

## ANALOGIES TO ART IN FRENCH PROSEFICTION OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

If I were to heed the warnings of the estheticians, I would not only abstain from comparing French literature and art of the fifteenth century but would also condemn the grandiose attempt of Johan Huizinga who started such parallels in his fundamental book of 1924, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.<sup>1</sup> I don't know whether Huizinga's great historical intuition would have been helped by a greater theoretical underpinning or methodological rigor<sup>2</sup> but I do know that in his two chapters called "Verbal and plastic expression compared" Huizinga has shown that their mutual elucidation proves clearly that the Middle Ages with its waning symbolism has come to a close and that its naturalism has nothing to do as yet with Renaissance, because it is an analytical, descriptive, illustrative and not an emphatic and evocative naturalism; there are no great ideas in this epoch but a pictorial thinking instead. Even going into greater details Huizinga remains convincing in literature and art.<sup>3</sup>

I shall follow this lead and discuss only prose works, not poetry, in relation to art. But before doing this, I still want to mention a concrete example from Huizinga which I find absolutely convincing. He actually compares the style the Chronicle of Georges Chastelain with the *Adoration of the Lamb* of Jan van Eyck in the Gent Cathedral Saint Bavon and writes about

The group of singing angles of this Altarpiece: Those heavy dresses of red and gold brocade, loaded with precious stones, those too expressive grimaces [are] equivalent to the showy Burgundian prose. It is a rhetorician's style transferred into painting ... In

<sup>1</sup> J. HUIZINGA, *The Waning of the Middle-Ages*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> JAMES D. MERRIMAN, "The Parallel of the Arts: some Missgivings and a Faint Affirmation", Part 1, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*: XXXI (1972), 153-164, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> HUIZINGA, *op. cit.*, 284.

Chastellain's prose . . . the clear observation and the vivid realism are . . . drowned in the flood of flowery phrases<sup>4</sup>. . . Chastellain has mixed . . . pompous rhetoric with . . . spontaneous naturalism.<sup>5</sup>

I try to continue Huizinga's views in a different way. I chose four outstanding prose works, not analyzed by him, in their entirety, namely *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* by Antoine de la Salle, *Les Arrêts d'amour* by Martial d'Auvergne, the anonymous *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, written at the court of Philipp the Good of Burgundy (1396-1467), and *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, an anonymous satire on marriage, irresponsible wives and henpecked husbands. I am going to illustrate them, progressing from idea to form, the first novel by subject—related painting, the second by form—related painting, the third by architecture and the fourth by pure art forms.

### **Le Petit Jean de Saintré**

A deeprooted consciousness of the changing seasons of the year is the hallmark of the so called *Très riches heures du duc de Berry* (1340-1416) by Pol de Limbourg (1400). With this illustrated prayerbook in hand we can easily follow the changig sentimental climate of the love story of La Dame des Belles Cousines and the little Jean de Saintré. Madame des Belles Cousines, a lady in waiting of the Queen falls in love with a young page whom she educates to be a Knight. She faithfully awaits his return from a long war in Eastern Europe. But once returned, the young knight leaves again for a tournament in Cologne. At this occasion the Lady is less faithful. At the beginning of Lent she goes to her country seat near an abbey; foundation of her family, and falls in love with the young abbot. The abbot responding, their affair goes on through months and months until Saintré, returning from Cologne finds his lady in the woods hunting with the abbot. The jealous prelate, upset by the situation, wrestes with the knight and comes out as victor. But invited by Saintré to fight with chivalrous arms, he succumbs. Saintré, returning to the court, denounces the lady as faithless and morally rotten and makes her impossible at court. Now the development of this pitiful love has effectively seasonal stages so that a comparison with the atmosphere coming from the months of the calendar of the Duke's prayerbook seems in order.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

When Lent begins the lady goes to the abbey with her ladies in waiting and some gentlemen as escorts and when they are received by the abbot in an elegant but cozy, well heated room with a well set table the atmosphere is exactly the same as in the reception room of the Duke of Berry on the *January picture of Pol de Limbourg*.<sup>6</sup> Here we see Jean de Berry clad in a blue garment embroidered with gold, a fur cap on his head, seated on a long bench in front of a richly served table, behind him a fire place. A chamberlain receives the visitors, warmly dressed and trying to warm their hands at the fire place. In the foreground there are two carvers in the middle, and two butlers at the left of the table. The feeding of the Duke's dog at the right and the gambling of two very small puppies on the table underline the coziness of the scene, the ostentatious reception notwithstanding. But to the sumptuousness and coziness combined belongs also the identification of persons. Thus the prelate seated at a small distance from the Duke is the bishop of Chartres, Martin Gouge who was also the Duke's counsellor and treasurer. Other courtiers have been identified, too. Due to the charmingly wrong perspective of the tapestry picturing knights leaving a castle for battling an enemy, some horses seem to enter the room together with the guests.

