The Narrative Imagination: Comic Tales by Phillippe de Vigneulles

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THE NARRATIVE IMAGINATION

Comic Tales by Philippe de Vigneulles

ARMINE AVAKIAN KOTIN

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS OF KENTUCKY
TO DANIEL AND ILANA

who did not always understand,
but who knew it was important
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When an eminent medievalist, knowing of my interest in the short narrative form, suggested that I study the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* of Philippe de Vigneulles which had then just been published, I reacted with some indifference, if not disdain, and said, “Oh, that’s been done.” I remember being surprised that he should suggest such a well-known work as the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. I soon learned of my error and in penance bought the book. At the origin of my involvement with Philippe, then, there was an error that I suspect many others have since made and will yet make: this work is not the well-known *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* of c. 1462, of unknown authorship, but the long lost link between it and later French *nouvelles* of the sixteenth century. Known for more than a century only to a handful of specialists (Michelant, Bruneau, Paris), it was the work of a merchant whose only other claim to literary immortality was his *Chronique* of Metz. It is to Charles H. Livingston’s great credit that the *Cent Nouvelles* has finally been published, an event that was all the more important because only one manuscript existed. After a tenacious search that reads like a mystery novel, Livingston tracked down that manuscript and purchased it in 1920. Thanks to the final efforts of his widow, Mme Françoise R. Livingston, and a former student of his, Robert H. Ivy, Jr., Livingston’s very attractive edition has brilliantly filled the gap recognized by scholars, for the edition is that rare combination of first and definitive. Livingston was a “sourcier” whose ideal was apparently to locate every possible source and analogue for Philippe’s tales. Besides the wealth of information thus uncovered, the other scholarly materials contained in the book, and in particular the bibliography, make it an excellent edition for study. My debt to Livingston, throughout this study, is great.

The appearance of the *Cent Nouvelles* in 1972 follows a significant new wave of interest in the *nouvelle* and in other short narrative forms of the medieval and Renaissance periods in France. Major new studies
x Preface

have recently been made of the fifteenth-century *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, of Nicolas de Troyes’s *Grand Parangon des Nouvelles Nouvelles*, and of the tales by Bonaventure des Périers. Long cast into the nether regions of obscurity reserved for unimportant, unedifying, and obscene fictions, the *nouvelle* came into its own right sometime during this century and is considered an important element of an authentic French tradition. With the advent of structuralist criticism and its demand for scientific rigor and objectivity, short forms are prized over longer ones, and the structuralist chapter of the present study is only one example of the many possibilities the *nouvelle* affords for a structuralist analysis of narrative. In short, I inscribe the text which follows in this new tradition and hope that it contributes to it.

Two of my colleagues at the University of Illinois, Peter Haidu and Robert J. Nelson, have read the manuscript of this study and have been the best of critics. I am grateful for the generosity with which they created a supportive atmosphere of constructive inspiration. To Wladyslaw Godzich, of the French Department at Yale, I owe thanks for sure guidance in structural usage during the elaboration of parts of the study. A special warm remembrance goes to Mme Livingston, of Brunswick, Maine, who answered my request for permission to see the manuscript of the tales with a gracious invitation to visit “an old lady and an even older manuscript.” I was certainly misled by part of that invitation, although the manuscript was falling into dust in places, for besides allowing me the unique opportunity of examining the manuscript, Mme Livingston led me on a guided tour of the Bowdoin College campus and library. My deepest gratitude goes to Daniel Poirion, professor at the Sorbonne, without whom this study would never have existed.

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Introduction

Philippe de Vigneulles was a bourgeois cloth merchant in the city of Metz at the turn of the sixteenth century. Although Metz at this time was part of the German empire and recognized the emperor as its supreme ruler, it was actually a free city having its own government. Partly elected and partly appointed, it was a complicated government, having at its head a Maître-Echevin and the high court called Les Treize. Being a walled city, and often called upon to defend its independence, Metz had acquired by the time of the birth of Philippe de Vigneulles in 1471 a rather strictly defined social system. Five hereditary clans or parages formed the elite of the city, with a “parage du commun” forming a sixth, much larger, group of residents of the city. Elected officials were chosen from the membership of the parages.¹

Philippe belonged to none of the parages, being of peasant origins and a newcomer to the city itself. His father, an honorable man and good citizen, was maire of the town of Vigneulles where Philippe was born. After a rather shaky primary education and an apprenticeship of doubtful value, Philippe ran away from home in 1486, stopping in Geneva for a year and eventually residing in Rome and Naples as a valet in the service of various masters. It was perhaps this stay in Italy which introduced him to the Decameron and the facetiae of Poggio (although he apparently did not know Latin). As he approached Metz on his return in 1489, he was stopped by soldiers and his bags were seized and examined; among his possessions were some Italian books. It was in 1505, when he was already established in Metz as a cloth merchant and hosier, that he began to compose his own collection of facetious tales. These events and many others of his life are recounted in fine detail and at great length in his Mémoires, published in 1852 under the title Gedenkbuch des Metzer Bürgers Philippe von Vigneulles. The editor describes this work as a mere collection of items “pour mémoire,” perhaps even as a first draft for his much larger and more important
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book, the *Chronique*. This curious and fascinating opus, which also recounts personal events from the author’s life, is a history of Metz from the beginning of the world to 1525. It is considered by historians an authoritative contemporary chronicle of the period of the author’s life, as indeed the author hoped it to be (it is said he consulted old men for recent history). A recent study of two Metz area merchants makes frequent reference to the *Chronique* as a source for the description of mercantile life at the time (Schneider, *Le livre de comptes*).

From the *Chronique* and the *Mémoires* also the reader can learn a great deal about Philippe’s moral values and artistic interests. He was very much a family man, having numerous children, only two of whom eventually survived. His concerns for his family, of which he speaks with discretion and restraint, become most apparent when the plague makes its periodic appearance in Metz. The frequent deaths which occurred in his family and among his servants show Philippe’s stoic acceptance of the will of God, for he was undoubtedly a devout man. An elaborate tapestry on a religious subject, which he made of more than 8,000 pieces of cloth and presented to the city in 1507, can be taken as an indication of his sense of devotion to civic duty (*Chronique*, 4: 47; *Mémoires*, p. 154). He was probably superstitious and naive in his beliefs; the reader is struck, for instance, by his detailed description of a monstrous, grotesque child born in the city, and there is not the shadow of a suggestion that such a deformed creature may have been the product of rumor and exaggeration (3: 114).

As a self-made businessman Philippe was probably very astute, for he achieved considerable success and even wealth. He frequently made trips to the fair in Saint-Denis (Lendit) or to Frankfurt to purchase merchandise. His attitude toward the noblemen in and around Metz is consistently one of respect, although he does moralize against evil behavior where it is present. He recounts his contacts with important people with something of the respectful pride of the *parvenu*, which indeed in many respects he is.

It is also clear from the *Chronique* and the *Mémoires* that Philippe took a great delight in aesthetic and cultural pleasures. He made ink drawings, which illustrated his works, played the *rebec*, and wrote some poetry. He describes a *momerie* which he produced, and in which one of his children had a role (4: 105-7). Both historical books betray a predominant taste for the anecdote, the *fait-divers*, the newsworthy in-
cident. His curiosity about events in the city is probably at the source of all his works. Throughout, his attention to details and the thoroughness of his descriptions and explanations reveal a sense of the importance of keeping track of events. Both works are replete with tales of murders and other crimes, as well as births and deaths, wars, crop failures, the price of wine, the weather, and the activities of noblemen and kings, in addition to some amusing anecdotes worthy of a collection of tales. One such incident involves the accidental death in 1510 of a horse skinner who did not completely kill his animal before trying to skin him. His death by a blow of the horse’s hoof is chiefly interesting to Philippe because it is amusing; he describes it as something that caused laughter rather than mourning (4: 73). One might say the author was aware of his importance as the conscience of his city and his time. His interest in past events, especially as they aggrandize the importance of his dearly beloved and “noble” city of Metz, is evident also in the fact that he translated into modern prose the chanson de geste of Garin le Loherain, which he took to be a historical work on the region.²

The impression that remains most strongly after a reading especially of the Mémoires, more personal and less given over to keeping track of daily events such as the weather, is that of a “bon enfant,” an optimistic soul whose bonhomnie and taste for life are predominant. It is curious that a large part of the Mémoires is recounted in the third person, almost as if he were making of himself the hero of a picaresque novel. A similar detachment is evident in a favorite saying of Philippe de Vigneulles, “l’homme prepose, Dieu dispose” (4: 178). It contains the germ of the philosophic attitude which pervades his two historical works as well as the Nouvelles.

Such were the character and interests of the author of the Cent Nouvelles,³ in which the attention to detail, the historical perspective of the record keeper, the enjoyment of life of the successful parvenu, the naive belief of the devout man are all present on a different scale, in a collection where laughter predominates. Both the Mémoires and the Chronique include a brief paragraph describing the work as being finished in 1515, although some ten tales were added at a later date. The modesty of this announcement is consonant with Philippe’s sense of himself as a nonscholarly author, indeed as an unconventional merchant, who took his temporary inability to work during an illness as a modest excuse for writing down adventures and stories he had heard.
Unlike many authors of the late fifteenth century and of the sixteenth, Philippe was independent: his works were not written in the service of a prince or a noble protector. But it was an independence tempered by the endearing lack of pretension of a person for whom pride of authorship was secondary to his pride in the city of Metz.

The *Nouvelles* was never published during the author’s lifetime, thus raising the question whether it was ever intended for publication. The only extant manuscript, written by a scribe, contains numerous corrections by the author’s hand (they are supplied by the editor with a note of explanation), which suggests that he possibly intended to have the work recopied or even printed. Perhaps too the manuscript served as the text of oral reading sessions; the corrections frequently eliminate repetitious “he saids” or indicate a sentence rewritten for more logical grammatical structure. They are in general clarifying corrections, not substantive changes. Whether written for a general audience or for close friends, the manuscript can be considered the record of many evenings’ pastimes.

Unfortunately, the manuscript has been severely mutilated. The first page of the prologue is missing, as are six of the original 100 tales; five other tales are amputated to the extent that they are incomprehensible; and many others are incomplete in one form or another: four lack only the title; nineteen lack the beginning; seven, the beginning and the end; and thirteen, only the end. Of the additional ten tales (101–10), only number 110 has survived, glued to the inside of the back cover of the manuscript. Finally, due to the poor condition of the paper, five of the original 100 are missing some part of the middle.

The absence of the first page makes it difficult to ascertain the title. Nowhere in Philippe de Vigneulles’s writings does the title *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* appear. A different title can be found in both the *Chronique* and the *Mémoires*: at the date of 1515 in the *Chronique* (4: 198), Philippe says he composed “‘ung aultre livre contenant cenc novelles ou contes joieulx,’” and in the *Mémoires* (p. 283), he mentions “‘ung livre contenant cent nowelles ou contes joieulx.’” The presence of the same title in the prologue to the sixty-second tale (“et pour multiplier le nombre des centz nouvelles ou compte joieulx”) suggests that this was perhaps the intended title. It has the advantage of referring to the fifteenth-century *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, just as this work referred to the *Decameron*, but at the same time maintains its originality and its difference.
Whatever the exact title may have been, it is certain that the book was placed in the perspective of a tradition of short narratives (the prologue makes this explicit). But what was that tradition, and how is the nouvelle to be defined? Any reader familiar with the literature on the French nouvelle has had to face a bewildering array of books and articles whose preconceptions vary enormously. In studying that object known as the nouvelle, critics have used widely differing methods of approach; the form is defined according to historical criteria that vary, different forms being called nouvelles or not by different authors, and different historical periods being considered. It would be most profitable, I feel, to consider first the problematics of the nouvelle's origins, and it is in the perspective of the conscience or mental activity of an epoch that those origins can best be explained.

The modern reader of tales like Philippe's is at a considerable disadvantage in that he is asked—implicitly and sometimes explicitly—to place himself in the position of the contemporary reader. By contemporary I mean not just the society of the time, but more exactly the milieu of the first reader, the immediate receiver of the author's production. He must lay aside centuries of a development which has been cataloged, characterized, acculturated by scholars and critics. It is a naive reading that is needed. Philippe de Vigneulles and his contemporaries recorded their stories in a precritical time, when no rules or authoritative theories of the genre existed (Pabst, *Novellentheorie*, p. 11). The nouvelle was able to maintain a freedom of expression unlike either the rather rigid medieval genres or the prescribed forms of sixteenth-century poetics. What the modern reader must try to conceive is a cultural phenomenon, the nouvelle, whose nature is predominantly traditional and derivative, rather than original and individual.

The fifteenth-century author of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, for instance, found it expedient to refer to a tradition (the *Cent Nouvelles* of Boccaccio in particular), but modified that tradition by the institution of a certain newness. According to his preface, these were new stories, with a new localization and in a new form, even if the themes were similar to existing stories (Pabst, p. 170). Indeed, following Pabst's argument, one may consider the notion of "newness" as informing the meaning of the word nouvelle in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This is the closest the contemporary reader could come to perceiving any "theory" of the nouvelle, a shaky foundation, perhaps,
for a definition of the genre, but one that is not forgotten by the modern reader attempting to define or explain the origins of the form.

In view of the lack of rules or theoretical texts, then, it is necessary to embrace many forms of short narration in discussing the evolution of the *nouvelle*. Merely to define the form as any text so called, as R. Guiette and A. kibédi Varga have done, is to be content with a tempting simplicity that is misleading. The term seems to include a variety of different forms; the Chevalier de La Tour Landry, for instance, used it to mean erotic adventures told by glib young men to naive young women (Pabst, pp. 164, 166). Conversely, it has been applied by later critics to an overwhelming number of texts not so called. A solution to this problem of definition is suggested in a provocative essay by Hermann Tiemann, whose approach overcomes the difficulty of assigning limits to genres. He would substitute the term *Kurzerzählung*—short narration—which he then studies in its medieval evolution.

Tiemann declares the *Kurzerzählung* maintained an artistic freedom unlike any other medieval genre. Lacking the formal, thematic, didactic, moral, or even aesthetic constraints of other “higher” genres, it preserved and developed certain types of themes and subject matter impossible in other forms. Tiemann denies the existence of an ideal or *Urform* of the *nouvelle*, for which he says most critics have searched, but discusses the several types of short narration which, through a series of phases of which the last is the acquisition of prose in the first decade of the thirteenth century, represent the beginnings of the *nouvelle* in French literature. He lists the steps which constitute what Ferrier called the “native tradition,” going beyond Ferrier in naming the constitutive elements and contradicting Auerbach’s assertion that the form of the *nouvelle* was a new creation of the French Renaissance. By the end of the thirteenth century, according to Tiemann, all the elements which constitute the modern *nouvelle* are present (*Die Entstehung*, p. 23 and passim).

Tiemann’s essay is a testimony to the necessity of considering the sixteenth-century form in historical terms. The importance of earlier narrative forms cannot be ignored, and it is necessary to place the *nouvelle* in the context of the notion of tradition or derivation from other forms. Originality was decried, and the best authority was usually another text. Themes, motifs, character types, situations, even entire plots circulated rather freely from place to place, and in a time when the
numbers of the reading audience were limited (and particularly limited
to the upper social classes) the importance of oral transmission cannot
be underestimated.

Some critics have attempted to determine the importance of nonliter-
ary origins of the nouvelle, which is indeed a difficult task. André Jolles
in Formes Simples placed the cas at the limit of the simple form which,
through amplification, could become the literary form of the nouvelle.
The literary form develops, he says, when an individual case is fixed as
an artistic form of internal cohesion, distinct and nonrepeatable (pp.
144, 151, 154). Such a literary form is the Italian novella: “la nouvelle
toscane cherche à raconter un fait ou un incident frappant d’une manière
telle qu’on ait l’impression d’un événement effectif, et plus précisé-
ment, en donnant l’impression que cet incident est plus important que
les personnages qui le vivent” (p. 180). The presence of the “événe-
ment effectif” seems to be the most important distinction between a
literary form and a simple form.

Jolles’s theory is original but does not satisfactorily explain the role
of oral transmission in establishing a tradition. The problem is compi-
cated because oral forms are sometimes written down but continue to
circulate orally. What is really in question is the oral transmission of
texts and not a distinction between oral and literary forms. Significant
for the oral transmission of short narrative texts was the similarity of
theme, situation, type of event, or type of humor. Even a text which was
written down, such as the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,
may have circulated in an oral form, depending on the memory of a
reader for its authenticity. Surely what was immediately lost when such
a reader retold from memory a tale he had read, even when an author
was cited, was the language of the original, in other words, its literary
form. There are two important consequences of this hypothesis. First, in
spite of different genre names, the types of literary forms may not repre-
sent different types of narrative activity. No one is surprised to find the
same story in a poem of eight-syllable lines with rhyming couplets and
in a prose narrative. Tradition, in other words—and this is the second
consequence—depends on preformal factors, which are transmitted
from speaker to hearer. For example, the type of humorous situation
well known to viewers of the farces, which often pervades the tone of
the nouvelles, could be remembered without regard to artistic elabora-
tion and thus easily transmitted in a different literary form. It is this kind
of imitation of other texts which the author of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* was referring to when he described his work as *nouvelle* with respect to the Florentine *Cent Nouvelles*.

It is therefore a cultural context of short narrative forms which constitutes the tradition. Prevalent in Oriental literature, then in Italian in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the short narrative, often with a moralized ending, existed at times within the framework of a larger story. It has been convincingly demonstrated by Bédier in his massive thesis on the *fabliaux* that there is nothing particularly Oriental about the French short narratives, although the idea of a frame story may have been derived from Buddhistic narrative (*Les Fabliaux*, part 1). Much more important for the French tradition was the Italian *novella* literature, whose influence on the French production is certain. Toldo’s position represents one extreme: everything about the French *nouvelle*, including the so-called *esprit gaulois*, testifies to the truly Italian origin of the form (*Contributo*, pp. x–xi, 7–10). This can hardly be maintained, as there was surely a French tradition of short narratives (Ferrier mentions courtly romances, p. 20). On the other hand, it is quite convincingly argued that the use of a frame was borrowed from Italy. According to Vossler, the gathering of the tale-tellers in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* was a mere fiction superimposed on the tales to provide a better imitation of the *Decameron* (*Anfängen*, p. 5), and Auerbach claims that only a domestic frame had existed in France prior to the borrowing of the courtly frame by the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (*Zur Technik*, p. 16).

