example it might be pointed out that it is humility which has access to the highest regions. But of this we shall have more to say, if the Lord God of truth permit, in its own place. However, if the philosophers have made any discoveries which are sufficient to guide men to virtue and blessedness, would it not have been greater justice to vote divine honors to them? Were it
not more accordant with every virtuous sentiment to read Plato's writings in a Temple of Plato, than to be present in the temples of devils to witness the priests of Cybele mutilating themselves, the effeminate being consecrated, the raving fanatics cutting themselves, and whatever other cruel or shameful, or shamefully cruel or cruelly shameful, ceremony is enjoined by the ritual of such gods as these? Were it not a more suitable education, and more likely to prompt the youth to virtue, if they heard public recitals of the laws of the gods, instead of the vain laudation of the customs and laws of their ancestors? Certainly all the worshippers of the Roman gods, when once they are possessed by what Persius calls the burning poison of lust, prefer to witness the deeds of Jupiter rather than to hear what Plato taught or Cato censured. Hence the young profligate in Terence, when he sees on the wall a fresco representing the fabled descent of Jupiter into the lap of Danaë in the form of a golden shower, accepts this as authoritative precedent for his own licentiousness, and boasts that he is an imitator of God. And what God? he says. He who with His thunder shakes the loftiest temples. And was I, a poor creature compared to Him, to make bones of it? No; I did it, and with all my heart.’


**Of the Three Perturbations, Which the Stoics Admitted in the Soul of the Wise Man to the Exclusion of Grief or Sadness, Which the Manly Mind Ought Not to Experience.**

Those emotions which the Greeks call εὐπαθείαι, and which Cicero calls constantiae, the Stoics would restrict to three; and, instead of three perturbations in the soul of the wise man, they substituted severally, in place of desire, will; in place of joy, contentment; and for fear, caution; and as to sickness or pain, which we, to avoid ambiguity, preferred to call sorrow, they denied that it could exist in the mind of a wise man. Will, they say, seeks the good, for this the wise man does. Contentment has its object in good that is possessed, and this the wise man continually possesses. Caution avoids evil, and this the wise man ought to avoid. But sorrow arises from evil that has already happened; and as they suppose that no evil can happen to the wise man, there can be no representative of sorrow in his mind. According to them, therefore, none but the wise man wills, is contented, uses caution; and
that the fool can do no more than desire, rejoice, fear, be sad. The former three affections Cicero calls constantiores, the last four perturbationes. Many, however, calls these last passions; and, as I have said, the Greeks call the former εὐπαθείαι, and the latter πάθη.