The combination of coziness and ostentation, the mania for identification and the wrong perspective appear likewise in a dynamic scene from *Le Petit Jean de Saintré*: The reception of La Dame des Belles Cousines by the abbot occurs in early lent when the weather is still cold and meat is forbidden. Therefore

"The Abbot... sent people to the city to get lamprey, salmon and other first class fish"...<sup>7</sup>

And when Madame and her company have arrived and been well warmed up and at ease

"the abbot guided her to his very nice little dining room with tapestry-carpeted, glass windows and a good fire. And there were three tables set and covered with very beautiful table cloth and the buffet richly furnished with beautiful plates and dishes"<sup>8</sup>.

Then follows the seating and identification of the participants.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For the description of the pictures of Pol de Limbourg, I follow JEAN PORCHER (ed.), *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. Paris: Nomis, s. d.

<sup>7</sup> ANTOINE DE LA SALE, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. JEAN MISRAHI ET CHARLES A. KNUDSON. Genève: Droz, 1965, p. 245.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-249.

The identification of the abbot and the grande dame is of course not complete; for, as the author says, "certain reasons". Therefore modern scholars have felt that Antoine de la Salle has written a *roman à clef*. According to A. Bronarski<sup>10</sup> la Dame des Belles Cousines is Marie de Clèves, the youthful third wife of the aging prince-poet Charles d'Orléans, the prisoner of Agincourt, and mistress of the knight Jacques de Lalaing. Her country seat was Coucy-le-Château near Laon and near the Abbey Nogent-sous-Coucy. The abbot would be the notoriously spendthrift Abbot Roussel (1434-1451) deposed by bishop Antoine Crépin of Laon. Marie de Clèves' three ladies in waiting actually had the names Jehanne, Katherine and Ysabel like those of Madame Des Belles Cousines.

Now still a word about the temporal false perspective of which the superficial reader is not aware despite contradictory time indications in the text. As a matter of fact, Saintré leaves for the Cologne tournament in summer, stays two weeks and needs two other weeks for the trip back on horseback. Consequently he would have returned before even his lady went to her country seat. As the sentimental story however demands it, he stays away a whole year. We find the violation of the temporal perspective as charming as the violation of the spatial perspective by Pol de Limbourg.

The *February pictures* are less scenes of coziness than scenes of privacy. Privacy is independent on subject matter. As motif it is concerned with something intimate at the exclusion of onlookers or bystanders except peeping Toms at keyholes. Therefore there are comparable the scene of the rich peasant woman and her servants drying their clothes wet from the snow in front of her fireplace and the togetherness of the abbot and the Dame des Belles Cousines in the latter's dressing room, an intimacy the lady has created under the pretext to confess her sins to the abbot.<sup>11</sup>

The *first of May*, festive day of the greatest importance in the late Middle Ages finds two similar and though different stylizations in the art of Pol de Limbourg and that of Antoine de la Sale: The center of the festivity in both cases is a cavalcade. As visible on the picture, people at the occasion used to cover themselves with young green foliage and the king offered green greatcoats to his courtiers. The young lady in the foreground and those who follow her are wearing this livry. At the head of the cortege there is a music band. In the story of Saintré Madame Des

<sup>10</sup> A. BRONARSKI, "Le Petit Jehan de Saintré; une énigme littéraire", *Archivum Romanicum*: V (1921), 137-238.

<sup>11</sup> ANTOINE DE LA SALE, *Jehan de Saintré*, *op cit.*, 255-256. See also my article: "The Discovery of Realistic Art in Antoine de la Sale through Pol de Limbourg", *Modern Language Quarterly*: XV (1954), 168-181, particularly, p. 175.