In short there is no doubt that the development of the short narrative form in France owes a great deal to Italian tales, but whether or not there is a direct inheritance from the Italian is a question to be answered for individual cases.

Far more interesting for the present study is the role of four other short narrative genres or subgenres, all medieval, in establishing the context of short narratives referred to above. These are the *facetiae*, the *exempla*, the *lais*, and the *fabliaux*. The first two are not for the most part written in the vulgar tongue, although they were extremely popular in France in the early sixteenth century. Each of these four forms corresponds to a certain type of narrative activity. The *facetia* is a rapidly outlined funny story (a joke with a punch line); the *exemplum*, a moralized story; the *lai*, a romantic, sentimental tale; and the *fabliau*,
something of a combination of these three, where the moralized ending and the treatment of love are subjugated to an overriding concern for the amusing nature of the events described. The facetious, the didactic, the sentimental, the realistic (the term most often used to describe the fabliaux)—all four contributed to the nature of the nouvelle.

Like the facetia, which has been called “l’intermède nécessaire entre le fabliau et la nouvelle française” (Weber, p. 102), the nouvelle is a rapidly told story with a surprise ending. The lightning structure of the facetia is amplified into a more developed narrative. Sozzi found this to be one of three important modifications which occurred when Poggio’s facetiae were translated or adapted into French. Weber has suggested that the facetia was really an oral form, and the author who finally wrote it down was merely the last in a line of oral transmitters (p. 102). The importance of the brevity of the form for its transmission by memory is obvious.

Another kind of thought activity is represented by the exemplum, defined as “un récit ou une historiette, une fable ou une parabole, une moralité ou une description pouvant servir de preuve à l’appui d’un exposé doctrinal, religieux ou moral” (Welter, p. 1). The basic function of the exemplum was to illustrate a point of a moral nature; it was thus a gentle form of didacticism, in which the useful function was arrived at through the pleasant or amusing. The medieval ideal of literature as edifying persisted into the sixteenth century, complementing a tradition of amusement and providing an aesthetic format that was present to a greater or lesser degree in the nouvelle. The notion of “sugaring the pill” pervaded the narrative tradition, and many critics trace a development of the nouvelle directly from the exemplum. Tiemann puts it categorically as follows: “Daher hat auch jede (angeblich) reale Geschichte eine Bedeutung, die aus ihr abzulesen ist. Jede Geschichte wird zum Exemplum, sei sie ernst oder scherzhaft. Man kann über sie weinen oder lachen, immer ist aus ihnen das Beispiel abzunehmen. So sind höfische, ernstgestimmte Bretonengeschichten (‘Lais’) Exempla, so sind ausgelassene Schwanke (‘Fabliaux’) ebenfalls Exempla” (Die Entstehung, p. 8). The validity of this judgment cannot fail to strike any reader who has observed the high proportion of fabliaux and lais containing implicit or explicit morals. So basic did Zumthor find the notion of a moralized narrative that he included the presence of a moral as one of the four fundamental characteristics of the medieval short narrative.
10 Introduction

(Essai, pp. 400–401). I feel obliged to agree both with Tiemann and Zumthor. The role of morals in Philippe’s tales will be discussed in chapter 3.

Despite the differences in tone and manner, the lai must be considered an early form of the nouvelle, since it was a short narrative form. The sentimental thematics, however, are virtually absent from such collections as Philippe de Vigneulles’s and Nicolas de Troyes’s. Love is the main subject of the lais, and they may therefore have influenced more directly such collections as the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre.

Much more frequently compared to the nouvelle is the fabliau, a short comic tale often with a punch-line ending, where love is treated in gross, concrete terms and the moral is often cynical. Nowhere as much as in the fabliaux does the moral interpretation contrast with the comic events of the narrative. The presence of a moral seems to reveal that the strength of the medieval tradition of moralized tales was so strong that even a highly “immoral” tale required a moral ending. But there is more: the reader of these times perhaps could not conceive of a story existing merely for the sake of the events or characters themselves, nor could he imagine those events and characters as not having a meaning beyond the literal. Tiemann’s statement regarding the exemplum suggested this hypothesis. In fact this context corresponded to a much more basic mental activity than the creation of eventful stories. In the fabliaux characters assimilate the outside world by making over to their own experience the events of the story, by interpreting it. They are taking the individual out of the typical, making the particular into the cultural.

This is also the role of the nouvelle. There is not, however, a clearly defined development of the fabliau into the nouvelle. What is certain is that ideas, outlines, even whole developments from the fabliaux are found in some nouvelles, and although subject matter and themes may have been available in a popular reservoir of orally circulated tales, there is an obvious filiation (Dubuis, Les CNN, p. 303). The nouvelle amplified, however, and more interest and attention was paid to the description of events and characters: in short it was a more artistic form than the fabliau. An illuminating difference in the humor of the fabliaux and the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles of the fifteenth century is pointed out by Küchler. He finds that it was the obscenity and enormity of the situa-
tions that aroused laughter among the hearers of the *fabliaux* rather than a humorous style or manner, as in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (31:40). The belief that the *fabliau* demonstrated a lack of artistic effort is widely accepted by critics (see especially Auerbach, *Zur Technik*, p. 41).

These four forms are among the most frequently mentioned forerunners of the French *nouvelle*, but a great many other works have been mentioned. The difficulty of determining with certainty the role of earlier texts in the formation of the *nouvelle* raises doubts about the entire question of comparison of earlier forms to the *nouvelle*. Dubuis in his recent study of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* suggests a common structural basis for comparison which is useful. In his conclusion about the *lais* he declares that one must consider not the differences between *lais*, *fabliaux*, and *nouvelles*, but their common ties. It is the profound similarity of structure that unites the various forms: “Les trois genres obéissent aux règles impératives du genre narratif bref. Quel que soit le genre cultivé, il faut toujours compenser par l’intensité du récit la perte de ressources qui découle de sa brièveté et il n’est pas besoin de réfléchir longuement sur cette question pour constater que les chemins sont peu nombreux et qu’ils convergent: on débouche toujours sur l’inattendu, sur la surprise. C’est la logique interne du genre narratif bref qui condamne le fabliau, le lai et la nouvelle à se choisir des structures identiques” (*Les CNN*, pp. 467–68).

One might solve the problem of origins, as some critics have done, by considering social factors. Something in the pastimes and culture of the people of the late medieval and early sixteenth centuries led to this kind of creation of signifying forms. As I have suggested, it was preformal content that circulated from place to place and from time to time. Such content may have found different types of forms at different times, forms that acquired a meaning for a specific culture at a specific time. Thus critics have postulated the gathering of a group in which the presence of both narrator and audience was crucial to the propagation of narratives. According to Redenbacher, the position of the teller with respect to the hearers, their social norms, and their literary traditions determined the direction and goal of the telling (p. 6). In the Middle Ages people thought centripetally or symbolically and the artistic portrayal of the hero was as an ideal model or leader. Out of this portrayal grew the medieval epic. The Renaissance person, on the other hand, is
neither leader nor ideal but is typical, and interest is in the thing and the people as they are, not for what they represent (p. 69). The typical nature of the individual is underlined by the repetition of typical situations and plots in the *nouvelles* (p. 8).

It would be important to delineate the specific social atmosphere leading to the creation of each type of short comic narrative. Again, such an effort was made by Nykrog and Rychner for the *fabliaux*. But the major problem in assigning social origins to the *nouvelles*, as it was a problem for both of these critics, is the impossibility of separating such factors as the social norms of the audience and the author, their "national consciousness," and their philosophy of humanity from their literary inheritance.

If, as I have suggested, the *nouvelle* and its origins are cultural factors of an epoch, it is important to ask whether there was a conscious cultural development. The idea has been put forth that the freedom of certain forms allows a better expression of the *état d'esprit* of a time (Weber, p. 101). Unfortunately little evidence exists in our time for the verification of cultural factors, other than the narratives themselves. Nevertheless the constant reference to a tradition suggests the possibility of defining a cultural evolution, some of whose steps are evident. One might take at face value, for instance, the brief introduction to Philippe de Vigneulles's fifty-third tale, with its reference to past books: "Au temps passés l'on faisoit plusieurs tromperies et finesse comme l'en trouve par escript en plusieurs livres et hystoires. Je croy que la coustume n'en est encor pas perdue et que present s'en font tousjours des nouvelles qui sont aucunes fois bonnes a oyr pour advertir ceuxx qui rien n'en sceivent et pour les garder du dangier." I would argue that the word *nouvelles* in this paragraph, an adjective modifying "tromperies et finesse," should also be read as the key word describing the continuity of past to present, of old narrative subjects to new subjects which constitute *nouvelles*. All texts, as they draw on a narrative tradition, contribute to a conscious cultural development. It will be interesting to study Philippe's tales from the standpoint of their traditionality, to discover to what extent the *nouvelle* of Philippe can be defined as the outgrowth of a cultural development. This will be done in chapter 1.

While the intent of this book is to give an extended definition of the *nouvelles* of Philippe de Vigneulles, a general definition will be useful
as a point of departure. It has been said that the French nouvelle is the transposition of the Italian genre: “la nouvelle est, dans l’histoire littéraire française, ce genre importé d’Italie qui fait son apparition en France avec la traduction du Décaméron par Laurent de Premierfait et qui est représenté au XVe siècle par les Cent nouvelles nouvelles, ce ‘nouveau’ Décaméron” (Rychner, Review, p. 333). While there is no doubt that the French nouvelle needs to be defined in part with respect to the Italian novella, such historical statements are insufficient in detail.

A useful and general definition of the nouvelle was given by Werner Söderhjelm in his early study of the fifteenth-century French nouvelle: “Telle qu’on est habitué à concevoir historiquement l’idée de la nouvelle, c’est un récit court, généralement en prose, qui nous présente une situation le plus souvent prise dans la vie de tous les jours et resserrée dans un cadre étroit. L’événement raconté aboutit à une catastrophe inattendue ou surprenante, ce qui veut dire que l’élément dramatique joue un rôle essentiel dans la constitution de la nouvelle” (p. ix). Many elements of this definition should be retained. First is the idea of the “événement raconté.” Both the event and the telling of the event are contained in the word nouvelle. Probably derived from the Provençal nova or novela (Pabst, pp. 14–16), the word nouvelle in the Middle Ages was used in the pragmatic sense to mean news, new thing, or interesting event. The translation of this event into a tale is most interesting: according to some, it is the newness of the event which provides the impulse to tell it, to make of it an epic event, and the telling is encouraged by the presence of a critical audience (Redenbacher, pp. 4–5; Vossler, Anfängen, p. 7). Of course, it is very often in fact an old event that is recounted (taken from an established tradition); it is only nuanced or modified to satisfy the pretension to newness (Küchler, 30: 331). The presence of a pragmatic newness in Philippe’s nouvelles is a key factor in their definition, as his use of the word shows (see chapter 1). But given the tremendous similarity of theme, subject matter, events, characters, and type of situation, it is certainly a paradoxical newness, for the news has a way of repeating itself, and the author of each new nouvelle is only the temporary authority over the news.

Dubuis found what seems to be a middle step in the pragmatic-to-literary evolution, the verb form “noveler” (also “noveller” and “nouveller”), meaning change, renew, or renew oneself, and also “‘répandre une nouvelle,’ c’est-à-dire, porter à la connaissance d’autrui un
élément nouveau, le raconter” (“La Genèse,” pp. 10–11). There was thus a shifting of the meaning of nouvelle from “new thing” to “telling.” Although the author of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles may not have been aware of such an evolution in the denotation of the word, different editions of that work offer a variant that may imply an equivalence in meaning of the words “comptes” and “nouvelles,” as Dubuis points out. This would indicate a close relation between the activity of recounting or telling and the definition of the literary form. Dubuis’s analysis of the etymology of the word remains unconvincing, however, and most critics remark only that the definition of the form includes some notion of newness or novelty. Yet the literary nouvelle is already better defined in the text of Philippe de Vigneulles, and it is certain that the activity of tale-telling is included in that definition, although Philippe does not use the verb nouveller.

Brevity is a second important element of the nouvelle. Although this is a relative matter, it constitutes a basic stylistic quality. Both Dubuis and Zumthor included it as one of four basic aspects of the nouvelle (Dubuis, Les CNN, p. 17; Zumthor, Essai, p. 399). Zumthor points out that brevity as an ideal necessitates the relative absence of description, requires an assertive tone or manner, and eliminates individualization, resulting in the presentation of typical factors or generalizing propositions. This is certainly true of texts such as the fabliaux and the lais, but is perhaps less applicable to the nouvelle as it developed in the sixteenth century. However, it is clear that brevity has far-reaching implications for the conduct of the narration.

Third, the term situation used by Söderhjelm has been much discussed, especially by Küchler with regard to the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, in which he considers it a principle of construction, and by Ferrier, who makes it the chief characteristic of the fifteenth-century nouvelle (Ferrier, pp. 1, 21; see also Küchler, 31: 80). Undoubtedly the concept of situation, usually considered as the source of the comic impact, has a definite role in the analysis of the short comic narrative; one may speak of a progress or change (or a lack of change) from an opening situation to a concluding situation. It would be much more useful to consider what it is that constitutes and brings about such a change (or fails to) than to stress the importance of the situation, as Ferrier has done. This will be in part the goal of chapter 2 of this study.

Two other compositional definitions provided by Zumthor with re-
Introduction

gard to the medieval récit serve to describe the construction of the short narrative: they are unity, evident in the presence of a pointe or an ultimate source of the action, and the fact that the conclusion is based on and exhausts the premises (Essai, p. 400). Both factors imply that the end situation of a tale is at the origin of its elaboration.

These compositional characteristics are in keeping with a fourth essential part of Söderhjelm’s definition, the “élément dramatique.” Rychner like Söderhjelm speaks of a trait: “l’action de la nouvelle est nouée par un trait saillant [qui] réunit les événements en un point, les réduit à l’unité” (Review, p. 334). For Dubuis, the dramatic element of the outcome is the most important single aspect of the nouvelle: there is always a surprise or an unexpected event (Les CNN, pp. 102-3, 125, 563). Here one may see the influence of the facetia type of narration, in which what is sought for is the punch of the ending.

A fifth important element, suggested by Söderhjelm’s phrase “la plus souvent prise dans la vie de tous les jours,” is realism. The claim to narrate a real event is considered by Dubuis as one of the four main characteristics of the nouvelle (Les CNN, p. 17). The nouvelle by its realism is often contrasted with the lai or the fable, which contain fantastic elements, and with the romance and other allegorical forms. One may say that the absence or refusal of any allegory does indeed characterize the nouvelle.

Similarly, the rejection of the sublime and the ideal can be seen as the nouvelle’s reaction to the courtly tradition. Sozzi, who calls this reaction “l’étude désintéressée du réel” (“La Nouvelle,” p. 78), claims that a new, ironic, antisublime prose, bourgeois in nature, became the typical nouvelle style, revealing a disenchanted, lucid attitude toward reality, without any abstract mythicization. He calls it a “nouvelle mentalité dans la mesure où de vieux clichés narratifs sont démontés ironiquement dans le but d’anéantir certains mythes courants au sein d’une littérature édifiante et idéalisante” (p. 84). It had been the role of the conteurs to establish this “realistic” current alongside the courtly tradition which persisted into the later Renaissance. The idea of the realism of the nouvelle as a reaction to courtly or sublime literature is still very much in vogue and refers implicitly to a temperament or an aesthetics which has yet to be defined in all its ramifications. It would be most important to analyze in depth and in detail the relation between sublime or idealized prose and the so-called disenchanted attitude to-
ward reality, in order to demonstrate the annihilation of courtly ideals through "realistic" prose. To my knowledge, this has not yet been done.

Nevertheless, a catchall term has been much used to describe this attitude: it is the famous "esprit gaulois," which unfortunately has the disadvantage of being defined by the very object which it pretends to describe. It has been called the "characteristic attitude" of the conteurs, giving rise to a "particular flavour," and is based on the aesthetic and literary principles of the author (Ferrier, pp. 1, 3). Ferrier also calls it an "interest in certain types of human relationship . . . with the purpose of providing an infinite number of increasingly subtle variations on a given theme" (p. 38).

All such definitions of the realistic aesthetics of the French nouvelle are well intentioned, but I believe a better way has to be devised to study and define "realism" in the nouvelle literature. Such an attempt will be made for Philippe's tales in chapter 4. A description of attitudes and temperament is an interesting approach to an author or a work, but it is difficult to extend such a study to several works over a period of time.

In this study I shall refer to tales by number. (The titles give the number of each tale but are usually discursive and too long to quote in full in each case. Appendix A provides brief titles for all tales.) Many of the tales consist of several separate anecdotes sometimes linked by the presence of one character, but standing alone in their narrative structure. Thus I found it expedient to consider each a separate story.14 In all there are 116 stories considered complete enough for analysis.

The fact that the collection originally numbered 100 tales bears witness to Philippe's knowledge of tradition. It is clear that he wished to make a coherent, unified work of the varied stories he collected over at least a ten-year period. The thematic ordering of the nouvelles (see chapter 1) is one proof of this intention, and the frequent internal references are another. About a third of the tales refer to other tales. Reference is made on the basis of similarities or differences by a brief summary or by stating the number of the tale referred to, but in some cases where both are given, the number is incorrect. Thus 93 mentions 68 and gives enough of an indication of the outcome of the tale the author is referring to that it is clear he is actually thinking of 85. Number 53 refers to 58, which should be 59 (a rare example of reference to something that
is to come). Number 87, about some people who want a crucifix, refers to 56, but the other tale about a "crucifix à cheval" is actually 26. Such "mistakes" might indicate that this scribal manuscript was at least the second version of the *Cent Nouvelles*.