And when I made a careful examination of Scripture to find whether this terminology was sanctioned by it, I came upon this saying of the prophet: There is no contentment to the wicked, says the Lord; Isaiah 57:21 as if the wicked might more properly rejoice than be contented regarding evils, for contentment is the property of the good and godly. I found also that verse in the Gospel: Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them? Matthew 7:12 which seems to imply that evil or shameful things may be the object of desire, but not of will. Indeed, some interpreters have added good things, to make the expression more in conformity with customary usage, and have given this meaning, Whatsoever good deeds that you would that men should do unto you. For they thought that this would prevent any one from wishing other men to provide him with unseemly, not to say shameful gratifications — luxurious banquets, for example — on the supposition that if he returned the like to them he would be fulfilling this precept. In the Greek Gospel, however, from which the Latin is translated, good does not occur, but only, All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, and, as I believe, because good is already included in the word would; for He does not say desire. Yet though we may sometimes avail ourselves of these precise proprieties of language, we are not to be always bridled by them; and when we read those writers against whose authority it is unlawful to reclaim, we must accept the meanings above mentioned in passages where a right sense can be educed by no other interpretation, as in those instances we adduced partly from the prophet, partly from the Gospel. For who does not know that the wicked exult with joy? Yet there is no contentment for the wicked, says the Lord. And how so, unless because contentment, when the word is used in its proper and distinctive significance, means something different from joy? In like manner, who would deny that it were wrong to enjoin upon men that whatever they desire others to do to them they should themselves do to others, lest they should mutually please one another by shameful and illicit pleasure? And yet the precept, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, is very wholesome and just. And how is this, unless
because the will is in this place used strictly, and signifies that will which cannot have evil for
its object? But ordinary phraseology would not have allowed the saying, Be unwilling to
make any manner of lie, Sirach 7:13 had there not been also an evil will, whose wickedness
separates if from that which the angels celebrated, Peace on earth, of good will to men.
Luke 2:14 For good is superfluous if there is no other kind of will but good will. And why
should the apostle have mentioned it among the praises of charity as a great thing, that it
rejoices not in iniquity, unless because wickedness does so rejoice? For even with secular
writers these words are used indifferently. For Cicero, that most fertile of orators, says, I
desire, conscript fathers, to be merciful. And who would be so pedantic as to say that he
should have said I will rather than I desire, because the word is used in a good connection?
Again, in Terence, the profligate youth, burning with wild lust, says, I will nothing else than
Philumena. That this will was lust is sufficiently indicated by the answer of his old servant
which is there introduced: How much better were it to try and banish that love from your
heart, than to speak so as uselessly to inflame your passion still more! And that
contentment was used by secular writers in a bad sense that verse of Virgil testifies, in
which he most succinctly comprehends these four perturbations.
Hence they fear and desire, grieve and are content.
The same author had also used the expression, the evil contentments of the mind. So that
good and bad men alike will, are cautious, and contented; or, to say the same thing in other
words, good and bad men alike desire, fear, rejoice, but the former in a good, the latter in a
bad fashion, according as the will is right or wrong. Sorrow itself, too, which the Stoics
would not allow to be represented in the mind of the wise man, is used in a good sense, and
especially in our writings. For the apostle praises the Corinthians because they had a godly
sorrow. But possibly some one may say that the apostle congratulated them because they
were penitently sorry, and that such sorrow can exist only in those who have sinned. For
these are his words: For I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry, though it were
but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to
repentance; for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage
by us in nothing. For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but
the sorrow of the world works death. For, behold, this selfsame thing that you sorrowed
after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you! 2 Corinthians 7:8-11 Consequently the Stoics may defend themselves by replying, that sorrow is indeed useful for repentance of sin, but that this can have no place in the mind of the wise man, inasmuch as no sin attaches to him of which he could sorrowfully repent, nor any other evil the endurance or experience of which could make him sorrowful. For they say that Alcibiades (if my memory does not deceive me), who believed himself happy, shed tears when Socrates argued with him, and demonstrated that he was miserable because he was foolish. In his case, therefore, folly was the cause of this useful and desirable sorrow, wherewith a man mourns that he is what he ought not to be. But the Stoics maintain not that the fool, but that the wise man, cannot be sorrowful.


In Public Spectacles He is Moved by an Empty Compassion. He is Attacked by a Troublesome Spiritual Disease.

2. Stage-plays also drew me away, full of representations of my miseries and of fuel to my fire. Why does man like to be made sad when viewing doleful and tragical scenes, which yet he himself would by no means suffer? And yet he wishes, as a spectator, to experience from them a sense of grief, and in this very grief his pleasure consists. What is this but wretched insanity? For a man is more affected with these actions, the less free he is from such affections. Howsoever, when he suffers in his own person, it is the custom to style it misery but when he compassionates others, then it is styled mercy. But what kind of mercy is it that arises from fictitious and scenic passions? The hearer is not expected to relieve, but merely invited to grieve; and the more he grieves, the more he applauds the actor of these fictions. And if the misfortunes of the characters (whether of olden times or merely imaginary) be so represented as not to touch the feelings of the spectator, he goes away disgusted and censorious; but if his feelings be touched, he sits it out attentively, and sheds tears of joy.
Homilies on Matthew

[8]: If thou also weep thus, thou art become a follower of thy Lord. Yea, for He also wept, both over Lazarus, and over the city; and touching Judas He was greatly troubled. And this indeed one may often see him do, but nowhere laugh, nay, nor smile but a little; no one at least of the evangelists hath mentioned this.