Belles Cousines, during her nasty idyl with the abbot, might have sought of the last may parade a year ago which brought about her grudge against Saintr . Saintr  had secretly gathered nine knights and squires for the tournament of Cologne but without the permission of his lady and he arranges with them a May parade to honor the king. This parade of ten knights and squires clad in white silk on white clothed horses, however, is given with literary means as a teichoscopy from the king's palace at four o'clock in the morning. The ladies in waiting jump from their beds and run to the windows and the king and the queen do the same, the king still with his nightcap on his head<sup>12</sup>.

In *June*, the summer heat begins. No better way for the painter to express this than by showing peasants working on a meadow, mowing the grass and turning the hay. That the heat has started is expressed by the women who have protected their heads by white veils against the sun and by the three men who have kept only their shirts on and work in the same rhythm to alleviate their effort. Antoine de la Sale wants to surmise that the love affair with the abbot has reached the moral point of heat in this very month of June. The queen tried to call Madame back to the court already in April. Then she let pass one month and a half, says the text, until she sends a messenger who finds milady picknicking with the abbot in the fields<sup>13</sup>.

The *August* picture of Pol de Limbourg shows a hunting party. Summer draws to a close, the hunting parties have started. Ladies and gentlemen of the Duke's court on horseback, couples even on the same horse, are on their way for the falcon hunt. In the background young people are shown bathing and swimming and peasants are busy with harvesting in front of the castle of Etampes. The August and hunting description of Antoine de la Salle offers a most lively and dialogued presentation since the rich crisis scene of the novel is at issue. Saintr  has returned from the tournament, has dressed up most elegantly to greet his lady and finds out that Madame has gone hunting with the abbot. The latter feels embarrassed by Saintr 's sudden appearance<sup>14</sup>. He invites Saintr  to dinner, only to humiliate him with the consent of the lady. Fall comes and ends the hunting season.

The *December* picture, probably by Pol de Limbourg's successor Jean Colombe, called: *Le balali* which could be translated by "in for the kill", illustrates the fall atmosphere. In a glade of a wood, hunters accompanied

<sup>12</sup> *Jean de Saintr , op. cit.*, 236.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 262-263.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 271-272.

by their dogs finish to kill a boar; one of the hunters blows the horn. Above the trees a dark blue overcast sky makes stand out the high towers of the castle of Vincennes still kissed by the last sunbeams. The red costumes and the white dogs in the foreground contrast eerily with the dry brown trees and their thinning leaves and the pale far-off towers looking "as though they were mysteriously suspended in the evening air". As here colorful details and light effects produce a psychological atmosphere, so it happens exactly with the end of Antoine de la Sale's novel. The hunting season is also over for Madame and the abbot. At last she has returned to the court as has Saintr . But here a moral hunt begins where Madame is the game and Saintr  the hunter, in for the kill. Saintr  has taken back from Madame Des Belles Cousines the blue belt, token of fidelity and, producing it, he tells the whole court one evening her story, disguised as an occurrence that has happened in Germany. But, once the story told, Saintr  asks all the ladies what should be done with such an unfaithful lady. Madame Des Belles Cousines thus cornered and at bay is condemned by all ladies. Saintr 's questions and the severe answers of the ladies like enraged dogs put the lady as their quarry to a painful moral death. The metaphor of the hunt is here contextually fully justified, since this moral hunt actually continues as event the literal hunt which was fatal to the lady's love affair as well as to her reputation and elicited the endgame<sup>15</sup>.

### Les Arr ts D'Amour

These judgments of criminal cases against love by Martial d'Auvergne are an intelligent parody of juridical trials, actually fifty one cases of which sixteen are appealed from lower courts to the highest court of Love, the remaining thirty five are judged for the first time. According to Jean Rychner all fifty one sentences were passed at one single session of the supreme court of Love<sup>16</sup>. Often the judicial apparatus is so strong that the abstractly presented delicts are drowned in the arguments of plaintiffs and defendants as well as in the testimony of witnesses, the accusations of the prosecutor and the sentence of the judge. But there are also other presentations of the cases where the delict appears in a concrete form mainly due to a lively report of the plaintiff, so to speak *in fieri*, and the interest is drawn from the problem of guilt and punishment to the psychology and environment of the punishable events as they occurred in life, outside the

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 305-307.