Charles H. Livingston published ten articles on the work between 1923 and 1966, most of them brief introductions to the seventeen tales he published in them, although the 1923 article in *Revue du Seizième Siècle* gives a thorough introduction of both the author and the work. While Livingston's chief interest is in source materials and analogues, as in the edition, my goal is to analyze the work and explicate it for the modern intellectual reader and to provide a basis for later comparative studies. Thus I will examine the tales from a variety of approaches, considering first the importance of traditional elements in the *Cent Nouvelles* and the theoretical definition supplied by the author, then the narrative structures and themes. Two other basic characteristics of the genre which will be discussed are the relative dosage of morality and comedy, including the role of obscenity, and the importance of realism. I hope that these several topics will provide a reading of the work historically, generically, structurally, and in terms of its human significance.
Chapter One

The Tradition of the *Cent Nouvelles*

THE THEORY

Like most authors of his time and of medieval times, Philippe de Vigneulles wrote a prologue introducing his collection of stories and frequently used a brief prologue to present individual tales. Typically, in the individual prologues as in the main one, the author addresses the reader directly, using a form of the verb in the second person or the pronoun *vous*. Thus the prologues have the immediate function of establishing a contact between author and reader or hearer. Besides this general role, the prologues serve to introduce the author and justify his activity as tale-teller, thus constituting a "theoretical" statement about the genre of the *nouvelle*. In other words, in the limited sense in which one can speak of the theory of the *nouvelle*, positing the rules of the genre, such theory was relegated to the prologues, whose functions, in this case, fall into five main categories: 1) a statement of truth and authenticity or argument of authority; 2) an attempt to enlist the benevolent attention of the reader; 3) a modesty clause; 4) a substantive introduction of the *nouvelle* (i.e., themes, subject matter, summaries); and 5) a moral justification or a statement of the intention to please and instruct.

The lost first page of the main prologue of the *Cent Nouvelles* possibly discussed literary works which Philippe had read, since the remaining fragment begins with a rather lengthy historical introduction to the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* of the fifteenth century, naming the Duke Charles of Burgundy and the Dauphin who later became Louis XI. Moreover, a small fragment of manuscript, transcribed by Livingston, names Boccaccio and his tales "advene en Ytalie," which Philippe says were told for "joyeuseté," without sin and for the good in them. Philippe probably also described the manner in which the tales were told, for the fragment mentions three women, tale-telling, and ten days. The importance of his descriptions of these two literary sources is in
providing a justification for his own activity (another French Decameron?) and an answer to the objections of the incredulous: “à quoy je respons et dis qu’on peut croire que possible est esté advenus” (Prologue, ll. 12–13). He wishes to show that strange things are possible in the present time as well as in the past, by showing that new stories can be found in sufficient number to make a similar collection: “pour montrer que, se les aventures qui se font en divers lieux et que jour-nellement advenissent venoient à la connoissance d’aucun bon facteur, ilz en pourroient faire et composer ung livre aussi bon que ceulx qui ont esté fait devant” (ll. 32–35). Just as he speaks of his sources as if they were descriptions of historically real events, so he claims his own stories were real: “comme moy mesme en a sceu et veu la plus grant partie ou du moins je les ouy dire et racompter à gens digne de foy et de creance” (ll. 25–27). It is significant that nothing occurs in the tales themselves which is not realistically or physically possible. A statement in the prologue maintains “et peut on croire toutes choses qui ne sont contraires à Dieu ne à sa loy” (ll. 13–14), a statement which also has the function of inviting the reader’s benevolent attention.²

Although it is clear that the written word holds significant value for Philippe de Vigneulles, so too direct oral transmission implies the authenticity of the stories he writes. In the prologues to some individual tales, Philippe claims to have heard the tales recounted in a given situation, as in number 25, presumably heard and retold by Philippe’s father, Jehan Gerard. The prologue to number 100, which is virtually all that is left of this tale, introduces another real-life person, the nobleman Andréeu de Rineck, seigneur de Laidonchamps,³ who is said to have told the tale which Philippe is here repeating: “à ung disner, nous vinmes à deviser et à parler des pays d’oulter mer et des choses estranges, et entre les aultres compte ledit seigneur vint à dire et racompter une nouvelle laquelle je vueil ici mettre pour la derniere.” This is both an argument of authority and a detailed description of the setting in which tale-telling took place. Parler or deviser blend neatly and smoothly into racompter une nouvelle, which clearly was a logical part of an evening’s conversation. This prologue gives a detailed and explicit statement about the transmission of nouvelles in Philippe’s time, as well as an indication of his idea of their place in life. In the same vein, Philippe’s purpose in writing down the stories he claims he heard is to promulgate them to a wider audience. The nouvelles were undoubtedly meant to be read
aloud, possibly in an evening gathering, or recounted from memory; he provides the written text for such an oral performance. (In the tales themselves Philippe addresses his listeners using the words "ouir" and "escouter.") In sum, because nothing "impossible" happens in the tales and because their authority is assured by their direct oral transmission, Philippe maintains the "truth" of his tales as of his written sources. The reader's benevolence is likewise invited by this guarantee of truth and by the evocation of the pleasant, congenial settings in which such stories might be told.

Philippe names himself as author in the prologue and gives his occupation as "marchans de drap" (l. 10), without stating more fully his bourgeois status in Metz. He makes no pretense to literary skill, describing himself as "seulement moy, qui n'as guieres veu ne hanté" (l. 36), and says he is "simple d'entendement" (l. 11). He wrote his tales "au moins mal que j'ay peu ou sceu" (l. 29) and concludes the prologue with another modesty clause, telling his readers "qu'ilz me pardonnet les faultes qui y sont . . . et vuellent supplyr mon ygnorance et mon simple entendement" (ll. 41–43). Altogether conventional, in spite of their apparent reality, such statements have the effect of delimiting the minimal role of the author (in the modern sense), in opposition to the importance of the greater authority, which is the tradition.

Philippe devoted considerable attention to a substantive definition or description of the nouvelle, a very fundamental component of the genre description. Subject matter was to be varied in nature (the prologue to 52 refers to other stories which are of "pluseurs sortes"). The most prevalent type of subject matter, according to the prologues to individual tales, is something "pour rire" or a "joyeuseté." Other possible subjects include adventures and any subject matter already treated.

Many prologues to the individual stories state the theme of the story or of the next several stories. These themes are finesse, rire, tromperie, réponses amusantes, simplesse, femmes, questains, aventures, and curés. Tales with similar themes are often grouped together, especially those about questains, curés, femmes, and simplesse. Since not all tales are classified by the author, these subject categories cannot serve as a complete thematic description. Their importance lies in their very existence in the tales, which implies that to a considerable extent Philippe defined the nouvelle thematically. These were the themes he considered nouvelle material, probably because he had read them or
heard them in other narratives, so that naming the themes is an additional argument of authority and links the Cent Nouvelles to the narrative tradition. The themes he names for the most part reflect those of previous volumes of tales and stating the topic or theme is a traditional mode of opening statements. It is the themes or subjects that are important for a coherent book, and besides tying the tales to the past the naming of subject matter can serve the function of unifying the work.

Individual prologues sometimes give a summary of the story to follow (and occasionally of past stories if they are similar) which also recall Boccaccio's summaries. Similarly, characters are sometimes introduced at length: in numbers 20, 30, 52, and 99 the prologue is used for this purpose (all are examples of stories in which the personality of the character is a prime mover of the action). Two prologues speak retrospectively of the type of characters present in the previous tales (another indication of the sense of continuity Philippe maintained).

Part of the substantive description of the nouvelles is provided by the use of transitional statements, which insure the unity of the work. In the main prologue Philippe had described the circumstances of his writing the book, which he began in 1505 while sick, gradually adding new tales as he found them: "ay depuis tousjours multipliez jusques au nombre de cent et dix" (ll. 27–28). Still later he put them in order: "et puis les ay mis en escript par ordre l'une après l'autre" (ll. 28–29). There is textual evidence of this putting in order, a further indication that the manuscript is at least the second version, and the prologues to individual tales contribute to it. Some tales are said to be "digne d'estre mise en renc" (or "au nombre"), and in about eleven prologues he also mentions that he is "multiplying" the number of tales. Philippe was making a book, which clearly meant a unified whole of which the individual tales were the constituent parts. Any book worthy of the name, it would seem, needed to contain a sufficient number, as well as quality, of stories; hence the thematic grouping and thematic transitions such as this one from the prologue to number 14, which states: "[A]u propos de parler des curez, puis que nous y summes rentrez, je vous en vueil encor racomptier une petite nouvelle." So great is the exigency of unity for the genre that mere transitional formulas are sometimes used: number 21 begins, "Pareillement comme cy devant avons dit," but in fact does not refer to anything specific.