[9]: But if that example be too great for thee, in the first place, this saying itself cometh of sloth; for what had Paul more than thou, that thou shouldest say emulation of him is to thee impossible? However, not to be contentious, let us leave Paul, and consider the first believers, who cast away both goods and gains, together with all worldly care and worldly leisure, and devoted themselves to God entire, every night and day giving attendance on the teaching of the word. For such is the fire of the Spirit, it suffers us not to have any desire for the things that are here, but removes us to another love. For this cause, he who hath set his love on such things as these, though what he hath must be given away, or luxury or glory laughed to scorn, or his very soul yielded up, he doeth all these things with perfect ease. For the warmth of that fire entering into the soul casts out all sluggishness, and makes him whom it hath seized more light than anything that soars; and thenceforth overlooking the things that are seen, such a one abides in continual compunction, pouring forth never-ceasing fountains of tears, and thence reaping fruit of great delight. For nothing so binds and unites unto God as do such tears. Such a one, though he be dwelling in the midst of cities, spends his time as in a desert, and in mountains and woods; none of them that are present doth he see, neither feel any satiety of such lamentations; whether it be for himself, or for the negligences of others, that he is weeping. For this cause God blessed these above all the rest of men, saying, ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’

The Homilies On The Epistle To The Hebrews, Homily XV, 8; 114-121.

[John Chrysostom’s complaint that his congregation burst out laughing when it should have prayed]
And do you, a solitary, laugh at all and relax your countenance? thou that art crucified? thou that art a mourner? tell me, do you laugh? Where do you hear of Christ doing this? Nowhere: but that He was sad indeed oftentimes. For even when He looked on Jerusalem, He wept; and when He thought on the Traitor He was troubled; and when He was about to raise Lazarus, He wept; and do you laugh?


‘But as to coarse, idle words, or such as move to laughter, we utterly condemn and ban them in all places. We do not allow any disciple to give mouth to them’.


[Just as weariness of the body is dispelled by resting the body, so weariness of the soul must needs be remedied by resting the soul: and the soul's rest is pleasure... Consequently, the remedy for weariness of soul must needs consist in the application of some pleasure, by slackening the tension of the reason's study. Thus... it is related of Blessed John the Evangelist, that when some people were scandalized on finding him playing together with his disciples, he is said to have told one of them who carried a bow to shoot an arrow. And when the latter had done this several times, he asked him whether he could do it indefinitely, and the man answered that if he continued doing it, the bow would break. Whence the Blessed John drew the inference that in like manner man's mind would break if its tension were never relaxed. Now such like words or deeds wherein nothing further is sought than the soul's delight, are called playful or humorous. Hence it is necessary at times to make use of them, in order to give rest, as it were, to the soul.

Nevertheless it would seem that in this matter there are three points which require especial caution. The first and chief is that the pleasure in question should not be sought in indecent or injurious deeds or words. Wherefore Tully says (De Offic. i, 29) that ‘one kind of joke is discourteous, insolent, scandalous, obscene.’ Another thing to be observed is that one lose not the balance of one's mind altogether. Hence Ambrose says (De Offic. i, 20): ‘We should
beware lest, when we seek relaxation of mind, we destroy all that harmony which is the concord of good works’: and Tully says (De Offic. i, 29), that, ‘just as we do not allow children to enjoy absolute freedom in their games, but only that which is consistent with good behavior, so our very fun should reflect something of an upright mind.’ Thirdly, we must be careful, as in all other human actions, to conform ourselves to persons, time, and place, and take due account of other circumstances, so that our fun ‘befit the hour and the man,’ as Tully says (De Offic. i, 29).