<sup>16</sup> JEAN RYCHNER, ed., *Les Arr ts d'Amour de Martial d'Auvergne*. Paris: Soci t  des anciens textes, 1951, p. XXV.

courtroom. This type of arrêts has already elicited the interest of Vilho Puttonen who tried to use them as elements for the social and cultural history of the fifteenth century<sup>17</sup>. If this may be done with fictional material is an open question. But this way of presentation certainly is comparable to a type of pictures of Van Eyck and other Flemish contemporary painters who draw the interest from the subject matter of their pictures to the extremely detailed and perspectivistic background of a landscape that seemed to the art of the painter of greater importance than the central foreground action. Here the method is compared, not the subject.

In the *arrêt XI*<sup>18</sup>, which I would call *La Baignade*, a very clear background picture arises: It is a late afternoon and very hot. The sun is near its setting. A lady, her lover and their friends decide to go to the gravel beach of an island for bathing and catching fish. One group spreads out the net, the other group chases the fish to drive them into the nets. But the lover ran less after the fish than after his lady, tripped her up in a bad joke so that she fell into the water, made wet her petticoat and even ruined it. The young man, feigning to help her up, again purposely touched her breasts and pressed her strongly against his body<sup>19</sup>. This background stands out against all the excuses of the defendant, the jokes of the prosecutor and the sentence of the judge. We may think here of Jan van Eyck's background of his painting the *Virgin of the Chancellor Rollin* in the Louvre. There, behind the chancellor kneeling before a Madonna with the Child, a large tripartite window opens upon a Flemish landscape striking the onlooker much more than the main figures. On the left side there is in a far and misty distance a town full of beautiful steeples and towers, nearer to the onlooker a broad place with citizens, then a well constructed bridge in form of a donkey's back, spanning a river winding through the landscape and furrowed by microscopically small boats. In the center is an island with a magnificent castle surrounded by trees and finally in the farthest distance a line of snowcovered mountains disappearing in the sky<sup>20</sup>.

A similar parallelism exists between the *arrêt LI* and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* by the Master of Flémalles. In the Arrêt the apparent evildoer is the lady but the court considers as the more guilty her young lover because he did not behave like a gentleman. Again out of the trial

<sup>17</sup> VILHO PUTTONEN, *Etudes sur Martial d'Auvergne*. Helsinki: University 1943, pp. 65-89.

<sup>18</sup> I use the edition of LUISE GÖTZ, *Martial d'Auvergne, Les Arrêts d'amour*. Frankfurt: Diesterweg, 1932.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> E. DURAND CREVILLE, *Hubert et Jan van Eyck*. Bruxelles, 1910, p. 119.

rises a lively detailed background picture. The beautiful young lady and the rather nice young fellow are playing games together with others on a large green playground but they are a little too gay. The lady running after the young lad puts a handful of grass between his shirt and his back. Whether it was only grass or also nettles, dirt and ants, anyway the young fellow gets furious and slaps her face twice rather roughly, throws her to the soil, undoes her hair and drags her by the hair before all the others as though she were a chambermaid. This movie picture seems more interesting than all the arguments why the young man cannot be forgiven and why he has to get as punishment to be thrown naked into nettles and thistles.

The *Adoration of the Shepherds* of the Master of Flémalles is in itself rather interesting with the people crowded around the holy infant among them the apocryphal midwives Zebulum and Salome. But the background outdoes the central scene also here. It is a Flemish landscape at early dawn. Peasants are on their way to market on a route, leading in serpentine to a Bethlehem with Flemish towers and spires, with a convent, an inn, a farm, a blacksmith's shed where a horse is being shod, and there are boats on a river<sup>21</sup>. This presentation includes half told anecdotes and suggestions like the route expecting the coming of the magi<sup>22</sup>.

### Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles

We remember that Huizinga (and one could mention in this context also Panofsky) has stated that the new naturalistic style never got free from the older gothic style of the time. This is particularly true for a new parallel, namely that between the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and architecture. I first will discuss shortly flamboyant architecture for itself: The most elaborate Gothic decoration of cathedral fronts intrudes the simplicity of the new civic buildings and mixes this simplicity with flamboyant elements. In the *Hundred New Tales* a canvas of simplicity is likewise unbalanced by a style which partly comes from the late medieval arthurian prose romances, partly from prehumanistic latinizing tendencies. Whosoever is accustomed to later gothic cathedral fronts is struck by the wealth of ornamentation of, say, the *North Fassade of the Cathedral of Sens*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> ROBERT GENAILLE, *Flemish Painting from Van Eyck to Brueghel*. Translated by Leslie Schenk. New York: Universe Books, 1959, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> J. VAN DER ELST, *L'agè d'or flamand*. Paris: La Palme, 1951, p. 117.