In addition to subject matter, themes, and the need for unity, Philip-
pe's use of the word *nouvelle*, both in prologues and in the stories themselves, provides a substantive definition of the *nouvelle*. The word is used both in the pragmatic sense meaning news, or event, and as the name of the literary work or narrative genre. In the pragmatic sense it originally means something new that happened, but it more properly designates something new that is spoken about, which is how one might define news. The term *nouvelles* is used both with *advenues* and *comp-téz*: something that happened and something that is told. An event accedes to this general level of telling because it is worthy of note, or particularly interesting, or new in the sense of different. The notion of telling thus prepares the transition from pragmatic to literary *nouvelle*: when a *nouvelle* is told in a particular setting, the meaning of the word acquires yet another nuance, and it is but a small step from this new meaning to the most frequent use of the term as the name of a literary genre. All these nuances create a continuity of meaning which is exceedingly important for an understanding of the *nouvelle* in Philippe's collection. The following graphic representation summarizes these meanings and shows the continuing presence of the *nouvelle* as event within the literary *nouvelle*:

```
nouvelle:  event
event told
event told generally (news)
event told in a particular tale-telling session
  (oral transmission)
event told in a particular setting and written down
to be read by others (literary genre)
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The interrelations between the pragmatic and literary senses of the word are highly significant for these tales, whose claim to realism is probably greater than any other (see chapter 4), for the presence of the pragmatic sense within the literary achieves the effect of concretizing the literary *nouvelle*, which retains its meaning of something that happened that is told. The presence of the pragmatic sense also shows the close relationship between the literary *nouvelles* and the orally transmitted tales which constitute the popular tradition. The critics' idea of the social gathering's determining what accedes to the tale-telling consciousness is also confirmed in Philippe's case, since the author frequently implies that his tales are told because the audience might or should find them
interesting. Thus, because of the continuity of the event within the literary genre, Philippe is able to use the term *nouvelle* or *cent nouvelles*, in the literary sense, without further explanation, with the assurance that his audience will understand just what this literary form is. In this respect, Philippe's collection represents a step forward from the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, whose author, according to some critics, felt the need to explain the genre (Pabst, *Novellentheorie*, p. 172; Dubuis, "La Genèse," pp. 10–11).

The uses of the word *nouvelle* and the various substantive statements about the form define a narrative material and show how Philippe wished to organize that material to make a good book. The last function of the prologues, a moral justification, is an ambiguous element of the theory of the *nouvelle*. In essence, Philippe claims that all the tales are to be read for the good in them, if there is any, and the evil or harm is to be avoided. Stories containing evil are to be taken as a warning not to let something similar happen: "Sy prie et supplye à tous ceulx et celles qui les liront ou orront qu’ilz preignent le bien qu’ilz y verront et fuyent le mal qu’ilz y trouveront" (ll. 39–40). In the prologue to tale 28, the author explicitly states that any sins of an erotic nature or otherwise are mentioned only so that people can see them as bad examples. *Finesses* and tricks are also considered bad and do not serve as examples to be copied. There is even a little prayer to God that tale-telling may not be a sin (to eliminate any possible doubt), and the author feels his tale-telling activity is possible only with the grace of God. Although Philippe appears in both the *Mémoires* and the *Chronique* as a person of high ethical standards, these statements in the prologues cannot nevertheless be construed as proof of a personal commitment to a moral purpose. However tempting it may be to read out from the moral discourse some ethical profile of our author, we must recognize that its presence represents first and foremost a concession to a convention of the genre, to which it would not be farfetched to ascribe the function of prudent insurance against a possible indictment for immorality.10

While the main prologue is a coherent text obviously written in one piece, the prologues to individual tales sometimes seem rather haphazard in that they are not always well motivated. What determines whether a tale will have a prologue or not? One apparent factor is the introduction of a new type of theme (such as tales about women, in 38) or in general whenever the author feels he is starting off anew (as in 52
with a new type of character, a teetotaler). Also important is the ever-present argument for the validity of the tales, usually taking the form in the individual prologues of naming the person who told the story. Yet nothing about the nature of tales presented with such an argument would seem to call for a justification, so that naming the authority appears unnecessary or gratuitous. This very gratuitousness implies perhaps that one should accept as truthful or real those statements naming a direct source (i.e., a real person). A similar gratuitousness governs some moral statements found in individual prologues, as, for example, the beginning of 28 which apologizes for immoral tales even though the tale itself has very little to do with immoral behavior. One readily suspects that prologues such as this one have been added after the composition of the tales themselves, perhaps at the time the main prologue was written. I have already alluded to the existence of an earlier autograph manuscript, and I would suggest that the main prologue was added to the original manuscript before it was copied by a scribe. While the main prologue clearly serves to introduce the entire work, the individual prologues appear, next to the stories themselves, as so many guides to the reader on his journey through the work. As such, they gently lead the reader from theme to character type, from type of subject matter to an explanation of the very nature of tale-telling, while constantly announcing the global unity of the work and its adherence to a certain tradition of narration, both thematic and formal. In sum, prologues are intended as reminders that the entire work is to be understood within the tradition which is constantly called to account.

Given the absence of a frame story, the prologues assume some of the functions usually ascribed to frames: the description of certain characters, the presentation of a general theme or topic, smooth transitions from one tale to the next, encouragement of a benevolent and appreciative attitude on the part of the reader, the assurance of the modesty or discretion of the narrator concomitantly with the affirmation of the truth or reality of the tales or their authority, finally the guarantee of their moral value. All these needs are served by the prologues which, far from masking the identity of the author, as a frame story can, specifically present him as the collector and writer.

As Pabst has shown, theory may be relegated to prologues or other statements external to the nouvelles in order to liberate the latter from
constraints (*Novellentheorie*, pp. 2, 26–27). In the case of the *Cent Nouvelles*, that liberating function is fulfilled by the authority claims combined with the request for the appreciation of the moral value of the work, which are in fact two aspects of the same principle. It is, of course, reasonable to consider both as commonplaces of the genre. That Philippe de Vigneulles seems to believe in the reality of his sources as well as some of his own tales may be ascribed to his relative naïveté, but it is really beside the point. What the presence of these commonplaces reveals is a respect for tradition which is still very medieval in nature. Authoritative sources and not invention are the guarantee of a good book.

The same tradition is apparent in the thematic groupings and the constant reminders of the formal unity of the work. Even the activity of tale-telling as described in the prologues as well as in the stories themselves is a kind of reference to an authoritative tradition of nouvelle-making, an activity which justifies the renovation of old materials through their recasting into new forms. The very use of the term *nouvelle* is indicative of this two-sided nature of the tales: it refers to the tradition but reaffirms the value of new, different, interesting events. A *nouvelle* should tell of something new; it contains in itself both its history and its renovation.

**THE PRACTICE**

To examine the manifestation of tradition in the narratives, it seems imperative to consider the sources of the work. This immediately raises the problem of the necessary incompleteness of any source study, even when it appears to have been pursued with tenacity, as is the case with Livingston's *notices*. Where a literary source is present (there are four works Philippe read in all probability which appear as sources), or where sources or analogues are available in folktale collections, it is possible to speak of the relative lack of originality of the tales. In no way, however, is it possible to do so exhaustively: there is no guarantee that other literary or folklore sources were not used which have left no trace for the modern observer, just as there is no guarantee they were actually used.

Combined with this uncertainty about literary and folklore sources is the impossibility of locating a so-called oral source or what Livingston
all too frequently refers to as "la tradition orale." Although in his opinion there may be as many as seventy-five tales (of 116) which were transmitted orally, it is useless to speculate on Philippe’s oral sources. It is quite possible that the author’s claim that he heard a particular tale recounted in the Metz region is true; it is equally possible that such a claim is merely a conventional form of truth statement. In spite of these problems, Livingston’s study might have led him to conclude what the reader intuitively feels: that the collection is neither highly original nor entirely traditional. The reader recognizes stock situations and traditional character types, such as the adulterous woman, the rustic, the fool, the cowardly braggart, and traditional motifs such as “le don de l’amant récupéré” in 71 and, in 38 and 40, the substitution of a person for another, with the first person later making himself known by showing an object he had taken. Humor, too, is of traditional types. Finally, on a more general level, the presence of tradition is felt in the fact that some of the same subjects recur consistently: adultery, scatology and obscenity, trick-playing or deceptions of all kinds.

Although we can thus observe the insistent presence of a tradition, both oral and literary, Philippe’s tales are never a simple imitation or translation (as are, for instance, some of Nicolas de Troyes’s); every tale is renewed. The nature and importance of this renovation can be observed and evaluated in traditional tales or situations which are modified to a greater or lesser extent by Philippe. Number 11, for instance, is based on a story of a treasure hidden in a wall which is marked by an inscription; the treasure is stolen and the inscription modified to indicate this fact. Philippe’s version changes the situation—instead of a rich man, it is a priest who hides his treasure because he is going to Rome for a Jubilee. The cache is more cleverly concealed—instead of a stone, the wall is replastered—and the inscription is much more elaborate, including a painting with a religious subject. The tale, while clearly based on a common source, is thus remade, re-created. A more elaborate modification occurs in 65 where a newly married wife imprudently reveals that she learned the art of lovemaking from her father’s servant, a situation that is found in numerous texts in folklore and literature. Its combination with another similar plot, in which the girl’s mother confesses premarital infidelity and is accidentally overheard by her husband, is not found in other sources and is either a development of Philippe’s or an inspiration from a lost source. Number 96 also starts from a traditional
situation—lovers meeting illicitly are surprised and scared away by a hidden person who either plays an instrument or falls, and then profits from the spoils—usually a sumptuous meal and sometimes the girl as well. The renovation of this theme includes the humorous addition of two very shocked monks who would prefer to cover their eyes than to let the drummer (in this case) play his instrument. They provide a comic contrast which underlines the obscene nature of this voyeuristic scene.

The locale is also original: it is a large common oven in which all the characters involved plan to spend the night.

There are many other such "traditional" stories which are modified in one way or another. A typical occurrence in the *Cent Nouvelles* is the combination of two or several traditional themes to make a new story. For example, number 41, an adultery story, contains two traditional elements: the removal of the husband by sending him to fetch some wine, and the insignificant (indeed here nonexistent) revenge by the husband after he discovers the lovers. Both motifs have an abundant bibliography (see the notice, p. 186); they are combined here to make a *nouvelle* which is not found integrally in any available source and which constitutes thereby a probable renewal. Insignificant revenges can be found in three other stories (43, 69, and 70), all combined with other mostly traditional elements.

More extensive modifications occur in other tales which appear less the remaking of a traditional theme than the creation of a new story using some traditional and some original elements. The story of the priest accidentally exposed naked to his congregation (7) is an original treatment of a stock situation, entirely unlike any other except for the presence of this embarrassing situation. The traditional thematic element is merely an aspect of the story, whose first part, another embarrassing incident which motivates the priest's exposure by his deacon, is another entirely original story also containing a traditional situation: the priest's breeches are treated like a precious relic.13

Thus, many traditional elements are renovated through changes in situations with the addition of greater detail, more elaborate development of plot, changes in locale, combinations of two (or more) traditional situations that put both into a new light, or additions of new characters which provide contrast in a stock situation.

The modern reader is better able to perceive the extent of the role of tradition, and we might put our critical advantage to good use by com-
paring the *Cent Nouvelles* to the farces and the other short narrative forms already discussed. In this case, a comparison with the *lais* is largely negative; with the exception of 99, none of the tales bears much resemblance to this form. On the other hand, the *farces* undoubtedly influenced Philippe’s tales. The popular background of his tales, his comic purpose, and his copious use of dialogue all reflect the mentality of the farces, which Philippe probably knew quite well. The assertion that the farces are rooted in day-to-day reality is valid for the *nouvelles* also, and the long list of comic situations in the farces provided by Beneke and Toldo has many similarities to the *Cent Nouvelles*. As an example, deliberate and unintentional misunderstandings occur in 2A (Symonnat avoids doing penance by misunderstanding what is wanted of him), in 13 (a rustic hears “adieu” when his confessor wants him to repeat “à Dieu”), and in 61A (the simple-minded Goffin, while guarding a city gate, thinks he is not being called because the guard outside the city wall calls “Ho guet!” instead of “Goffin!”). Jargon, an important aspect of the farce, is present in several tales. Hannes in 91C, who speaks poor French and is drunk as well, spouts a series of spoonerisms which are a fine specimen of pure jargon. He asks a city merchant for “des poullaine à grant soulez” instead of “des souliers à grands poullains,” then begins a horrendous *équivoque* on the word *chier* (meaning expensive) spoken by the merchant. Hannes mistakes it for the past participle of the verb *chier*: “‘Car, fait il, le pain l’ai chiez, le vin l’ai chiez, le drap l’ai chiez, le filz l’ai chiez, le cul l’ai chiez, trestout l’ai chiez.’ Et vouloit dire que le cuir estoit chier et que tout estoit chier.” When he finally gets home (“et se boutta par hayes et par buyssons, car le chemin n’estoit pas pour luy assés large”) he informs his wife he wanted to buy her “patte et canne” by which he meant “une panne de gorge et une coste.” His wife makes him go to work and he asks for “mon trowe et ma hauvelle,” that is, “son howe et sa truelle, car il estoit terrillon.” It is easy to imagine these scenes transposed to the stage.

In short, the type of comic humor in the *nouvelle*, in Philippe’s usage, is very similar to the type of humor in the farces. This is not to say that the farces were a source for Philippe’s *nouvelles*. There is an instructive difference in the technique of verbal humor: the humorous point is to be found most often in the meaning of the words spoken, rather than in the method of their delivery or in their aural impact.
Often providing a mere narrative outline or topic, the exempla function as a depository of traditional motifs, ideas, or subjects from which Philippe may have developed some nouvelles. The series of strange animal tales recounted in 55, for example, may have been inspired by two similar events found in the *Mensa Philosophica*, ch. 29, no. 139, and ch. 26, no. 120 (pp. 39, 42). The part that survives through the oral tradition is the basic idea: a smaller, weaker creature catches a larger one or otherwise does something freakish and contrary to its nature. In terms of the narrative, Philippe’s tales are always an amplification with respect to the exempla, and usually they preserve their moral intent or function, sometimes indeed adding an explicit moral where the original exemplum had only an implied one. This is what many authors of exempla intended their users to do. The author’s familiarity with exempla is revealed in tale 72, which ends with a statement about the value of a tale he claims he heard in an Easter sermon preached by a Cordelier to awaken the sleeping congregation. Of course here as with other forms a direct relationship cannot be traced with any certainty.\(^17\)

As Livingston has pointed out in his Introduction, the *Cent Nouvelles* is readily comparable to the fabliaux, and some ten fabliau themes are present in the nouvelles. Some of the characteristics of the fabliaux which can be found in Philippe’s nouvelles are linearity and unity of plot line; simplicity of characterization; variety of themes but unity of intention; presence of a moral concomitantly with obscenity in action and in words; and the so-called realism. Yet many nouvelles go beyond these characteristics and considerably develop the narrative structure, themes, and characterization (often in the direction of greater psychological motivation).\(^18\) Tale 8, for instance, a version of Bodel’s “Brunain la vache au prestre,”\(^19\) strengthens the anticlerical attitude and doubles the point—the priest’s greed—by topping the priest’s loss of his cow with an effective punishment. There is a well-constructed second conflict between the protagonists in which the priest’s effort at regaining the price of his cow is met by a better strategy on the part of the poor man. His position at the outcome is much more surely as victor over the immorality of the priest who first tricked him. He convinces his son, “sur peine d’estre tres bien batus,” to say in church not that his father had slaughtered the priest’s cow, as the priest had instructed him, but that the priest asserts that “il n’y a jonne femme en sa paroiche qu’il n’aït chevauchiez.” The story is suddenly much more amusing (Bodel’s ver-
sion gives the poor man such a pious minimal victory that it only evokes a smile), the characters more interesting, especially the poor man who is rather pitiful in the fabliau but develops in the nouvelle a hidden capacity for cleverness. The moral, "Et ainsy fut vraie la prophécie qui disoit que, quant on donnoit aucune aumosne à l'église, Dieu en renvoyoit le double," might be applied to what the priest "got" as well, since his punishment is doubled in Philippe's version by the addition of the second part.

The amplification in 81, an excessively scatological story similar to "Jouglet" (M.-R., 4: 112, no. 98), provides much neater construction; all details are tied in and related to each other, gratuitousness is excluded, and the initial act (causing another character to eat something which loosens his bowels) is highly motivated. Another kind of development is toward "cleaning up" a story and supplying underlying values. The important difference between the fabliau "Les IIII. Souhais Saint Martin" (M.-R., 5: 201, no. 133) and Philippe's number 78B is in the nature of the wishes. In both tales a couple is granted three (or four) wishes, but where the fabliau is entirely erotic and makes a veritable litany out of naming sexual parts, using the most "vilaine parole," Philippe's version by comparison is scrupulously clean and even moralized. When the wife wishes for a new leg on her pot, her husband out of anger wishes the leg in her stomach, whereupon the neighbors, hearing her screams, morally force the husband to use the last wish to remove the leg. Although some of the comedy of this ridiculous situation is provided by the possible sexual undercurrent present in the ambiguous meanings of pied (the third leg) and ventre, laughter is provoked less by comic eroticism than by the mockery of the undeserving couple's aspirations to divine assistance. The story is thus made "respectable," while the grossly amusing aspect of the traditional tale is significantly toned down. Also, where the explicit moral of the fabliau is strictly an antifeminine statement—a husband should never listen to his wife—in Philippe's tale the moral is founded in bourgeois values. Of the sixteen versions of this "conte à tiroirs" cataloged by Bédier, Philippe's fits into the least obscene category.20 These changes are characteristic of the amplification in Philippe's nouvelles.

A close examination of the structure of 110 is instructive of the method of survival of a fabliau theme and its modification in the nouvelle. The fabliau "Do pré tondu" (M.-R., 4: 154, no. 104) has
supplied the model of the obstinate wife, and the course of the debate between husband and wife in both versions is virtually identical, as the following schematic representation shows:

**C.N. 110**

1 A husband names found object a *couteau*  
wife says *forxe* [scissors]  

1 B husband repeats *couteau*  
wife repeats *forxe*  

2 A husband, angry, will force wife to say *couteau*  
wife says *forxe*  

2 B husband beats her  
wife says *forxe*  

3 A husband menaces with death  
wife shouts *forxe*  

3 B husband pushes her under water above her mouth  
wife shows *forxe* with fingers  

**MORAL:** “*et [elle] demourait en son oppinion*”  

**Do pré tondu**

1 husband says field is *fauchiez*  
wife says *tondu*  

2 husband swears to *fauchiez*  
wife swears to *tondu*  

3 husband angry  
wife reiterates *tondu*  

6 husband gives 60 blows  

6 husband renders wife unable to speak  
wife gestures with fingers that field is *tondu*  

The numbers refer to steps or degrees in the progress of the argument, and the letters distinguish two events in each step. Where there is a lacuna in the structure of the *fabliau* we can easily supply the missing statements (in sections 2B and 3A) without doing violence to the events of the tale: it takes sixty blows before the wife falls speechless and nearly senseless to the ground (indeed an obstinate person), and she certainly must be continuing to maintain her position during the beating, even probably shouting it (3A) as the blows continue to fall. The threatened death of the wife is likewise implicit in the number of blows
she receives. The function of the progressive structure common to both tales is to define the character of the obstinate woman. Yet, if the survival of the theme through oral transmission is rigidly demonstrable on the semantic level, the difference in the manifestation is revealing of the renovation brought to the theme by Philippe de Vigneulles: the nouvelle has a systematic character which the fabliau lacks.

In general, the fabliaux appear in comparison to Philippe’s nouvelles a cruder narrative form. The amplification in the nouvelles is always toward more satisfactory integration of all events, desires, thoughts, actions, and personalities into the tale as a whole. Where there are often unsatisfactory sequences in the fabliaux (perhaps because the versions we have are degraded), the tales of the Cent Nouvelles are always carefully constructed with no detail left to the imagination.