Now these things are directed according to the rule of reason: and a habit that operates according to reason is virtue. Therefore there can be a virtue about games. The Philosopher gives it the name of Wittiness (eutrapelia), and a man is said to be pleasant through having a happy turn* of mind, whereby he gives his words and deeds a cheerful turn: and inasmuch as this virtue restrains a man from immoderate fun, it is comprised under modesty. [Eutrapelia is derived from trepein = ‘to turn’].


In human affairs whatever is against reason is a sin. Now it is against reason for a man to be burdensome to others, by offering no pleasure to others, and by hindering their enjoyment... [A] man who is without mirth, not only is lacking in playful speech, but is also burdensome to others, since he is deaf to the moderate mirth of others. Consequently they are vicious, and are said to be boorish or rude [...] 


Further, comedians especially would seem to exceed in play, since they direct their whole life to playing. Therefore if excess of play were a sin, all actors would be in a state of sin; moreover all those who employ them, as well as those who make them any payment, would sin as accomplices of their sin. But this would seem untrue; for it is related in the Lives of the Fathers (ii. 16; viii. 63) that is was revealed to the Blessed Paphnutius that a certain jester would be with him in the life to come.
B. Laurent de Premierfait, excerpt from the prologue of Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes for the Duke of Berry

‘[..] Maiz puissant, noble, et excellent Prince, escoutez s’il vous plaist le miserable cas de ces laboureurs et de leur chose rustique, ausquelz se par vous ou aultre aiant puissance, voulenté et sagesse, n’est briefment secouru et pourveu en vostre temps de remede convenable. Dieu qui ne het alcun et qui de tous a merci et en especial des bons simples laboureurs et aultres hommes justes. Il retirera sa main a sa benivolence des prestres et des nobles qui ne gardent misericorde ne justice envers eulx, ne envers les aultres, ains les soubzmarenhent et foutent.

Il advenra que Dieu leur ostera raison d’entendement, honneur d’ancien estat, et les vestira de confusion. Il espessira les tenebres de leurs yeulx, Il mettra trebuchetz a leurs piez afin qu’ilz cheent du tres hault au tres bas. Il ramenra a neant ou transporter a enaultre mains leurs orguilleuses richesses, honneurs, gloires, dignitez et puissances.

Je ne vous persuade ne admoneste pas, car vous advisez assez par les yeux de vostre pensee et ceulz de vostre corps, quele et com grant iniquité, service et austerité, ce soit veoir les simples laboureurs proufitables a tous et nuisans a nul homme, estre par apperte violence oppresses et dechaciez de leurs povres maisons mutilez, batu et injuriez de fait et de paroles, leurs femmes ahontagiees, leurs filles corrompues, et leurs aultres choses transglouties et gastees, ou mises en raencon par les nobles hommes d’armes de ce temps, ausquelx les roys et princes deputent ou au moins doivent commetter la garde et la defense de sains laboureurs et de leurs choses rustiques.

De leurs gains et labours sont comblees et esplendies les tables des roys, des princes et d’aultres quelconques, non pas seulement hommes mais bestes et oyseaulx soient prives ou sauvages, et en eulx est tele frugalité et sobresse, que pour aisier et secourir les aultres ilz seuffrent volontairement disetes et mesalses. Ilz portent le jonc de servitute et le grief fes de truage. Ilz regrettent seulement que ilz ne possessent mie en seurté et en paix ce pou qui leur demeure, après Dame Sainte Eglise et leurs aultres seigneurs satiffaiz de leurs rentes, demaines et subsides.’

1 Cucchi, ‘The First French Decameron’, 114-15
C. Plot summaries of the comedies of Terence

**Andria - The girl from Andros**

Pamphilus is in love and has promised to marry Glycerium, who is the eponymous girl from Andros. However, his father Simo has already arranged for him to wed Philumena, and his present affair with Glycerium puts the arrangement at risk. When the affair becomes known, Chremes, Philumena’s father, withdraws his permission and breaks the engagement.