<sup>23</sup> ROLAND SANFAÇON, *L'Architecture flamboyante en France*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1971, 104, fig. 125.



which yields a surprisingly rich and complicated life of forms. The most striking element is the flame-ornament of the rose window above the portal. The tympanon does not show sculptures but has an ornamental design instead. The rose-window shows very well the flame-pattern, the details of which will be discussed later. This whole architectural ornament represents the variation of a formal theme (the flamboyant) in which all the fifteenth century cathedrals take part. Now, oddly enough, this ecclesiastical ornamentation has been transferred in the fifteenth century to civic buildings, guildhalls, townhalls, all sorts of juridical and municipal edifices, private hôtels and city palaces different from castles and strongholds. Like the cathedrals all the civic buildings and all the hundred tales have the same overall style and nevertheless each of them has its own individuality. *The Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* are a collection of one hundred rather obscene and frivolous stories to the taste of the Duke Philippe the Good of Burgundy (1419-1467) and his court at Genappe. An anonymous redactor has collected these novels, allegedly told by thirty six different courtiers, the Duke himself included. Their individual manner of story telling however is not clearly distinguishable. The hundred novels are called *new* since they want to imitate and continue the old hundred tales of the Decameron of Boccaccio. This aspiration, according to the preface, was vain, however. They rather retold and enlarged in a clumsier style some elegant *facetae* of Poggio-Bracciolini and reported some remarkable cases from the criminal courts of Flanders: But the naturalism of the subject matter is covered by a more or less thin layer of flamboyant solemnity. There are on a flat background.

1. A simple structure with surprising elements of ornate exaggeration;
2. Protruding complex units contrasting with the flatness of the whole;
3. Media built in to relate exterior and interior aspects;
4. A statuary of personified abstracts or picturesque scenes;
5. Remarkable surprises at extreme structural points;
6. Spots of willed artificiality (*Préciosité*).

One may believe that concepts became mental pictures in architects and writers alike before they chose their appropriate media to make them materialize. Therefore I do not see anything incompatible or extravagant in their comparison. Let us start from *The Palais de Justice of Rouen*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 166, fig. 199.

Here the relative simplicity of the streetfloor and even windowline of the mainfloor receive an overcompensating hyperbole in the rich and paradoxical roofgallery of dormer windows with two arches. These arches flanked by flying buttresses and pinnacles help to give a truly exaggerated decoration to the dormer windows and make them thus more important than the main windows. Certain types of the short stories, in themselves very simple get an exaggeration similar to the decoration-complication of the ornate dormer windows. This exaggeration in literature is an overcomplication of the plot. The Franciscan friar of *nouvelle 2* tries to heal a girl with a particular powder which hurts one of the Franciscan's eyes and blinds it. Now the exaggerated complication lies in the fact that the Franciscan at his arrival is already blind on one eye and by the accident becomes completely blind.<sup>25</sup> When in *nouvelle 30* a monastery in a city substitutes the tithe for women by intercourse, the outraged husbands do not only beat up the friars as in older versions of the tale but, by a truly hyperbolic revenge they burn down the monastery with all the friars, their church and everything. An incest story in *nouvelle 50* does not occur between brother and sister but as hyperbolic as possible between grandson and grandmother. The Hyperbole of plot is paralleled by the constant stylistic hyperbole of combining almost each adjectif and adverb with *très*.

On the *Palace of Justice in Rouen* a second feature strikes us, namely the most elaborate, protruding octagonal edifice. This octagon is like an *exordium* to the whole building as its most decorated part. The elaborate *exordia* of many of the *novels* contrast in the same way with the rest of the literary edifice, they are in contrast not only with the naturalism of the content but also with the prevailing simple style because the pre-renascent French compiler of those short stories did not dispose of the stylistic means of his model Boccaccio, namely the pseudo-Ciceronian *periodare* to be used throughout the narration. However a rhythmically ornamented *exordium* at least is possible to the French writer by mentioning for instance a city, followed by a well sounding relative clause or apposition and by adding to the local a temporal determination and rounding up the sentence by what one calls the psychological predicate (*nouv.* VIII, II, LXXV, XXVII).