The differences between the facetiae and the Cent Nouvelles are always in the direction of amplification of a barely outlined story into a narration with characters portrayed in a more or less realistic fashion, situated for the most part in a real time and place, whose actions are motivated, explained, described in detail and subjectively, with extensive commentary by the narrator. Tale 45, for instance, elaborates in 161 lines a story whose essence is found in a nine-line Bebel facetia. A woman is required by her confessor to tell her husband which of her children are not really his; she finds a clever way of fulfilling this penance without revealing her shame. The elaboration consists mainly of two scenes in which the priest expounds at length on the moral values which determine his action: she must tell her husband because he is not legally expected to nourish a bastard child at his expense and his doing so constitutes a derogation of the rights of his real children. This motivation according to bourgeois values is one of the characteristics of Philippe de Vigneulles’s nouvelles. Formally, such amplification is most visible in the extensive use of discourse.

The nouvelles that are closest in manner to the facetiae are those in which the main point is a verbal joke. Weber has pointed out the importance of the motto in the facetiae as representative of the spontaneous use of speech (p. 88). Besides the nineteen tales in which this type of comedy dominates, there are numerous others (about twenty-three) in which it occurs as an adjunct or a subplot, testifying to the survival in the nouvelles of this type of facetia, a model which Philippe adapted and renovated into a well-formed subgenre including many original
stories. Another imitation from Bebel is Philippe’s number 67, the story of a woman who has just given birth to a child whose neighbors comment on his resemblance to his father; she thereupon asks if the child has a “couronne,” thus revealing that the real father is not her husband but a monk. The tale is succinctly told in Bebel (p. 23, no. 1, 47). Philippe’s elaboration contains two noteworthy additions. First, the exchange of comment and question is motivated by stating that the woman did not feel well, and the other women were trying to cheer her up. Her illness also possibly explains her rather stupid and certainly prejudicial remark. The second addition is typical of many modifications or amplifications of traditional tales: it is the laughter and enjoyment by those present of the point of the story. What in Bebel is a mere listing of the cold facts of the case is subjectively told in the nouvelle and developed into a scene of general hilarity, with the commières repeating the amusing remark to each other. There are clearly two different modes of narration at work here. A close examination of the facetia reveals only one phrase that is not a part of the narration: the comment that women customarily remark upon the child’s resemblance to the father (in the Latin, only two words, “ut fit”). This is the only instance of discourse in the anecdote, whereas in Philippe’s version eleven phrases out of twenty-four are in the realm of discourse. The narrative voice drops its objectivity at the central part of the story to change to a subjective point of view which reveals what the woman is thinking. Her thoughts explain the asking of the question, providing a motivation that is not spelled out in the Bebel version. These additions are representative of the kinds of changes that occur between the facetiae and the nouvelles of Philippe.

Of all the medieval narrative forms, the three collections of nouvelles which Livingston names as sources have perhaps the most influence on the Cent Nouvelles. The fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles probably functioned as a sort of art of the nouvelle, as many stylistic similarities can be found. But a comparison of Philippe’s eighteenth nouvelle with the seventy-sixth of the fifteenth-century collection shows the same form of embourgeoisement that was found in relation to the Bebel facetia. The characters are bourgeois citizens (“elle et son mary estoient de bon paraige et avoient des bons amys selon leur estat”), and in rising to protect the family in the face of an adulterous priest who would seduce the wife, they express certain moral values which are altogether absent from the fifteenth-century tale. Although in both ver-
visions the priest is chastised, and in the same manner, the chevalier in the earlier tale is motivated entirely by his desire for amusement. Borrowings from Masuccio's *Novellino* are few, but here too similarities in style and in the prologues and authority statements indicate a probable influence.

An important characteristic of Philippe's writing can be observed through a comparison of *Decameron* 8: 6 with number 52. In Philippe's tale, a greedy man called La Tortemawe is about to slaughter his pig and does not wish to share it with his neighbors, as custom requires, so he follows the advice of some jokers who persuade him to pretend the pig has been stolen. They then steal the pig themselves and congratulate La Tortemawe on playing so well the part they have suggested. La Tortemawe has been introduced by a rather long subplot which explains that he is not a drinker, even when someone else pays, and due to this dubious virtue he is able to save enough money to buy a cow. The drinkers, who mock him constantly for not being one of them, are subdued by this fine reward for a virtue they do not possess, but only temporarily: their mockery redoubles when a wolf strangles and devours his cow, ruining even the skin. The *Decameron* story omits the introductory subplot but follows the same story line, with an additional part.

The opposition between drinkers and teetotaler is an innovation of Philippe's with respect to the source; it is carried through the tale and motivates both La Tortemawe's actions (the pig, like the cow, was probably bought with money saved by not carousing in a tavern) and the anger and revenge of the drinking friends. The psychology of this motivation goes deeper than that of Boccaccio's: what in the *Decameron* is merely two jokers who steal for fun is in Philippe's tale an entire social behavior pattern rising to justify itself in the face of a nonbeliever. The drinkers act to ostracize and punish the teetotaler who by his very example—a model of virtue in the extreme—poses a threat to their way of life. The accidental loss of the first symbol of the teetotaler's virtue—his cow—possibly inspires the drinkers with a suitable punishment, which is effected by removing the second symbol, the pig. In the *Decameron* version Bruno and Buffalmacco are lightheartedly playing a trick from which they intend solely to profit—as they do without pity. Philippe's characters are the moral defenders of the right to punish any representative of the extreme, which is also the message of
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the moral: "La bride vous mes dessus le col." The psychosociological perspective of tale 52 does not necessarily improve on Decameron 8: 6, but it does add greater depth, although some of the hilarity of Bruno and Buffalmacco’s tricks is gone. By creating a local character and supplying a different motivational context which is carried through the narrative, Philippe has made the Boccaccio story into his own.

The weight of the narrative tradition in Philippe’s nouvelles is considerable, not necessarily because the various forms referred to here were systematically employed as sources. It is the modern reader who, with the power of hindsight, can best detect their presence in the product, although their absence in some cases does not necessarily imply originality. That is why, historically and from a modern perspective, we can see Philippe’s nouvelles as part of that greater genre identified by Tiemann as the Kurzerzählung or, more precisely, the comic short narrative. The nouvelle cannot be defined separately from other short narrative forms, because changes or renovations are not systematic: they do not pass what Jauss called the test of commutation ("Littérature médiévale," p. 84). The fool, the faithless wife, the trickster all pass readily from fabliau to facetia to nouvelle. Themes or motifs, situations and general topics remain basically similar in different forms.

What is the role of Philippe’s nouvelles in this greater genre? At the time of their composition, the Italian novella was in full development. It has already been shown (Livingston, pp. 38–41) that Philippe knew of the Decameron and the Liber Facetiarum of Poggio (the latter work probably in translation), both important steps on the continuum. In France the fabliaux had died out, so to speak, as the critics generally agree,25 by the end of the fourteenth century. Replacing them, Poggio’s facetiae had been translated and were enjoying considerable success in France. The exemplum was a form in decline as Welter showed,26 and its contribution to the later French nouvelle had been made already. Although banned from church services by several councils, the exempla were still extremely popular, particularly so, perhaps, in Metz, where Philippe probably heard many. Various other short narrative texts contributed to the constitution of the nouvelle, but at the time the author of the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles wrote his preface he felt the need to explain his use of the term as the title of a literary form—for
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such it was, as it had been about 110 years earlier in Italy. This fifteenth-century work marked the moment of the affirmation of the genre in France, indeed its constitution.

When Philippe renewed it, he added a step to the process or the continuum. In France his collection was only the second to bear the title nouvelle. The Cent Nouvelles occupies an intermediary position on the continuum. The continuation of some themes, character types, subject matter, motifs, comic devices, and morals in short narrative works postdating Philippe de Vigneulles, as many later analogues listed by Livingston for most tales show, tends to confirm Philippe’s role in the historical situation of the short comic narrative.

While the prologues supply a “theoretical” definition of the nouvelle, referring to a narrative tradition, the tales themselves put into practice that reference to conventionality. From this dual reading of the definition of the nouvelle form—theoretically in the prologues, pragmatically in the practice of the tradition—the following hypotheses emerge. The nouvelle as part of the greater genre of the short comic narrative is one manifestation of a narrative material, a form of content, which has been transmitted through many different types of forms—fabliau, facetia, exemplum, farce, among others. Although renovated and recast into new stories, the nouvelles maintain their traditionality because of their relative dependence on certain narrative patterns, on a “deep structure” which survives across national boundaries and through centuries and is no more dependent on a national character or language than it is on a particular form of expression.

In the case of Philippe’s nouvelles, the deep structure is manifested in a form of content in which the event or sequence of events is the primary feature. Events are worth telling when they are unusual or unique, and, as Philippe states in his prologue, it is possible to collect a sufficient number of such events to constitute a book such as the Florentine and Burgundian models he refers to—all that is needed is a “bon facteur” to transform those events into a narrative form that is appropriate.

Such was the modest intent of Philippe de Vigneulles. He was an avid collector of news items, as his two historical works amply demonstrate. And among those stories were some which could be retold as a nouvelle. We can postulate that the narrator, with his somewhat limited knowledge of the short narrative tradition, selected those stories which
had deep structures analogous to the traditional stories, or were similar enough to be assimilated into the conventional narrative and to provoke the desire to narrate them in the form of a *nouvelle*. It was the role of the tradition, in other words, to motivate the selection. The relation between the tradition and the originality in the work is thus clear: "La Tortemawe," the greedy teetotaler in 52, may have been an authentic figure of Metz, a real person whose newsworthy story was known to the author. But if the story is told as a *nouvelle*, it is because it corresponds to a known deep structure, that provided in this instance by the *Decameron* novella, a narrative material which is reworked with a new development and new details into a surface structure that is a unique manifestation of an existing narrative pattern.
Chapter Two

Sequential Models

The *nouvelle* as a genre lends itself particularly well to structural analysis, both because of its relative brevity and because of its unity and "closure" (Zumthor, *Essai*, p. 400). In studying the structure of medieval short narratives, some critics have established a distinction between sequence of events and situation. Ferrier, for instance, stated that the fifteenth-century *nouvelle* laid more stress on the situation than on the sequence of events. The situation was created by the juxtaposition of character types (p. 21), and its importance was such that she calls it "the dominant feature of prose fiction at the close of the Middle Ages" (p. 52). Such a statement would no longer apply to Philippe de Vigneulles's *nouvelles*. Although one might say that most tales show characters involved in a situation which constitutes the main point or *trait* of the story, it is precisely the sequence of events leading to and including the main point—and the comic outcome—which provides the structural definitions of these *nouvelles*.

The immediate impression one obtains from a close reading of the tales is of two basic types of narrative, one about foolish people, the other about clever people. The main events usually present the characters in terms of this basic positive-negative opposition, although both types of narrative may be present in one tale. Because of the homogeneity of narrative events in Philippe's collection, it is possible to derive from the sequence of events in all tales two operative structural models which describe the two basic narrative types.¹

In describing narrative, many critics have recently attempted to apply structuralist methods to achieve a scientific or objective description of the object of study. Beginning with Vladimir Propp's study of the Russian folktale, and including studies by Todorov, Greimas, Prince, Scholes, Barthes, and others, this attempt at scientific rigor has often
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consisted of applying to narrative the rules and structures of another science, such as linguistics, grammar, or semiotics. With the possible exception of Propp’s *Morphologie du conte*, all have done some violence to the narratives in question. My purpose in creating structural models of the sequence of events in Philippe de Vigneulles’s tales is primarily to define them structurally and hence thematically. Starting with the stated fundamental postulate that the sequence of events in the tales constitutes the heart of the narrative, I have let that sequence of events guide me in establishing a structural method of analysis. The models that are derived from the narratives are directly drawn from the reading of all the tales; they are developed through a process of trial and error, consisting of making a test model on the basis of a small number of tales, which is then tested for all the tales and adjusted as necessary.

Because the specific object of study is the sequence of events, it is necessary in effect to rewrite the stories according to that level of analysis. Such rewriting must, of course, remain faithful to the text in its original form while temporarily setting aside other aspects of the narratives not being studied, such as character elaboration, descriptions of settings, dialogue, and so forth. Where necessary, normal chronology is reestablished, although this is rarely the case. Such a process of elimination and extraction does not violate the integrity of the authorial creation. Indeed, any critical reader selects factors which are in agreement with the expectations he brings to the text. Although analysis of the sequence of events necessarily excludes other factors, such as style or discourse elaboration, defining and delineating a specific aspect of the text as the object of analysis is a necessary methodological procedure which provides an ultimately more accurate reading than would otherwise be possible. A study of the motifs in Philippe de Vigneulles’s stories, for instance, following the motif-indexes such as Thompson’s of the folktale or Rotunda’s of the Italian novella, would inevitably dissect his stories into short narrative units such as the author never envisioned, but would demonstrate the relative importance of traditional motifs in his work. In my study, the rewriting of events takes the form of a simple restating, in as short a phrase as will conveniently suffice, of each item in the sequence of events present in each of the tales. Thus the models described below are both an abstraction and the result of a process of abstraction.
The following is an example of a rewritten text, as an illustration of the foolishness model:

28: "Le marchand de tripes." A prologue informs the reader that the story is about the "simplesse" of a young man from Metz who became a merchant by his father’s request, and what happened as a result. [This is a typical form of preparation in this group of tales: the reader is told to expect something foolish.]

The father is a rich man of common origins, who, finding he is getting old, regrets that he never gave his son a proper education. He wants to teach the son a job, so he gives him a sum of money and tells him how to become a merchant. He warns his son to be wise and prudent and to buy only that merchandise which is very desirable. He is to go to the fair (in Paris) and look around until he sees a large crowd gathered around some merchandise; that will be a sign that it is good and salable. He is to buy the entire supply of those goods, if possible. The son promises to follow the father’s advice and leaves with some others for the Paris market. [The father’s desire to repair his mistake in not educating his son provides the situation which is the point of departure for the foolish action by the son.]

As a dutiful son the young man will be expected to follow the father’s instructions to the letter. This is indeed what we see happening in the next part of the story. So dutiful is he that he does not pay attention to the experienced merchants he is traveling with, preferring to go on his own and trusting only his father’s instructions. [This careful and absolute application of the paternal doctrine is the immediate cause of what happens.]

The first day at the market he looks all over for a large crowd but doesn’t find any, so he returns to his hotel without buying anything. The next day at dinner time he sees a large crowd attracted by a merchant—a tripe merchant—so, faithful to his father’s doctrine, he bargains, sets a price, makes a deposit, then proceeds to do the same with all the other tripe merchants in the market. Then he has the merchandise guarded while he buys several barrels into which he loads the tripe. Lastly, he hires some cart drivers to take the barrels to his father in Metz. [The reader follows the foolish action of the son, fully aware, because he has common sense, of the stupidity of it, but never so warned by the author.]

The trip to Metz takes several days and the merchandise is rotten and stinking upon arrival, turning the father’s satisfaction to shame and anger. The son’s ignorance and stupidity are revealed to the neighbors,
and when the father tries to scold him, he replies he only did what he had been told. [The last step is thus the reaction to the foolish action which reveals for the first time to the son that he was stupid, and it is followed here by a moral: teach your children some useful knowledge while they are young.]

This example is typical of a type of narration in which a character does something foolish or stupid, usually thinking it is smart, clever, proper, or good, and typically unaware of its foolish nature until it is revealed to him by others. In this example, more so than in others, the author’s scorn bears down on the young man and his father: no doubt a case of professional pride. The preparation—that is, the statement that the character is foolish—is enhanced by other indications of the son’s ignorance, such as his sore buttocks after the ride to Paris and his wonderment at all he sees once he has left Metz. These are embellishments that one can expect in view of the length of the story (161 lines). It is the function of the situation to supply a need or make a demand on the character which he is unable to meet. The cause of the action is the character’s belief that he can satisfy that demand or fulfill that need, and do it well. The character’s lack of insight into his own incapacity is an essential element of these stories. It is the author’s style to recount the actions that follow with no commentary as to their foolish nature. Only when other characters react to his foolishness does he—and the reader, if he is as foolish as the character—see his foolishness, although in some cases this insight is not described. The revelation is thus the point, the amusing moment, the unveiling of an uncontrolled or unexpected fact, the moment when the foolishness hits the character and does him in. This example illustrates a structure in five parts which is common to all foolishness stories: part 1, preparation; part 2, situation; part 3, cause; part 4, action; part 5, reaction.

A second example will illustrate the cleverness model:

27: “Le chapeau plein d’œufs.” The character Thieri, apparently a trompeur by nature, is the victim of a joke. Thieri is seen at market buying eggs; he places them in his hat and replaces the hat on his head. One of the observers is Growes, a “fine mouche,” who decides to play a trick on Thieri. Growes settles himself in a public place with some other men, calls to Thieri, and pretends he has something important to tell him. Then he tells him he likes everything about him, that he likes his clothes,
except for the hat which he wears so high on his head—and so saying he
strikes a blow on the crown so that the eggs break and run down around
Thieri's shoulders. Thieri is furious, throws his hat at Growes, and es-
capes, but not before all present have burst into laughter.

The events of this tale could be summarized thus:

Step 1  Thieri puts eggs under his hat
Step 2  Growes observes him
Step 3  Thieri does not know Growes has seen him
Step 4  Growes pretends to have something important to say to him
Step 5  Growes claims to like everything about Thieri, his clothes,
        but not his hat
Step 6  Growes strikes the hat
Step 7  Thieri is covered with broken eggs
Step 8  Thieri runs away

This example is typical of a group of tales in which a character does
something clever, usually intentionally, which deceives another charac-
ter. It is apparent that the victim is vulnerable (step 1) because the per-
petrator of the trick is in a position of power over the victim. He acquires
that power in step 2 and maintains it because the victim is unaware of
his own vulnerability (step 3), because the perpetrator uses a ruse to
approach his victim (step 4), and because the perpetrator disguises
his position of power and his desire or intent to use that power (step
5). The model can be stated more abstractly as follows:

Step 1  victim is vulnerable
Step 2  perpetrator has desire to use vulnerability
Step 3  victim cannot stop perpetrator
Step 4  perpetrator approaches victim through a ruse
Step 5  perpetrator disguises his role
Step 6  perpetrator attacks victim
Step 7  victim is deceived
Step 8  victim runs

This model can be generalized to all tales of cleverness. In some
cases step 8 occurs in a variant form: the victim submits, or the victim
swears revenge; a more general form of step 8 would thus be: victim
runs and/or swears revenge or submits. A desire for revenge naturally
leads to an additional part of the story. In step 3 the reasons for the
victim's inability to help himself can be either of two types: lack of power to act or lack of knowledge of vulnerability; either the power is on the side of the perpetrator or the victim does not recognize his attacker. In some cases, steps 3, 4, and 5 occur so rapidly as to blend together. (An earlier version of the cleverness model had fewer steps, until it was discovered, by applying the model to all the texts of the cleverness type, that all three steps are present in the story, even when they appear blended together.) The ruse may consist solely of disguising the role as perpetrator, for instance, which might be called cumulation of steps 4 and 5.

The designation "victim" does not necessarily mean a character suffers harm; any clever action, or any ruse, however lacking in malicious intent, has as its object a person who is fooled, misled, or deceived; he is, in other words, a victim, whether or not he is present as a character in the story and whether or not he knows of the clever action. The boozing couple in 91A fool a city administration: the city is the victim. By his cleverness a young man in 92 pulls his old mother's painful tooth, saving her from her misery. But she is the "victim" of a deception, however beneficent the intent and the result. Number 3 has two "victims" played off against each other by the perpetrator of the deception in such a way that each thinks the other is doing something to him.