Simo wants to punish his son for his dalliance, and he pretends that the match will still go ahead, and that the wedding would take place on that same day. He recruits Davus, his servant, who is supposed to be his accomplice in the scheme; however, Davus betrays Simo to Pamphilus, and the son attempts to trick his father. Instead of protesting, he eagerly accepts to get married on the same day.

Simo manages to persuade Chremes to reconsent on a wedding between his daughter and Pamphilus. So now, Pamphilus is in the awkward position of having to marry Philumena, while having promised to marry and protect Glycerium. On top of that, Glycerium is pregnant, and Philumena is also the sweetheart of his friend, Charinus.

Davus is facing the wrath of Pamphilus for having advised him wrongly and having gotten him in this mess, the wrath of Charinus for giving his beloved to marriage to Pamphilus and the wrath of Simo for betraying him to his son.

Fortunately, a stranger from Andros arrives. He tells the protagonists that Glycerium is not actually from Andros but she is an Athenian citizen, who was adopted in Andros following a shipwreck which resulted to the death of her family. By revelation of the family names it is concluded that Chremes is Glycerium’s true father. He gives Glycerium's hand in marriage to Pamphilus, which means that Philumena can now marry Charinus and Davus is absolved.

**Eunuchus**

Thais is a courtesan in Athens, and she keeps the company of Thrasso, a soldier who was away for a while. Thrasso returns and brings a girl, named Pamphila, as a gift to Thais.
However, upon his return he realises that Thais has taken up a new lover, Phaedria. Thais is torn between her fondness for Phaedria and her desire to keep Pamphila. She asks Phaedria to go out of town for some days, until she can get possession of the girl from Thrasso. He concedes, and asks for two slaves he had bought for her, one of whom is a eunuch, should be sent to her house.

Pamphila is being taken to the house of Thais but on the way she is seen by Chaerea, who is smitten by her beauty and aided by his servant Parmeno he decides to swap clothes with the eunuch slave and present himself at Thais’ house as the eunuch. When he is found in the house, he rapes Pamphila and escapes. In the meantime, Thais has had some discussions and has determined that Pamphila is in fact an Athenian citizen, and her family has been tracked down, but after the day’s events her circumstances have changed. Chaerea is too glad to offer the best amendment he can by asking to marry Pamphila, while Thais maintains her affair with Phaedria and Parmeno is forgiven for his involvement.

_Heautontimorumenos - The Self-tortmentor_

Menedemus, a wealthy farmer, is working himself to exhaustion, worrying his friend Chremes. When challenged, he explains to Chremes that he is punishing himself for reproaching his son, Clinia, for his relationship with a poor girl. Menedemus presented his own military past as a virtuous example to his son, and Clinia, shamed, left to join the army in the east. Menedemus is punishing himself for driving his son away.

As Menedemus leaves, Chremes runs into his own son, Clithipho, who is with Clinia who just returned from the war. Clithipho asks his father not to tell Menedemus of Clitia’s return, as Clitia is still afraid of his father’s reaction. Chremes agrees, but defends his friend. Meanwhile, Clinia has maintained the affair with his lover, Antiphila, who arrives accompanied by the courtesan Bacchis, the lover of Clithipho. Fearing that his father will not approve, Clithipho scolds his slave, Syrus, who conceives a ruse to fool Menedemus: Bacchis will pose as Clinia’s mistress and Antiphila as her servant.

Chremes informs Menedemus of his son’s return, but since he believes that Bacchis is his mistress, he warns Menedemus against her, claiming that she is spendthrift. Chremes, in the meantime, walks into Clithipho and Bacchis embracing, and tells him off as he
believes his son is betraying his friend. He summons Syrus with the intention to plot against his son’s mistress, Syrus agrees to help but he has his own agenda, directed against Chremes. Syrus needs money and intends to take it from the older man.