To explain further literary and architectural parallels we use *The Hôtel de Ville of Brussels*<sup>26</sup>. Although here the much greater simplicity than in the *Palace of Justice in Rouen* is evident, there are two features

<sup>25</sup> All references and details in my forthcoming article: "Le caractère flamboyant des *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*", in *Mélanges offerts à Charles Rostaing* (1974). Numbers of the stories and pages according to the edition of FRANKLIN P. SWEETSER, *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, Genève: Droz, 1966.

<sup>26</sup> *Petit Larousse* 1964, p. 481, fig. 10.

which seem to contradict its simplicity, namely the statues between the windows and the long elaborate arcades. The statues in the fifteenth century may be of saints, of heroes and of abstract personifications. And what is so typical for this century, the abstract personifications appear so real to this generation that they seem almost concrete realities. Therefore it is surprising for us that the *Cent Nouvelles*, too, are populated by such statues of abstracts as Love, Fortune, Fear, Youth, Honor, Anguish, Desire, Truth, Health, Confession, Death, Life Correction, Marriage<sup>27</sup>. These abstracts appear capitalized and personified. In *nouvelle* LVIII two fellows whose love is not requited by their ladies are cursing Fortuna as well as Amor. But in the niches of the short stories there are also sculptured groups, the lady at the window between a knight and a squire (*nouv.* XXXVI), the lover hidden in the toilet, his head put into the hole of the lid to silence his cough (*nouv.* LXXII), the wanton pastor liberated from the pantry, covered with eggs, cheese and milk (*nouv.* LXXIII).

The second striking feature of the Brussels Hotel de Ville, as already mentioned, is its archway. This archway of seventeen gothic arcades<sup>28</sup> belongs to the street as well as to the building. It is a means of separation and of communication between the two. It means separation as a screen of municipal offices against the noise of the market place, it means communication by inviting the pedestrians to come nearer to the municipality and to use the arcades as a covered passage on rainy days. Thus it is an indirect contact between town and people, comparable to the indirect free discourse or substitutionary report that belongs to the author as well as to the fictional speaker. Now those scholars who desparately tried to find early examples of this device certainly missed *The Hundred Tales* where one finds at least twenty five examples of style indirect libre. This is for the fifteenth century an enormous percentage and therefore I dare establish the taste parallel between archway and that style in which one hears at the same time the voice of fictional citizens and the voice of the author. For two more parallels we choose the *Hôtel de Ville de Compiègne*<sup>29</sup>. The onlooker of the front is attracted most of all by the belltower, and not only by the tower but by its spire. This spire not only strikes because of its height but also because of its unexpected strange decorations. Does this kind of architecture draw the interest to the extreme end of a building in order to surprise, to fas-

<sup>27</sup> J. U. SCHMIDT, *Syntaktische Studien über die Cent Nouvelles*. Diss. Zürich, 1888, 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> A. MAESCHELEK EN J. VIAENE, *Het Stadhuis van Brussel*. Louvain, 1960.

<sup>29</sup> ROBERT DUCHIER, *Caractéristique des Styles*. Paris: Flammarion, 1934, p. 73, Planche 26.

ciate, to bluff? We don't know. But we do know that literature of the fifteenth century, against all grammatical tradition, does the same, namely to put the predicate at the end of the sentence in main clauses as well as in secondary clauses. Although this usage may be an early imitation of classical Latin sentence structure, it is a naive imitation and a mania having no precedents in old French prose syntax. At any rate, the reader, as the onlooker of the belltower, has to direct his attention first of all to the end of the sentence, otherwise he will not understand the text. The ornaments of the spire of the civic building in Compiègne are not only on a remote place but odd and artificial in themselves. They represent corbelled little watchtowers not quite usable as such. These flank a similarly artificial porch. It is no exaggeration to call such an arrangement "précieux". Now, oddly to say, also the crude *one hundred tales* have such précieux decorations. Précieux metaphors and metonymies are often justified by the characters of the introduced speakers but none the less they create a strong contrast to the purposely picturesque but crude circumlocutions of sexual implications. The précieux examples actually are meant as playful euphemisms. The girl of *novel XXIV* who flees, when she has left her seducer helpless in his only half taken off long riding boots, declares him to wish to avoid "the ambusch of his will". Different young women are said to lose what is most highly praised in this world (*novel XXIV*) or to be satisfied that one takes what because of their honor they cannot give (*novel LIV*). Others are said to do what one thinks rather than writes down (*novel XXVII*). What we have tried to explain until here was that certain propensities of taste are *mutatis mutandis* recognizable in buildings as well as in bourgeois tales. These tendencies concerned exaggeration, ornamentation making a part of a whole outstanding, indirect communication, filling empty spaces with personified abstracts and putting "précieux" elements outside the normal line of sight.