It is immediately apparent that the two models, although direct opposites, are not isomorphic—they are not alike in form. In fact, the difference in form reveals a difference in the nature of the two types of narration, a difference which complements their relation of opposition: foolishness sequences do not have the systematic character of cleverness sequences. Although the exact nature of the five parts of the foolishness sequence may vary, the eight steps which constitute the cleverness sequence are always identical. Thus, different forms of preparation are possible in the foolishness stories, whereas cleverness sequences always begin with a vulnerable victim. The main causative factor in foolishness sequences can be of different types, but in cleverness sequences it is always the desire to deceive a vulnerable victim. Just as the foolish action is an unwitting event, so the clever "attack" is prepared and planned with the utmost consciousness and intent. What is more logical for the cleverness sequences than a step-by-step narration, given that its function is to describe an event which must proceed by incremental degrees? In point of fact, it is not possible to devise a model which gives
a step-by-step reduction of the events in the foolishness sequences. The model for the foolishness type of narration thus presents a higher degree of abstraction than the cleverness model, and there is a greater variety of events in the foolishness sequences than in the cleverness sequences.

The two models also reveal a difference in the number of major roles. While the cleverness sequence always has two, victim and perpetrator, the foolishness sequence has only one, the foolish character. More precisely, the foolishness sequence describes the effect of an event perpetrated by one character on himself, whereas the cleverness sequence narrates the effect of an event perpetrated by one character on another. Thus foolishness sequences have a more descriptive quality, and cleverness sequences are more analytical.

VARIATIONS IN THE MODELS

Since models are operative units, it is necessary to derive a set of rules of transformation governing their operation. When these rules are applied to the models, it is possible to retrieve all the texts from the models; in other words, variations in the sequences of events follow certain patterns which are described by certain variations in the models. These rules of transformation are of two types: repetition of models, in part or in entirety, and accentuation of any part or step. It is also possible to combine the two models in one story.

In foolishness stories repetition of cause, action, and reaction (parts 3, 4, and 5) reiterates the foolishness of the characters. (Preparation and situation, parts 1 and 2, are usually not repeated.) Number 97, Philippe de Vigneulles’s version of a story later made famous by La Fontaine’s fable, “Le meunier, son fils, et l’âne,” demonstrates one variation. The preparation implies that no matter what you do, you cannot please everyone. The situation is the need to take the ass to market. The cause, the action, and the reaction are then repeated five times, as follows:

| Part 3          | the son is tired               |
| Part 4          | the son rides on the donkey, the old man walks |
| Parts 5 and 3   | people say it is shameful to let the son ride while the father walks |
| Part 4          | the son walks, the father rides |
Parts 5 and 3 people say it is shameful
Part 4 both walk
Parts 5 and 3 people say they are foolish and ignorant
Part 4 both get on the donkey
Parts 5 and 3 people accuse them of hurting the animal
Part 4 father and son decide to carry the donkey
Part 5 people say they are foolish; the father understands that he is foolish to try to please anyone

[Moral: "c'est chose impossible de soy bien gouverner en ce monde icy et estre en la grace de chascun, car le peuple d'aujourd'hui est plus enclin à mal parler que à bien dire."]

Each time the characters think they do well, their action is met with criticism and the revelation that it was not the right thing to do. Only after all the possibilities are exhausted—son rides, father rides, neither rides, both ride, they carry the animal—can the revelation of the real nature of the characters take place: their foolishness in listening to the "murmures" of others.

An analogous structure occurs in 78B, in which a couple is granted three wishes. The wife thinks she can make a better wish than her husband because she is more familiar with the needs of the household. This is the cause for the first foolish action, her wish for a new leg on her pot. The husband minces no words in telling her how stupid that wish was and his reaction—incensed rage—is the immediate cause of the second wish: he wishes the leg were in her abdomen. At this point the reaction is by neighbors who, attracted by the woman's screams, force the husband to wish the leg out of her stomach. Their moral indignation brings the man to an understanding of his action, as he fears the accusations of the neighbors. Here two characters behave foolishly, and the two series of cause-action-reaction sequences show this doubling.

It is possible to distinguish three separate types of foolishness stories, three thematic categories, based on differences in the accentuation of different parts of the model. When the accent is on the reaction, the tale can be called a Misadventure: the foolishness of the outcome is not always apparent to the reader until the last step. For example, the monk in tale 16 who decides to urinate into his *houseaux* (boots) to alleviate his extreme discomfort during a lavish dinner party might succeed were it not for the intervention of the hostess who mistakes the priest’s actions for a prelude to departure and reaches for his hand to stop him.
reader is certainly alerted to the fact that the monk’s plan will not succeed, but cannot predict the exact nature of the outcome until the woman actually grasps his hand and lifts it, causing the monk to urinate on her hand and her dinner table. The reaction is thus virtually cumulated with the action, the moment of revelation is almost part of the action; indeed, the event is not revealed in all its foolishness, whether to other characters or to the reader, until the characters react to it. Accentuation of the reaction is also evident in 76A, another Misadventure story which has a very long reaction: twenty-two lines out of forty-nine, in several distinct parts. The nature of the revelation—the return of a man from the grave—is such that its development is not surprising.³

In general, something happens to a main character in Misadventure stories that provides the primary point of the tale, whether it be amusing or instructive. The fact that in Misadventure stories the foolish character is sometimes a passive victim of events places the reader on his side as a sympathetic participant and not as an outsider judging the character. The basic sequence of events is nevertheless identical.

A second difference of accentuation distinguishes two further thematic categories, which I call Simplicity and Stupidity. The essential difference between these two thematic categories is in the nature of the preparation: if the character whose actions constitute the story is described with sympathy by the author, the tale is considered a story of Simplicity. Thus in number 4, in which an ignorant priest mistakes his superior’s request to serve “modicum et bonum” at a dinner for a request to serve only his ass, named Modicum, the sympathy for the “povre” priest and the mockery of the antipathetic dinner guests who must eat the meat of the ass classifies the story as Simplicity rather than Stupidity. On the other hand, the narrator pitilessly mocks the young man in 89 who after six months of marriage was still unable to make love to his wife, to the extent that he gives him a pejorative nickname. This tale is thus classified as a Stupidity tale.⁴

As a rule, when there is repetition in the cleverness sequence, it takes the form of repetition of the sequential structure from the start, sometimes following a negative step. That is, any step in the model can fail or occur in a negative form, thereby eliminating all remaining steps, and the story continues by repeating the model from the beginning. For example, a nonvulnerable victim can be found in 35: a questain who lies
and cheats (as questains do) is refused the right to preach in Metz by some clerics and priests, so the city is not vulnerable. However, the questain finds some villages where the residents will listen (where they are thus vulnerable) and so the story continues according to the model, with a new victim. In 37A a good priest succeeds in unmasking the evil of questains to his congregations, so step 3 is negated: the victim has the power to stop the perpetrator. Again the questains approach other victims and succeed, but step 7 is negated: although the “attack” occurs in step 6 (a questain lies to justify his activities), the trick fails to deceive the victims, who only laugh at the lies.

When the model is followed without a negative statement at any point, as in number 27, the outcome is entirely predictable; the only surprise is for the victim. If, on the other hand, there is negation (or failure) of any step, the tale takes an unexpected turn. In 21 some women intent on punishing a man who has defamed them fail in their attack (step 6): the man is able to make them vulnerable in turn and through his cleverness escapes a beating. Many tales are complex in this manner in that two or more cleverness sequences follow each other. A repetition of the sequence without a change in the roles of victim and perpetrator occurs in tale 35, in which a questain twice fools a woman. In the first trick, the questain deceitfully acquires two new, good sheets from the poor woman. The last step is the husband’s decision to retrieve the sheets, a revenge of sorts, planned by the victim. But this revenge, step 8, is negated by a second trick: instead of victim and perpetrator changing roles, the perpetrator is given another chance, and the victim again makes herself vulnerable.

A special case of repetition is the well-known type of the “trompeur-trompé” story, illustrated by the following tale:

31: “Mon loup.” A malicious rich man hates his poor neighbor. When his cow is killed by a wolf, he reports this event in a tavern where the poor neighbor and other men are present. Only a week before, the poor man’s only goat had been killed by a wolf, and the poor man makes the logical, human assumption that it was the same wolf. Half speaking to himself, he says, “c’est mon loup.” The rich man sees an opportunity to profit from the comment and calls the others present to witness the poor man’s statement that he owned the wolf. Based on this false pretense, the rich man brings suit against the poor man for the value of his cow. Since
he is able to prove that the poor man said the wolf was his, the judges must listen to his cause, although they recognize its foundation in falsehood. The poor man seeks counsel with one Jehan Gerard, mayor of Vigneulles, who asks the rich man to tell him what happened to the wolf. The rich man says that he and his men and dogs chased it away into the woods. Much to the rich man’s surprise, Jehan Gerard asks all present to remember this statement as witnesses. Appearing again before the court, the rich man reiterates his demand for the cow or its value, and Jehan Gerard counters with a demand for the wolf or its value (four times that of the cow), because after all it was the poor man’s possession and the rich man had stated in the presence of others that he had chased it away. [Unfortunately the end of the tale is missing, but it probably consisted of a judgment rendered by the court, either explicitly scolding the rich man for his attempted deceit or ordering a sentence so prejudicial to the rich man that he would prefer to drop his claim.]

Reflecting the alternating roles of victim and perpetrator, there is a dual structure throughout: two tricks are played, there are two tavern scenes and two court scenes, two statements are made which are turned to profit by the opposing party, and the same *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) is applied twice, once by each party. Here is a schematic summary of the events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>poor man thinks wolf is his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>rich man wishes to profit from this statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>rich man calls others to witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>rich man demands value of cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>rich man cites law in court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>witnesses are called forth [failure]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point of attack in the first deceit there is an interruption, a sort of legal recess, which negates the attack and during which the defendant seeks help. He finds it in the person of Jehan Gerard (Philippe de Vigneulles’s father), who then replaces the poor man as the perpetrator of the next trick. No real reason for the interruption is given; it appears as an arbitrary act of the judges or indeed of a kind of righteousness symbolic of God’s (for the judges recognize the dishonesty of the first trick). The interruption permits the transfer of power to the first victim and the transfer of vulnerability to the original perpetrator.
II

Step 1 rich man says he chased the wolf away
Step 2 poor man's lawyer wishes to profit from this statement
Step 3 he calls others as witnesses
Step 4 [he demands value of wolf]
Step 5 he cites law in court
Step 6 witnesses are called to prove poor man is right
[Step 7 judgment hurts rich man]
[Step 8 rich man pays up or relinquishes suit]

(The last two steps of the second trick are suggested by Livingston in his notice.)

The rigorous comparability of the two tricks is visible in the step-by-step reproduction of the first trick. The vulnerability of the poor man depends on his statement that the wolf was his, just as the rich man's vulnerability depends on his statement that he chased the wolf into the forest; thus in both cases an unthinking statement made aloud is at the origin of the trick. While the rich man seeks a monetary profit in step 2, the "profit" sought by the poor man and his lawyer is the administration of justice. In asking those present to witness the statement made, the poor man's lawyer is copying the rich man's power play (step 3). Steps 4 and 5, the disguise and the ruse, consist of pretending to be a righteous person demanding no more than what is due, so that the deceitful intent is hidden behind a facade of lawfulness; hence the court appearances and the citing of the law (step 5), with the production of witnesses (step 6). In sum, the rich man's false pretense that the poor man is responsible for letting the wolf eat his cow has its reflection in the poor man's knowledge that the rich man is responsible for chasing away the wolf, a fact that is true. Because the rich man could not be found guilty of malicious intent toward the poor man, in trying to force him to pay for his cow, the second trick was a necessary expedient to bring him to justice. The lawsuit demanding payment for the wolf is, of course, unrelated to the real guilt of the rich man; a devious means is used to arrive at the truth. In fact, the first trick, the rich man's deceptiveness, functions as a model for his own punishment. Thus what the rigidly comparable structures demonstrate is the pointe: the first trick is copied in every detail; the first deceiver's own system of values, a system of deception, is adopted by the victim, who is able to turn them to his own advantage, although he does not share those values. The irony of the situation is at
its fullest: the rich man loses because his lie is used to obtain the truth, and out of dishonesty and evil come justice and retribution.

If the poor man’s cleverness succeeds, it is in part due to the fact that his lawyer plays his cards close to the chest: Jehan Gerard does not reveal he is acting on behalf of the poor man (as a good lawyer, he has taken complete responsibility and has expressly asked his client not to mention his involvement). This is why step 4 (the ruse) is in square brackets. Although he will demand the price of the wolf, he does not say so to the rich man or the witnesses, nor does the author reveal this fact to the reader; it becomes apparent only after the next step, the citing of the law of an eye for an eye. This difference, apparently minor, is essential: whereas the victim in trick I, the poor man, cannot stop his deceitful neighbor (step 3) because power is on his side, the victim in trick II cannot stop the trick because he does not recognize the perpetrator. In trick II the doubling of the defendant by his lawyer and the silence of both lawyer and defendant (step 4) assure the victim’s ignorance of his attacker until the moment of attack (the case presented in court, step 6) and result in the presumed success of the second trick.

Another case of “trompeur-trompé” occurs in tale 30, where again the victim of the first trick uses the methods of the first perpetrator to turn him into the victim of the second trick. In this case victim and perpetrator change roles twice, and there are three attempted tricks. According to the model:

I

Step 1 priest will hear confession of malicious sergeant, known for his evil ways
Step 2 sergeant plans to take advantage of the fact that the priest doesn’t know him
Step 3 priest can’t make him confess his real sins
Step 4 sergeant pretends innocence or only minor sins
Step 5 sergeant claims to state all sins
Step 6 sergeant finally names “worst” sin: smelling a roast and desiring it [failure]

Here the deceptive “attack”—the sergeant’s claim that his worst sin was his gluttonous desire for a roast—fails to deceive the priest, because the priest uses this “confession” to make the sergeant vulnerable in turn and to perpetrate the following deception on the sergeant:
II
Step 1 sergeant confesses a “sin”
Step 2 priest intends to punish sergeant for his real sins
Step 3 sergeant doesn’t know priest is aware of his real sins
Step 4 priestpretends sergeant’s worst sin was a grievous one
Step 5 priest pretends necessity of difficult penance to absolve that sin
Step 6 priest gives sergeant difficult penance
Step 7 sergeant suffers from that penance
Step 8 sergeant swears revenge

III
Step 1 priest’s horse, tied up near a wheat field, smells wheat and desires it
Step 2 sergeant sees the horse
Step 3 sergeant has power because he is the village lord’s friend
Step 4 sergeant pretends the horse is doing harm
Step 5 sergeant pretends the horse’s master must pay for “damage”
Step 6 sergeant levies heavy fine
Step 7 priest pays excessively
Step 8 priest flees before more harm comes to him

[Moral: “il n’y ait que ung bon marchiez à aucune gens, c’est que on n’y ait rien affaire.”]

In the third trick, the sergeant turns the priest’s methods against him: he makes him pay for the horse’s “crime” of smelling the wheat and wanting to eat it, just as he had to do penance for desiring the roast. In all three tricks, the disguise, step 5, is accomplished by citing a “law” which must be obeyed (just as in tale 31 a law was cited in court). While the story might have ended with the priest’s successful deception as comic outcome, since the plot was complete at that point, the addition of the sequence relating the sergeant’s revenge enriches the point which is also stressed in the moral: the only way to avoid being fooled by tricky people is to stay away from them. One could, however, imagine yet another sequence for the priest’s revenge, adding on another surprise reversal and increasing the comic value of the tale.

As with foolishness stories differences of accentuation make it possible to distinguish four additional thematic categories. Two variables are involved: 1) the clever attack is either malicious or not malicious; 2) the victim is either really hurt or merely the victim of a deception. That is, the nature of step 6, the attack, can be either malicious or not, and the
victim in step 7 is either truly harmed or not. A nonmalicious act which stresses the cleverness of the action by the attacker minimizes the vulnerability of the victim. The clever "fool" Symonnat in the second nouvelle deceives a priest three times by interpreting his penance in a way not intended by the priest. In one case the priest does not even know about it, but one can still say he is the victim of a deception. Tale 37A shows a pardonneur trying to explain away the accusations of a preacher by cleverly changing the context of the words menteur and lairron. No one is really fooled, however, and his attempted cleverness is only laughed at. Both are examples of a thematic category one might call Cleverness. A Ruse, though malicious, stresses the cleverness of the attacker and the victim does not suffer any real harm. The questain in 37B uses a ruse to keep his congregation at his sermon; he asks any excommunicated persons to leave immediately, and no one dares to leave. The clever attack can be considered malicious because of the disapproving treatment of the questain by the narrator. Two other questsains in 36, on the other hand, are treated with approval by the narrator so their "attack" is not considered malicious and is good cause for laughter; yet they truly victimize their host. To avoid paying up a debt, they pretend to engage their relics toward payment, but manage to substitute their host's own bellows instead. This thematic category is called Joke. The last category, Trickery, is malicious and stresses the harm suffered by the victim. The trick played by a questain in 33 is truly nasty and is not attenuated by laughter in the text: he disguises himself as a universally admired monk, then exposes himself, defecates, and generally carries on in front of some village women. The unfortunate monk never learns why the town turns against him.5

Thus by several forms of accentuation of different parts or steps of the two sequential models, seven thematic categories can be delineated (Misadventure, Simplicity, Stupidity, Cleverness, Ruse, Joke, and Trickery), to which a total of sixty-six tales can be assigned.

With the exception of four tales which are difficult to classify, the remaining fifty fall into four further thematic categories which can be explained by the sequential models. Among these, the most important (in number) is a type of tale in which the comic point consists of the speaking of some words (always given in direct discourse) which are either clever or foolish. This thematic category, which we might call
Verbal Humor, is defined by the nature of the action in the foolishness sequence (part 4) or by the type of disguise or attack (steps 5 or 6) in the cleverness sequence. In the foolishness sequence a character who is initially described as a fool, a simple-minded person, ignorant, dying, German, or drunk (these are the forms of preparation) says something which is always thought to be appropriate but which is revealed to be foolish, stupid, inappropriate, or just plain silly.

Only four tales of Verbal Humor are cleverness sequences. One example is 56B:

56B. "Je sais bien ce que je ferai." A young valet who works for a shoemaker constantly disagrees with the shoemaker’s wife, a woman of bad temperament. One day the master returns home, not in the best of spirits, and asks his wife to do something for him. As usual she refuses to do it right away, resulting in an outburst of anger against her by her husband. At this point the valet intervenes between master and mistress and pretends to protect the mistress. Actually he is secretly pleased to see his master intends to beat his mistress and cleverly spurs him on by telling him rudely not to beat her. He then says "se vous la bastez, je sçay bien que je ferez," which the shoemaker interprets as a threat, and he beats the woman all the harder, out of spite and jealousy for his servant. The valet then jumps on a bench, plays a flute and dances, then explains to his astonished master that this was what he intended to do if his mistress were beaten. The words "je sais bien ce que je ferai" had two different meanings for speaker and hearer. The master ceases to feel jealous and the servant and mistress continue to hate each other as much as before.

The “victim” here is the master: he is the victim of a deception perpetrated by the valet which consists of making the master angry by pretending to take the side of the mistress, thus manipulating him so that he produces the valet’s wish, the chastisement of the mistress’s bad humor. According to the model:

Step 1 master is in a bad mood
Step 2 valet wants to exploit the bad mood to make him beat his wife
Step 3 master doesn’t know valet intends this
Step 4 valet pretends to protect mistress
Step 5 valet disguises his intention as a threat to master
Step 6 valet rejoices while master beats mistress
Step 7 master is fooled and astounded
Step 8 master accepts the situation
The double entendre of the verbal threat constitutes an eminently appropriate disguise of the perpetrator’s role (step 5). In step 6, the shoemaker is acting on behalf of his valet, as an agent of his desire to punish the shrewish woman. The neutral ending (step 8) might have been a reaction swearing revenge except that the master was acting in his own interest or was fooled into doing something he wanted to do anyway. One might add that the typical outcome of the cleverness sequence, the uncontrolled situation, is here especially obvious, for the master finds himself doing something he had not intended.

One of the most readily identifiable thematic components of Philippe’s collection is the Adultery story, a clever action or a series of clever actions in which the “attack” (step 6) often consists of the act of adultery.7 Just as with other cleverness sequences, any step can be negated. Where there is punishment or revenge, the trick has failed at some point. For example, in 39, the one case of failure by a husband, there is a negative in step 3: the wife knows about her husband’s attempt to seduce his servant girl and uses this vulnerability to play a different trick on him. In 69 and 70, the first trick, the adultery sequence, is successful and is followed by a revenge which is considered insignificant compared to the deed. The adultery story, then, is a cleverness sequence or sequences with or without failure of one or more steps, according to the possible variations of the cleverness sequence. The insignificant revenges found in 69 and 70 and the statements made by husbands in 41, 42, and 43 indicative of their weakness can all be considered foolishness sequences as well: the husband thinks he is doing well, or acting successfully, but his action is in fact stupid or silly, as the reader and the wife know. In no case, however, are a woman’s deeds assimilated into the foolishness sequence. Appendix B gives a classification of the types of adultery stories.