Sostrata, Chreme’s wife, has recognised a ring that Antiphila had in her possession, leading to her recognition of the younger girl as her lost daughter. Antiphila is now a suitable wife for Clinia, Syrus carries out a series of elaborate discussions that distort the truth enough to function to his advantage, resulting in issues regarding Clinia’s wedding. Considering their dire financial situation, that has deteriorated due to overspending, Chremes demands that his son chooses a different bride. Clithipho gives up his mistress and agrees to marry a respectable girl.

**Adelphoi - The Brothers**

Demea has two sons, Aeschinus and Ctesipho. When the sons are still young, he decides to separate them and raises Ctesipho himself, while giving Aeschinus to his brother Micio to raise as his own. Demea is a strict and oppressive father, while Micio is lenient and permissive. Ctesipho falls in love with a music girl but is afraid to reveal his affair to his strict father, since he knows he will not approve. Therefore, his brother Aeschinus decides to steal the girl on Ctesipho’s behalf, assuming the blame for the entire affair. Demea and Micio argue over their respective methods of parenthood.

After a monologue where Demea compares himself to his brother, he decides to follow his example and be more open and lenient, intending to criticise the method. He consents to giving away money and estate, convinces his brother to free two of his slaves and to marry someone he did not intend to, and finally condemns all this liberality, claiming that what people love on his brother is not his goodness, but his largess.

He then offers his sons the option to stay with Micio, or submit to him and his stricter methods. The play ends with Ctesipho destined to marry his loved one, Micio marrying Sostrata and Aeschinus marrying Pamphila, Sostrata’s daughter.

**Hecyra - The Mother-in-Law**
The son of Laches and Sostrata, named Pamphilus, is in love with Bacchis the courtesan. However, one night he was drunk and debauched a young woman, Philumena, daughter of Phidippus and Myrrhina. He rapes the girl and takes a ring from her, which he gives to his mistress as a present.

Pamphilus’ parents try to arrange a marriage for him and he consents. By chance, the woman he is intended for is Philumena, the girl he raped. She did not see his face, so he hopes she will not recognise him. However, Philumena is now pregnant and she is afraid that Sostrata, her mother-in-law, will shame her. She returns to her father’s home and feigns illness to avoid contact.

Pamphilus returns as the baby is being born, and does not realise that he is the father. He wants to send Philumena away, until the stolen ring that he offered to Bacchis serves as proof of Philumena’s identity. He then understands that he is the father and takes both mother and son with him.

**Phormio**

Chremes, has been maintaining two marriages and two families. In Athens he is married to Nausistrata, by whom he has fathered Phaedria. In Lemnos, he goes by the name Stilpho, he keeps another family with a local woman and he has a daughter, Phanium. His brother, Demipho, is Antipho’s father. The two brothers had agreed that Phanium would marry Antipho. For that purpose, Chremes goes to Lemnos to fetch her, only to find out that she has gone to Athens to find him. While she was there, her mother died and she was left at the care of a servant, Sophrona.

Phaedria and Antipho are cousins, each one in love with a girl. Phaedria is in love with a music girl and slave called Pamphila, but he cannot afford to buy her from her procurer, Dorio. Antipho is in love with Phanium, and he does not know that she is his intended bride. Antipho wants to marry the girl but expects that his father will not approve, he therefore recruits Phormio the parasite to help him with his cause. By clever use of law, the two get married.

This is when the play starts. Antipho’s father learns that his son has married a poor girl and blames his slave Geta, to whose care Antipho was entrusted, for the unfortunate
development. At the same time, Dorio the procurer has informed Phaedria that unless he
gets paid the arranged sum, he will sell Pamphila the next day. Again by intervention of
Phormio, the young man manages to buy Pamphila
Meanwhile, Chremes returns from Lemnos anxious about the fortune of his wife and
daughter and soon Phormio comes into the knowledge of his secret family and relationship
with Phanium. He Narrates the entire story to Nausistrata, and it is revealed that Antipho is
 enamoured with the girl destined for him all along, and his own secret affair means that he
cannot complain about his son’s affair with the music girl. Chremes is forgiven and Phormio
gets an invitation to supper.