### **Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage**

We approach now the problem of the central architectural flamboyant element itself. It is that flame system based on curve and countercurve. We take the pattern from a *Window of the Church in Arques*<sup>30</sup>. The stoneframe is filled with a central descending flame called soufflet and two lateral mounting flames called mouchettes or snuffer. This

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57, planche 20

principle of curve and countercurve creates an overall arch. Joseph Schaefer<sup>31</sup> has discovered: that also the painting attributed to Vilatte and called the *Piété de Villeneuve-les-Avignon* is composed according to the principle of curve and countercurve. The body of Christ on the lap of the Virgin forms a curve, the figures of St. John and St. Mary Magdalen bent over Christ form a countercurve inscribed in a triangle the sharp angle of which is formed by the head of the Blessed Virgin.

Why should the same situation not also exist in literature? One of the most curious and unique works of the waning of the Middle Ages is the *Fifteen Joys of Marriage*<sup>32</sup> a satirical parody of the religious model of the fifteen joys of the Blessed Virgin. They seem likewise arranged according to the general principle of curve and countercurve. Each joy begins with the diversely expressed pleasure and delight of the young husband and ends with his pain and sorrow. Between these fundamental curve and countercurve of the great arch of the novel is discussed the behavior of the wife in different circumstances but always in such a way that this behavior is not given as a single anecdote but as a recurrent event. Therefore it is not only presented as a specific description but as a general description which necessarily is accompanied by possible variations as well as by a general antifeminist criticism. This procedure means a triad within the greater curve and countercurve, namely the *general description*, the *soufflet*, and the *variations* together with the *criticism* representing the two mouchettes or snuffers. The overall curve and countercurve does not only concern statements by words but also by the recurrent metaphor of the wicker trap (*nasse*) in which the fishes hope to find enjoyment but meet destruction. The clearcut action and counteraction on the narrative level in all the *exempla* illustrate the triumph of the wife and the defeat of the husband. If we think not in terms of topics but of plots we are surprised by the same principle of curve and countercurve which occurs also on the structural level. The wife with the taste of luxury blackmails her husband in order to get a new dress. In the first night she refuses herself to her husband and plays the chaste: she does not get the dress — curve; in the second night she feigns to be seriously

<sup>31</sup> JOSEPH SCHAEFER, *Les Primitifs français du XIVe et du XVe siècle*. Paris: Laurens, 1949, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> I use the edition by JOAN CROW, *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1969. I have explained the problem lengthily in my article: "Le style flamboyant des *Quinze Joyes de Mariages*". *Mélanges Albert Henry*. Strasbourg, 1970, 73-84.

ill: she gets the dress — countercurve (*novel 1*). The domineering wife neglects first her duties as a housewife to the displeasure of her husband — curve; she neglects her duties as a hostess to the social ruin of her husband — countercurve (*novel VI*). Our terminology of opposite curves analogous to art covers all literary relationships between two features of the same behavior: repetition, parallelism, contrast and gradation.

How do these descriptive and dialogued soufflets or bellows combine with their mouchettes, the alternatives and the criticism. Jean Rychner in the introduction to his edition<sup>33</sup> gives a good example for the alternative variations. The soufflet of *novel IX* gives the story of a marital struggle throughout twenty or forty years during which the wife became more and more demanding until she had her aging husband declared impotent and incompetent to do his business whilst she herself fornicates with the first of their servants and let this servant run the house with the connivance of the adult children. The decisive point is the real situation of the husband. Here enters the first mouchette, that of *variations* or possibilities of the sickness: general weakness, gout or some other evil which hinders him to get up when he is seated; by chance, he might have been paralyzed on one of the legs or arms, or he was the victim of different accidents in different ways. The other mouchette or snuffer is the *criticism* that This old, sick and incapable man is in reality as wise as he ever was and that he only suffers in his interior since he cannot defend his cause against the violence and injustice done to him. He certainly could become desperate if he were not such a wise man. He has only one remedy: patience. And the author says that his suffering belongs to the greatest pains on earth. Still thinking of his business and its mismanagement in the hands of his wife and children, he really does penance for his sins. He is caught in the wickertrap which he so ardently had desired (*novel IX*).