Another very coherent group of tales forms another thematic category, Scatology. Here the tales are foolishness sequences in which the action by the main character consists of the unfortunate replacement of something the character thought was “good” by fecal matter. In 20B a tanner’s artistry in dyeing leather is replaced by it; in 23 a soldier’s honor during a ceremonial parade; in 24 a grandmother’s righteous indignation at the misbehavior of some young men; in 48 a love gift to a mistress; in 80 the value of cleanliness; and in 81 a sexual encounter. Yet three of these six tales are also “dirty” tricks (20B, 23, and 81); the
others are like misadventures in which the accent is on the reaction, the revelation of the presence of an unexpected "bad" thing.

Taking into consideration the events in sequence instead of traditional thematic categories allows for a more accurate definition of the substance of the narratives. Using the two sequential models and their variations, we can "map out" all the tales (with few exceptions). While traditional thematic descriptions cannot adequately deal with the problem of overlapping themes, defining the tales structurally by sequential models circumvents this difficulty, because both models can be applied to a single tale to satisfactorily describe all events.

When both models can be applied to a single tale, they either function together serially or they describe the events from two different points of view—thus the mixture of foolishness and cleverness in some of the scatological and adultery stories. An adultery tale may also be a tale of Trickery (malicious perpetrator, harmed victim), or a Misadventure for the cheated spouse (accent on the reaction). The combination of two or more sequences of different types can be considered one last variation. For example, the repetitive cleverness sequences in the "trompeur-trompé" story 31 ("Mon loup") are preceded by a foolishness sequence (a misadventure) in which the preparation is the description of the poor man's misfortune; the situation, the rich neighbor's malicious hatred of the poor man; the cause, the killing of his goat and his neighbor’s cow by the wolf; and the action, the speaking of the words "c'est mon loup." The remainder of the tale, the two trick sequences, can thus be considered a lengthy elaboration of the reaction, conforming to the type of the Misadventure story. In number 7 the misadventure in the first section is intimately linked with the trick in the second, which is a direct result of the misadventure. The following schema summarizes 7:

### Foolishness Sequence

- Part 1 [beginning is missing] a priest is saying mass with his old and simple-minded deacon
- Part 2 the priest's underpants have fallen; he cannot pick them up
- Part 3 priest gestures to deacon to remove the pants; deacon thinks they are something precious
- Part 4 deacon takes a clean towel, picks the pants up with great reverence, and puts them on the altar in front of the priest
- Part 5 priest gestures again to have the pants removed
56 Sequential Models

Part 3 deacon thinks the priest wants them taken to the congregation to be kissed
Part 4 deacon carries pants to congregation to be kissed
Part 5 people laugh, mock the deacon and the priest; deacon decides to seek revenge on the priest, and the priest decides to preach without any underpants at all

Cleverness Sequence

Step 1 priest preaches without his pants
Step 2 deacon decides to take advantage of this fact for revenge
Step 3 priest doesn’t know deacon’s intent
Step 4 deacon attaches priest’s robe and shirt together at hem with a pin
Step 5 deacon helps during the service as if nothing were different
Step 6 priest removes the robe during the service
Step 7 priest’s backside is revealed naked to the congregation
Step 8 priest is obliged to submit to mockery

This is an additive tale: it has two points and relates two series of causally related events, each of which could exist independently. Combined as they are, the first part appears as an introductory plot or narrative elaboration of an opening situation (i.e., introduction of characters with their attributes, etc.), with an intensification of the point in the second part.

The last thematic category, consisting of stories of priests who are libidinous and whose attempted sexual relations with women always go awry, presents complexities of structure by combining several sequences. Four stories fit this category of Libidinous Priests, in which the desired or attempted sexual encounter is revealed to be foolish because of a trick played on the priest. The seduction of an innocent married woman constitutes a first cleverness sequence in number 15, in which the last step is the husband’s decision to take revenge. He then invites the priest to dinner and proceeds to punish him through a very clever trick—by having him drink from a glass purportedly full of white wine which is really the woman’s urine. The entire deception perpetrated by the priest on the conscientious woman can also be seen as the foolish action in the foolishness sequence (part 4), because it is revealed to be foolish in the reaction, which is constituted by the husband’s revenge. In this thematic category, the priest is always punished for his libido. These are, of course, not the only tales in which men of the cloth are portrayed with libidinous attributes.
In the course of describing the models with their variations, we have seen several types of combinations of sequences of events. The initial examples given, number 28 for the foolishness sequence and number 27 for the cleverness sequence, were simple narratives in that they recounted one sequence. Most stories, however, are complex, having more than one sequence. The complex sequential structures fall into four types: repetition, alternation, addition, and embedding. We saw repetition of foolish actions in 78B and in 97. Occasionally, as in 66, repetition includes the five parts of the foolishness sequence. Alternation is the case in the "trompeur-trompé" stories, as in 30 and 31, and in any sequences where the second sequence describes a situation which is the reverse of the first. Addition can be the combination of a foolishness sequence with a cleverness sequence, as in 7 and 31, or the repetition of a cleverness sequence without reversal of situation, as in 35 (the questain who twice fools a woman). In embedded tales, such as number 15, both models can be used almost simultaneously to describe the same events.

Thus eleven thematic categories have been described on the basis of sequential models and variations operated on them. There remain four tales which do not readily fit these categories. Number 110, about an obstinate woman, and number 91B, about a tightwad, can be described by the foolishness sequence, although in both cases the reaction is absent. Number 57, in which a poor man unwittingly succeeds as a seer, is a tale of cleverness, although unintentional. Steps 2 and 4 are lacking; other actions by the perpetrator, the seer, are done without clever intent (steps 5 and 6). This is, of course, uncharacteristic of this sequence. The problematic ninety-ninth nouvelle, actually a story of sentimental love and the only such tale in the work, could be considered a series of cleverness sequences, but by its exceptional thematic component it is refractory to the sequential models.

Based on the main event of each tale, all but the last four mentioned tales can be classified according to the eleven thematic categories discussed above. A list of these categories and the number of tales in each follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misadventure</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupidity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleverness</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruse</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It should be cautioned that this list is in no way intended to limit the tales to one category or another; rather it is a list of the thematic components in the collection. It might be well to ask whether the relative proportions of thematic materials are typical or unusual. Although I have not studied the various antecedents and followers of Philippe's collection using the same method to establish thematic categories, a few generalizations are possible. First is the relative moderation in obscene materials, compared especially to the fabliaux, the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, and the Grand Paragon des Nouvelles Nouvelles of Nicolas de Troyes. A second originality seems to be in the high proportion of tales about verbal jokes. This is one of the more coherent groups of tales and a significant, distinct type for the Cent Nouvelles. Many of the tales in this category lack analogues in popular or literary works; Livingston considers them either local Metz area stories or inventions of the author. Most typical of the thematic components for the genre are the four categories of Cleverness, Joke, Ruse, and Trickery and the three types of foolish stories, Misadventure, Simplicity, and Stupidity.

A more traditional thematic approach to these tales might have begun in this fashion with the naming of certain traditional themes and proceeded with their description, as has been frequently done for the fabliaux and for other nouvelles. By deriving the themes from the sequential structures, we have obtained two results. First, the themes have been described more rigorously than by ordinary definitions; by giving a structural criterion for determining the theme of a story, we can arrive at a better understanding of what theme is. Instead of vague and impressionistic criteria, the structural components of theme have been defined. Second, fundamental relations between the themes are revealed through an analysis of the sequence of events, such as the relation between tricks and misadventures.

In a larger sense, the subject matter of Philippe de Vigneulles's tales falls into the two broad categories of human activity described here. Although no claim is made that the tales were written according to the models presented here, their striking homogeneity seems to indicate the
presence of at least an unconscious mold. One might similarly define other subject matters structurally, such as the heroic or the romantic, both quite absent from this collection but present, for instance, in the *Heptaméron*. The sequential models given here are paradigms in that they represent the structure of all the tales in the collection. Each of the two models describes a different syntagm; there are thus two basic syntagms. The outcomes of both models, which we called revelation in the first instance and an uncontrollable or uncontrolled situation in the second, are in fact homologous: both are characterized by an inadvertency. It is the sequence of events which in each instance leads to that outcome and which constitutes the structure of all the tales. This extreme reduction can be considered a theoretical demonstration of the intuitive impression of sameness in the narration which one feels strongly on reading the *Cent Nouvelles*. It describes the unity of the work and at the same time demonstrates a certain dialectic of narration, positive and negative sides of the intellectual capacity of human beings.
Chapter Three

Comedy or Morality

The twofold nature of the narrative sequences has its reflection in what can be called the double intention of the work, reflected in the presence of morals and laughter: the didactic and amusing purposes or the intent to instruct and please. The interrelation between both aspects is the subject of this chapter.

THE COMIC FUNCTION

The premise of the preceding chapter was that the comic outcome depends on the sequence of events. Here I posit that the inadvertency which characterizes the outcome of every plot sequence is governed by certain constraints which determine, characterize, modify, or color that comic event. Related to the narrative roles, these constraints are the narrative equivalents of linguistic entities called modalities, or verbs of mode. Mounin describes them as "monèmes" or words which actualize, specify, or complete another monème (Clefs, p. 143), and Benveniste writes: "Nous entendons par modalité une assertion complémentaire portant sur l’énoncé d’une relation" (Problèmes, 2:187). We can easily extrapolate this unit of grammar to the grammar of the narrative by describing complementary units of narrative which actualize, specify, or complete another unit of narrative. They are determinants of events, and they function separately or in correlation with each other in certain characteristic ways which will be described here. Although modalities are verbal functions, I find it convenient to label them with the names of categories of verbal functioning. The operative modalities in the Cent Nouvelles are desire, knowledge, power, and pretense.

In the following discussion of modalities, reference is made to A. J. Greimas’s actantial model, a structure which identifies six narrative roles and the relations between them (Sémantique structurale, pp. 176–80). Because there are major differences between the type of
narrative Greimas was considering and the comic short tales of Philippe de Vigneulles, it is impossible to apply the actantial model rigorously. Essentially, there are two basic roles in the *nouvelles*: the subject and the object. The subject is the major role in the foolishness stories, and both subject and object are present in cleverness sequences. Whereas Greimas found that the Russian folktale usually cumulated the actants called *sujet* and *destinataire*, the tales of Philippe de Vigneulles often combine the three roles of *destinateur*, *destinataire*, and *sujet* in one actor or character. This syncretism virtually eliminates as a separate entity the roles of *destinateur* and *destinataire* and may well be typical of the comic tale. As for the two secondary actants of *adjuvant* and *opposant*, they are most frequently combined with the subject, as they are often a quality or attribute of the character who is the subject. Generally speaking, however, the actant *adjuvant* is rare, except as a quality of mind (such as the ability to fool people), while the *opposant* is an important role and can be either a quality of the subject (such as simple-mindedness) or another character. The importance of the *opposant*'s role is probably a defining characteristic of the comic, nonheroic tale.

*Desire.* Although modalities do not necessarily occur in a certain order, the optative modality characteristically appears at or near the beginning. By far the most common, desire has been shown to be the basic thematic component of the *fabliaux*, and more generally of all "récits." Greimas defined desire as the semantic investment of the relation between subject and object (p. 181). If in the mythic tale the hero always obtains his object, it is of the nature of a foolish character either to fail in communicating to himself the object of his desire or to seek a foolish or ridiculous object. Of prime importance in this blockage of desire is the *opposant*, who in this case is usually successful. The young would-be lovers in 47 who are interrupted by some pigs fail in their desire; the particular nature of the opposition contributes to the comedy, for the young man is dragged through the mud by one of the pigs. Should the *opposant* have been the girl’s father, for instance, the tale would have lost its comic flavor. An example of a foolish object is present in 26: two self-proclaimed noblemen, one a laborer and the other a cart driver, wish to acquire coats of arms; this leads to a comic scene where the *orfèvre* shows them his designs. For the laborer, who had asked for the
most savage beast, he plans a calf, and for the cart driver, who wanted a crucifix and something new, he designs a crucifix riding on a horse, both appropriate to the real status of the "noblemen," in the armstronger's opinion. His designs emphasize the foolishness of the men's requests.

Success of the opposant also takes the form of a quality or attribute of the subject, or lack thereof, which acts to hinder or prohibit the attainment of the object. In 26, the two noblemen's lack of insight contributes to the foolishness of their object. When the opposant is a quality of the subject, the action of the opposant functions as if it were an adverb of means; the simple-minded monk in 5A, Jehan Pare, attempts by a foolish means to escape his abbot's wrath: instead of denying he is in the prune tree stealing prunes, which is all too obvious, he denies he is Jehan Pare. A woman in 88A seeks riches; she is advised by some "bonnes galloises" to try an erotic manipulation on her husband which they call "nouer la queue." Her reiterated efforts to accomplish this impossible feat, accompanied by the obvious natural consequence, are comical, as is indeed her belief that it might be possible. In general the qualities which function as opposants are negative forms of the modalities of power and knowledge, weaknesses of the subject whose presence intimately links the modalities of power, knowledge, and desire.

A special case occurs with the six scatological tales. Here the subject fails to obtain his desire specifically because the sought-for object is replaced by an ignoble one. The reader's laughter is thus caused directly by the debasement of the subject or hero because of the debasement of his object. In these stories the opposant is either chance or misfortune (24, 48, 80) or a character intent upon playing a trick on the subject (20B, 23, 81).

Knowledge. One of the most important modalities in this collection is knowing or not knowing; that is, what or how much the subject knows, what he does not know, and what he thinks he knows determine or characterize the event according to certain typical patterns. The relative importance of these three factors structures and creates the end situation of each sequence in the most fundamental way. In general, knowing characterizes the actions of a clever person or a clever sequence and not knowing typifies the fool sequences; but both can be present in one narrative sequence and plots are more elaborate when a character's ac-
Comedy or Morality

In all the fool sequences, it is because the character does not know something that he gets into the difficulty which constitutes the point of each tale. This is true of the adultery tales in which the cuckolded spouse has no knowledge of his position. In cleverness sequences the contrast between the knowledge of the perpetrator and the usual lack of knowledge of the victim insures the success of the trick. Such is number 3: a servant tricks both his master and a priest by giving a different set of false information to each; he alone knows the real facts. Knowledge of the true facts by either master or priest would drastically alter the course of the tale.

Knowledge may also mean recognizing a role played by another character, or even an object or quality. In the "trompeur-trompé" story, number 30, the entire first part (tricks I and II) depends on the fact that the priest knows the sergeant by reputation, and the sergeant is not aware that the priest knows him. If the priest did not recognize the sergeant, he would not be able to see through his false confession. If the sergeant knew the priest recognized him, he would not choose that priest to confess to. The sergeant's undoing (that is, the severe penance) supplies the comic outcome of that sequence: the would-be deceiver is deceived in place of his planned victim. In this tale, of course, there is a second reversal when the sergeant gets his revenge, again based on the conflict of the lines of knowledge: the sergeant knows the horse he sees belongs to the priest, but the priest does not know either that the sergeant is present in the village or that he has the power to punish him. Knowledge and power structure the end situation in this example.

The dosage of knowledge between characters colors the comic outcome. In 57 a devin or seer is hired by a rich seigneur to find the thieves who stole his treasure. Here the narrator informs the reader that three of the nobleman's servants took the treasure and intend to take turns questioning the devin to see if he recognizes them as the robbers. The devin himself has no knowledge of this fact. The reader also knows that the man is actually a poor shoemaker whose only wish is to have three good days in his life; when the three servants bring him a lavish supper, one each day, he enumerates the days audibly: "ung de part Dieu." The servants do not know about the poor man's wish and are misled into thinking the shoemaker in fact is counting them as the three robbers. In
other words, the reader is apprised of all the facts; the devin knows one set of facts (his real identity, his desire for three days’ good life); and the servants know another set of facts (they took the treasure and are sound-ing out the devin to see if he recognizes them). If the tale were told subjectively from the shoemaker’s point of view, the reader would be as surprised as he is at the outcome, when the three servants come to him, confess their crime, and ask him not to accuse them in exchange for returning the treasure. In sum, the three robbers’ presumed knowledge of the devin’s powers influences or motivates their decision to confess, which provides the comic outcome.

As Beyer has pointed out with regard to the comedy of the fabliaux, the reader is usually alerted that something is going to happen—but he does not always know what. He is prepared for an amusing outcome but cannot always predict the exact form of that pleasure. By withholding some of the information necessary for the outcome, the narrator leads the reader on and holds his attention and interest. In the long ninety-ninth nouvelle the chevalier Louis is asked to spend the night in bed with the husband of his friend Charles’s mistress, so she can spend it with Charles. Since the husband has a suspicious mind, Louis is to pretend that he is the wife. The reader has been informed that the husband is actually away from home, but does not have a clue to the real identity of the person in the bed with Louis. Louis trembles and fears for his life while the other occupant of the bed kicks him from time to time like a jealous husband making certain of his wife’s presence, and only after a lengthy description of Louis’s fears, which keeps the reader in suspense, do we learn, at the moment Louis does, that the other person is a beautiful naked girl! The reader’s shock of happy surprise accompanies Louis’s relief as the accumulated suspense and anxiety of the scene are resolved into a burlesque of courtly behavior. In this case the presumed knowledge—the belief that the husband was jealously checking up on the wife—is revealed to be false, and this revelation is the comic outcome. It is made all the more piquant by the supplying of partial information to the reader.

Power. Power or lack of power to do something can be the dominant modality causative of a comic situation, although more often it is combined with other factors in determining the conduct of events. For example, in number 32 a priest pits his sacred authority against the all-too-
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secular power of a man who has just robbed him of one of two bolts of cloth. He threatens the man with eternal damnation on the day of judgment, but the robber’s power, based on a more realistic authority (might is right), determines the next event: he takes the priest’s other bolt of cloth, saying the price is worth the merchandise. We can only laugh at the relative impotence of the priest in his ridiculous attempt to regain his first piece of cloth and feel he deserves to lose the second as well. As in this case, power is also linked to the subject.

Pretense. Knowledge and power are often combined with the last modality, pretense. A character pretends in order to disguise the real object of his desire; he proposes instead another object, a pretended object. Naturally all physical disguises are pretenses, as are all attempts to hide or decoy. Pretense is usually a function of the subject, but may also characterize the adjuvant’s actions, where that actant is present. There may be several pretenses in one tale, often in opposition with each other, but sometimes cumulating their effect on the event or situation at the outcome of the sequence.

In combination with knowledge or power a pretense either succeeds or fails to modify the course of events and the outcome according to the desire of the character. It is far more common for a pretense to be based on or combined with the lack of knowledge of other characters involved, thus insuring its success, than for it to fail due to the knowledge of the character to whom the pretense is made. In number 17, for instance, a bourgeois has overheard his wife plan a rendezvous with a priest; he goes to the meeting in her place, dressed in clothes similar to hers. The priest is not aware that the husband knows of the rendezvous and the disguise is therefore successful, ending in a sound beating of the priest and his clerk by the husband. On the other hand, the wife in 40 who pretends she wants to wear a disguise during carnival so she can frolic with her female friends is trying to deceive her husband and spend time with her lover; the pretense fails because the husband is “cler voyant” and knows of her real object. This tale is not in fact very comical.