The soufflet is generally picturesque and full of details, the two mouchettes of variations and criticism, are more abstract but it occurs also that the variations appear in a more concrete and elaborate form. This is the case with the variants of *Joie, XII*, concerning the vicissitudes of a family during war. The soufflet shows the family in disturbance. The wife having a lover, harasses the husband, sends him to bed, wakes him up at midnight, urges him to undertake a trip so that she is free to receive her lover. The husband has also to watch the children, to take care of geese and chickens, to bring the pastry to the oven, if not to knead it

<sup>33</sup> JEAN RYCHNER (ed.), *Les XV Joies de Mariage*. Genève: Droz. 1967, p. XXI.

himself. None the less when war breaks out, he does not want to leave his wife alone to go with other men into a fortress. So he is taken prisoner, beaten and mistreated day and night, finally ransomed by a considerable sum of money. He returns crying and suffering from the gout.

The variations concern first the hiding places of the lover of the unfaithful wife, the cellar or the washhouse or the stable. Sometimes the dog is barking, sometimes not, sometimes the wife declares the noise to come from rats, sometimes she beats the dog. The varieties in wartime are that the husband is not made a prisoner, but lives temporarily in a fortress; for the night he returns to his house through hedges and bushes, he is burned and scratched. But none the less his wife shouts at him, irritates him and calls upon him all evil and mischief, finally she tells him she could not stay any longer in the home. So he is obliged to bring his wife and his children to the fortress or to the city. And God knows the trouble to move the lady and the children to and fro, to lodge them in the fortress. Or it happens that the children, certainly not all his own, are badly educated and he would not dare touch them. He has to provide everything for them and they would be ready to shoot out one of his eyes.

The criticism says that this nasty wife, of course, is terrible and that even the wisest woman has as much common sense as the monkey has tail. All the sufferings of her husband never could induce her to give up her lover. But the husband thinks still he has the best of wives and that there is no better one on earth. He, in his blindness even prefers this wife to the salvation of his soul. He is as complaisant and dumb as the ox of the plough. He is pushed around like an old falconer good for nothing (XII). The variations and the commentary sometimes would make the impression of equal length so that the picturesque soufflet and thoses mouchettes represent, if projected from time into space, an ideal figure.

## Conclusion

We began our analogies with the comparison of themes but continued with putting the stress on more formal aspects. From the seasonal subjects in Pol de Limbourg and Antoine de la Sale we proceeded to the problem of foreground and background in the perspectivism of Jan van Eyck and his school compared to the *Arrêts d'Amour* of Martial d'Auvergne. From painting then we went into architecture. The same principle of the same overall pattern reappearing in many individual forms seemed to govern the different individual short stories of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and the different individual civic buildings of the same

type. According to the propensities of the epoch we tried to equate hyperbolic plots and stylistic expressions of exaggerations through overrich ornaments on simple structures and rhetorically elaborated exordia to edifices protruding from more moderate fassades. We paralleled the frequent indirect free discourse with archways as means of indirect communication; we saw in personified abstracts within naturalistic plots something like solemn statues in niches of civic buildings. We saw in the pseudo-latin predicate at the end of the sentence an attempt to have the interest attracted by an extreme point of a construction, not unlike the overwhelming effect of the belltower and even its spire on the onlooker of the front of a flamboyant townhall. We still found in the preciousity and euphemistic circumlocutions within naturalistic texts something like the unexpected, most artificial decorations of roof and spire, contrasting with the much simpler fassades, doors and windows.

Finally we pushed the art parallels to such formal details that we compared the structure of a flamboyant design with the literary structure of exempla from *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*. Each *exemplum* offered a system of curves and countercurves, a husband going into a wickertrap and his perishing therein. But such a system of curves still embraced another pattern, a triad of bellows and snuffers to which corresponded in literature a picturesque central presentation, flanked by its variations and its criticism. I personally believe that, by the method of this kind of interpretation the understanding of literary works can gain in depth. I am well aware that my approach belongs to a category of analogies which a positivistic criticism has called literary alchemy in an age of chemistry but I believe with Professor Richard Sayce that we never would have had any chemistry without the stage of alchemy and that it is our task to develop it into a real literary chemistry.

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