In number 39 there is a particularly comic variation of this relation between pretense and knowledge. A wife whose old, impotent husband wants to sleep with their servant girl substitutes herself for the girl in her bed; the old husband is unaware of the exchange and believes the
woman in the bed is the servant. The wife’s pretense is on the verge of success: she is about to obtain the real object of her desire—“ung picottin”—but even in his attempted adultery the man remains impotent. The husband can only placate his angry wife by saying “mon mambre viril . . . t’ait bien congneu du premier cop, et pour ce, ne volt huy dresser, mais je ne te congoissoie point.” Thus ultimately the pretense fails because an erotic, nonrational part of the man had “knowledge” bearing on the same event as the pretense. Obviously the modality of power plays an important role here, in an ironic way.

Although it is possible to state as a rule that a pretense combined with knowledge fails and a pretense combined with lack of knowledge succeeds, there are exceptions to this rule, usually because of the presence of power or lack of it. If the adulterous wife in 42 who pretends to be on a pilgrimage twice gets away with the subterfuge, it is entirely because the husband is too feeble to protest—he lacks the power over his wife. The fact that he observes the “pilgrimage” makes it very clear that he knows what his wife’s real object is. In other words, the pretense succeeds because the other character involved lacks the power to hinder its functioning. Success is also guaranteed by the subject’s power: the questain in 37D who succeeds in making a woman come to the offering by telling various lies, a particular form of pretense, does so in spite of the woman’s clear knowledge of his intent. He uses psychology to force her to come to the altar against her will.

Similarly, lack of power can alter the effectiveness of the pretense. The avaricious and lubricious priest in number 8 fails in his first pretense—his attempt to win for his own use valuable objects given by his congregation to God—not because the poor man knows better, but because the priest simply has no control over the cow; he lacks the power, and the fact that the cow has more “power” than he does smothers the priest and his greed with ridicule. Finally, when another character is in a position of power, a character’s pretense can fail: a wife in 73 pretends to be dead as a result of a beating given by her husband; the husband is too clever for her and succeeds in unmasking her by putting a handful of burning straw between her legs. We laugh at her failure just as we laughed at the woman’s successful “pilgrimage” in 42.

The relation of power or lack of it to pretense thus determines the outcome of a tale. In number 70, for instance, an adultery story, a wife
disguises a newfound lover as her relative. Although this pretense at first succeeds, the disguise is lifted when the "relative" makes love to the woman at night in the same bed with the husband. Thus clearly the husband knows what the lover's real object is; yet he lacks the power to avenge himself or to punish either party. The presence of a powerful husband—a husband whose next action would be characterized by the modality "to be able to"—would have altered the import of the tale, removed its comic intent (ridicule of the incapable husband), possibly occasioned a tragic ending, and eliminated the hearty laughter of the "relative" and the hearers of the tale when he later recounts it in company.

Thus the presence and sequence of these several modalities can determine the comic function of the tale. The four modalities discussed here should be analyzed in all forms of short comic narrative, for their function supplies a most fundamental formal component of the comic ethos. Of course, the study of comedy is not exhausted with these remarks; notably, linguistic comedy has been neglected. The types of comedy described above are the result of narrative functioning because of the knowledge or lack of knowledge a foolish or clever character has or acquires, or his power or inability to act, or because of the success or failure of his pretense or his desire.

As if to supply a model or incentive for the reader, characters laugh in about two-thirds of the tales, either as a group or as individuals, or both. The audience is sometimes portrayed directly, laughing to the last man: "tous les auditeurs se prindrent si fort au rire . . . que on leurs eust bien tirez les dentz de la bouche de fine force de rire" (58); it is often exaggerated: "Jaiquemin riolet si tres fort qu'il pissoit en ses brayes" (81). Whether laughter at the outcome is an expression of the "triomphe . . . du plaisir sur la réalité" (Mauron, *Psychocritique*, p. 93) or the "sudden uncoverings of a simple, original . . . element of reality" (Eastman, *The Sense of Humor*, p. 46), it is present in these nouvelles to signal the revelation of a private event to the public, the communication of the point to the reader.

Thus laughter correlates highly with the presence of the retelling of the events which make up the tale, which corroborates the social nature of the tale-telling activity. Retelling takes place in about half of the stories which do not lack an ending and may take the form of a general statement about the promulgation of the story: "et fut la chose decelée
tellement” (23) or “quant on sceut” (37D), or “ledit clerc . . . l’ait comptez en mainctes bonnes compagnies, comme avés ouy” (49). Sometimes there is a specific audience which also laughs: in 84 the author says, “Et depuiz fut racontée l’hystoire à monseigneur de Trieve en presence de ce gentil homme là où ledit fol mesme estoit, et en fut beaucoup ris par ledit seigneur, et aussi firent tous les aultres oyant compter l’adventure.” The recounting of a nouvelle is thus described as part of the nouvelle itself, with characters engaging in this activity as we might expect narrator and hearers to do. The endings which combine both laughter and retelling, although they do not occur in a majority of tales, are indicative of the pleasurable purpose of the stories.

Laughter is not merely an expression of pleasure, however; it has an instructive function as well, as many researchers on laughter have noted. The fact that Philippe’s stated goal in writing the tales combines entertainment with a moral purpose implies an understanding of the possible social functions of laughter. Some laughter expresses the united feelings of a group, as in 91A where an entire town laughs in recognition of the right of two incorrigible drunkards to have their own way, in spite of a legal action by the town officials. In 54 an ailing seigneur who tries to hunt indoors is laughed at (in a kindly manner) by other seigneurs et dames who carry the joke so far as to ask him for the game he has caught. The solidarity can be even greater when the person laughed at is also laughing and is accepted into the group. The tellers of unusual tales about animals in 55 are greeted by a deferential laughter.

But a more common form of laughter in Philippe de Vigneulles’s tales is an excluding laughter, mocking and repressing foolish or immoral actions. Thus a priest is laughed at in 2A by other priests for accepting a promise of a gift in return for absolution. Ignorance is the justification for the mocking laughter which greets messire Martin, a priest who thinks he struck the devil on the fingernails when in fact he has been the object of a mystification (51). Stories about priests’ misadventures are particularly funny and are always greeted with mocking laughter whose function is to chide their immorality and foolishness. Sully thinks that laughing at priests is an expression of rebellion against spiritual tyrannies, while Alan Segal finds that any undignified behavior by priests is regarded as obscene because it disturbs the social order. Other authority figures are mocked, and not always with reason, as in
number 61A where one member of the highest court in Metz, Les Treize, is laughed at by his peers because of the informal way a fool addresses him. In 52 the vice which is punished by mocking laughter is greed, and the character who is punished is pitilessly excluded from the group who laughs. Most of the laughter at stupid people is mocking and excluding, a laughter aimed at inferiors, and there are many examples of this type of situation.

This mocking function is typified by the laughter in 44. A “pouvre aveuglez marit” is unaware of his wife’s extracurricular activities, whereas the neighbors, on the contrary, see all, both the husband entering at the front door and the lover escaping at the back, “de quoy ieoulx voisins et voisines ce prindrent tous à rire, à moquer et à deriser et monstroient le povre homme à doigtz et faisoient grant derision de luy.” This pointing of the finger, symbolic of the all-seeing, all-knowing society, is present in all situations where the object of a joke or a trick is mocked. Whether a mocking or approving laughter, or simply an expression of amusement, the laughter in the Cent Nouvelles firmly establishes the collection as a work written for the sake of amusement.

MORALS

As in other comic narratives, the presence of morals may seem to contradict the humorous purpose of the tales. Yet morals are an important characteristic, and they take many different explicit and implicit forms. Often they are addressed directly to the reader or listener and appear to be a statement of the author’s personal opinion, as for example in number 71, in which a merchant has tricked a woman into returning the comb he gave her in exchange for sleeping with him (this is the theme of the “don de l’amant récupéré”). The last sentence of the story is: “Mais je dis, moy, que c’estoit grant honte à luy de l’avoir ainsi trompés.” Certainly the word moy evokes a strong sense of the personal morality of the narrator. Such remarks are in keeping with the disapproving attitude Philippe takes toward the various crimes and misdemeanors recounted at length in both the Chronique and the Mémoires, where they are never considered humorous.

A few morals take the form of a prayer, as number 62: “Dieu luy pardoint et à tous aultre innorant. Amen”; number 37 (at the end of
four stories about *questains*): “Dieu vueille que après eulx n’en viengne des pires”; and 59: “Ores prions Dieu qu’il y vueille mettre ame­d­me­ment.”

Other morals are little more than a résumé or closing statement, as in number 92, in which Jennesson pulls his mother’s bad tooth: “Et ainssy par la subtillité et bonne medecine de son filz Jennesson, comme cy devant avés ouy, fut reguerie ladicte revenderesse sa mere.” The moral in 42 is supplied by one of the characters, a husband who has just wit­nessed his own cuckolding, and it is ironic in that the statement he makes is the direct opposite of what one might expect of a man in such a situation: “Vraiment . . . elle est bonne femme, et ne l’ait pas telle qui veult.”

By far the largest number of morals consist of a general statement of a moral nature which the tale has illustrated. Philippe’s excellent but un­fortunately mutilated version of the traditional tale about the miller, his son, and their ass (number 97) both begins and ends with a general moral statement about the “pechiez de murmure.” The tale ends with the words: “Et est à ce propos, comme j’ay dit devant, que c’est chose impossible de soy bien gouverner en ce monde icy et estre en la grace de chacun, car le peuple d’aujourd’hui est plus enclin à mal parler que à bien dire.” Some stories are the illustration of a proverb: both 64 and 65 illustrate the theme “trop grater cuit et trop parler nuyst.” Number 38 is an illustration of the “subtilité” of a clever man; and 82 illustrates three times the difficulties of stupid people.9 These morals indicate that the tale is an illustration of a general fact and thereby point both to them­selves and to the tales.

The form of the explicit moral is such that it often appears as a lesson drawn from the story. A greedy man in 53 learns that when you are tricked and power is on the side of the opponent, there is nothing to do but pay up. The characters in 98, young clerics on their way to Rome, learn to distinguish dishonesty and virtue: they lose money to confi­dence men who offer a magnificent precious stone which supposedly will give the possessors a high office in the church. The moral: “Et leur fut force, s’il vouloient avoir benefice, de trouver une aultre pierre plus vertueuse que celle là, laquelle s’appelloit la pierre de diligence.”10

A generalized lesson, almost a moral injunction, is present in number 13, in which a priest thinks he is going to get a rabbit from a hunter in payment for absolution: “Et ainsi font aujourd’hui beaucoup de gens qui
se confesse et se haste si fort qu’ilz cuidoient prendre le livre en cour-
rant.” The moral attacks both the priest’s greediness and the hunter’s
lack of religious observance, and anybody else who might behave simi-
larly. The entertaining story of the “marchand de tripes” ends with a
generalized lesson in which Philippe, an educated merchant, undoubted-
ly had strong vested interests: “Et ainsi doncques, se vous voullés avoir
des enfans plaisant et saiges, faictes les apprendre en leur jeunesse, ou
aulurement ne vauldront rien, comme icy avés ouy par nostre nouveau
marchans de trippes.” How strongly one feels the contempt of the word
nouveau! A lesson about deceitful people is expressed in the proverbial
moral to number 36: “Et ainsi avés ouy qu’il n’y a si fin que aussi fin ne
soit.” A pointed lesson about greed is found in number 59: “Et ainsi
advient souvent que ceulx qui convoytent avoir le tout n’en ont rien.”
The lesson in 73 is about people who sin by pride and are rebellious: “Et
ainsi en preigne à toutes celles qui oultre mesure et raison sont rebelles
et de trop fier couraige.”

Moral statements are often present whether or not a moral lesson can
be gleaned from the story. In several stories where the point consists of
some amusing words spoken by a character, the moral may seem un-
necessary or unrelated to the main intention of the story, which is to
amuse the reader/listener. For example, in 63 both anecdotes (about
dying people who say something inappropriate to their serious situation)
are summed up by the proverb “de telle vie, telle fin.” In fact the stories
do not mention anything about the lives of the people, and the real moral
is that people cannot grasp the seriousness of their situation. In these
cases the conventional nature of the moral is readily apparent.11 In fact,
the story can also carry an implicit moral, sometimes conflicting with
the discourse statements which constitute the explicit morals.

The presence of such implicit morals raises the problem of the value
of the morality. Since its role is to instruct, to modify behavior, to
advise, or to warn, it may accomplish its function through positive or
negative examples. The problem in distinguishing between moral and
immoral morals is that one cannot determine with any degree of cer-
titude, in many cases, whether the moral is sincere or ironic. Even a
negative summary can have a positive function. Immoral morals could
be considered as a kind of warning. The prologue has a blanket justifica-
tion for all immoral tales: they are examples not to follow, which was an
expedient excuse for many a risqué tale in the Middle Ages and in the
Renaissance, including the immoral exemplum tales. Yet the final message of many tales is immoral. For example, in number 45, in which Isabeau is required by her confessor to tell her husband which of her children are not his, there are two morals. The tale illustrates a clever action which is also mildly evil (by religious as well as social standards). The priest’s comment is an obvious moral: “il n’y ait aujourd’hui au monde mauvaité ne finesse que ne soient en une mauvaise femme.” If Isabeau is described by her confessor as “mauvaise” and “fine,” we are meant to understand that her actions serve as a negative example. However, it is clear from the story that the reader is expected to admire Isabeau’s cleverness, constituting an implicit moral. The narrator’s comment at the conclusion confirms this interpretation and contradicts the priest’s highly moral behavior in forcing Isabeau to speak to her husband. This comment is the second moral, a sort of tacked-on paragraph: “Aussi ne sçay je se le prebtre faisoit bien ou non de luy faire dire à son mary et reveiler le pechiez qui estoit secret et le faire publique.” As a result the story seems on the whole to contradict an ethical standard of behavior; it takes an immoral position. Other immoral morals can be found in 19 and 20, about two different tricksters or practical jokers who get away with their tricks. The moral which is implied is that you can’t beat a joker. In 21 a man who has wronged a group of women tricks them out of the punishment they had planned for him, and gets away with it.

Next to these morals there are some clearly ethical morals implied in a large number of stories. Several adultery stories end with a message against adultery: in 17 a discreet husband exacts his revenge (rather pitiful, it is true) but does not let dishonor come to his wife, which the author clearly approves of. A practical joker in 23 turns out reformed by the end of the tale, implying that such people can and should improve (a message opposite from that found in 19 and 20). The daydreamers in Philippe’s version of “Le pot au lait” are punished for trying to change their status; they will always be poor, they learn, because that is their destiny (78A). Sinners are punished or ridiculed and good people are rewarded, like the devin in number 57.

Ultimately, the morality of the tales is a matter of interpretation. The overwhelming bulk of morals, both implicit and explicit, preach good behavior and chastise the immoral. But the function of the moral is not necessarily a “moral” (i.e., ethical) one, and even the explicit morals
are sometimes little more than a summary of the story or a statement which has been illustrated by the story. Such a problem of definition can be overcome by taking a formalistic view, such as that suggested by Zumthor in his *Essai de Poétique médiévale* (pp. 400–401). Any change in situation from beginning to end would thus contain an inherent, implied significance. Nevertheless, seductive as such a perspective may be, we need to consider the content of the morals in order to understand the human significance of the work. The fact that a tale which pretends to stand as an example for moral behavior can also amuse is highly significant. Before we draw conclusions about the relative importance of the pleasurable and the useful intentions of the *Cent Nouvelles*, we should take a look at a special case which combines both aspects.

**OBSCENITY**

Erotic themes do not predominate in the *Cent Nouvelles* as they do in the *fabliaux*, yet their presence creates a particular type of humor and lends a certain color to the work which calls for an examination of their role. At the same time sexuality is a subject which lends itself well to moralizing, and the same is true of scatological stories. For this reason they can be considered together; they are both areas in which attacks are made on social mores, hence the general term obscenity.

There are thirty-nine tales in which sex is mentioned, described, or referred to, seven which refer to or describe defecation, and twenty-two in which the exposure to other characters of an intimate (i.e., not socially visible) part of the body is either described or implied. Of course, there is overlapping of these three aspects of obscenity in some tales. Eighty-eight protagonists have erotic roles at least in part. Besides the six scatological tales there is one more in which excrement occurs as part of a general exposure of private parts to a group of women.

The reader must do justice to Philippe de Vigneulles’s prowess as a conteur of obscene events, for an inventory of all terms having erotic or scatological value shows a great variety. Three basic types of diction are present: use of a proper term; use of a figurative euphemism not using any proper terms but not referring to any other context for comparison; and use of terms from other semantic contexts for the creation of obscene metaphors. There is a fourth minor category which employs direct nonerotic expressions or naïve descriptions of sexual activity or
parts of the body; often a child or a "fool" is speaking, but the narrator also uses this type of description with tongue in cheek as if to imply that the characters involved consider themselves innocent but he, the narrator, and we, the readers, know better. There is thus a complicity between reader and narrator leagued against the characters which creates a particularly voyeuristic kind of pleasure for the reader. In 42 the narrator says "elle comme honteuse couvrit ses deux yeulx de ses deux genoux, mais pour la couvrir plus à point, le Carme se boutta dessus et sembloit qu'i la deust estrangler." A child describes the genital organ of his mother's lover as "ung groz dent . . . aussi groz que vostre bras et aussi rouge . . . que vostre bonnet" (93).

Remarkably, the proper term foutre is never used in the Cent Nouvelles, which distinguishes the collection from the fabliaux and the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles of the fifteenth century. A similar pudency governs the absence of the terms con and vit, although the former is used as part of a composite name in 89 ("Jehan Peu-de-con"). By comparison a long list of words for excrement, all present in one or more of the scatological tales, indicates perhaps that such terms are less of a shock to propriety. The more infantile nature of scatological preoccupations is possibly the basis for the greater permissiveness compared to erotic proper terms, although it is difficult for the modern reader to make such distinctions based on the social values of a different time. In short, the scatological tales as a group appear cruder—as indeed their subject matter would seem to necessitate—than erotic tales. The relative poverty of scatological metaphors also indicates a lesser effort of invention, although an extended metaphor in 81 is indeed a masterpiece of the genre.

Not altogether lacking in comic effect, the euphemisms are nonetheless as a rule far behind the metaphors in evoking a smile. Whereas the former make obeisance to some well-intentioned and necessary rule of society, the latter demonstrate the real freedom of the genre to discourse at length on usually unacceptable topics. They permit considerably greater development not only on the acts and the sexual parts of the body but also on sexual desire and satisfaction, resulting in more explicit and complete descriptions of erotic behavior. The technique of the end-developed metaphor can be found in such fabliaux as "De la Damoselle qui ne pooit oir parler de foutre" and "De la Pucele qui abevra le polain" (M.-R., 3:81 and M.-R., 4:199, respectively) and in some "sermons joyeux."
The best developed metaphors for the sex act in the *Cent Nouvelles* are those which concern military behavior, riding, and music. In number 65 the play on "instrument" and "danser" is developed in detail and maintained over half a page. The metaphor of the attacking army is developed to the point of extreme exaggeration in 89. Here the erotic tradition itself is parodied, because the "siege" lasts a full six months before the "picquenaires et hallebardiers avec serpantins et courtais" succeed in entering the "forteresse," in spite of the weakness of its "murailes." In the problematic tale 99, in many respects a departure from the norms for this collection, the direct comparison of sexual intercourse to battle parodies the proper behavior of a feudal courtier: Charles, the hero, says the narrator, should be paid double by his prince because for every blow he would have made if he had followed him into battle in Naples as he was supposed to he gives three to his lady love in Genoa. The warrior expressions usually apply to nonwarrior characters, even to priests in some cases. Metaphors from the semantic field of riding include *chevaucher* and *monter haut pour voir (de) plus loin*, the two most frequent expressions for the sex act.

Metaphors for male genitals fall into the same categories and include descriptions of tumescence as well as lack of it. *La lance, une anse d'épée, l'instrument,* and *les outils* are the most frequently used terms. Metaphors for female genitals are more distant from the object and do not describe it by analogy as is usually the case for the male member.

In his study of the relation of facetiousness to morality in the *fabliaux* and other medieval forms, Beyer claims the euphemism is used to free the facetious joke but also has an end in itself as a parody of courtly behavior. The latter type of comic effect is virtually lacking in Philippe de Vigneulles as very few euphemisms refer to the courtly semantic field (cf., for example, *faire la courtoisie*). Three other types of expression described by Beyer are equivalent to the three categories described above: the proper term (which Beyer sees as less able to produce comic effect than metaphors), the substitution of subliterary or abstract expressions (most of the euphemisms are of this type, considered by Beyer the least apt to produce comic effect), and metaphors, in which the comic effect is in direct proportion to the distance between the elements of the metaphor and its meaning, their "senselessness" and artificiality (see Beyer's development on pp. 104–12). If the metaphor permits greater freedom of expression, it is because it both maintains respect for
and circumvents taboos; its artistic—hence artificial—refusal to speak of such matters, its refusal of the proper term, results by the same token in their concentration and elaboration and in their comic effect.\textsuperscript{14}

In general, the laughter provoked by obscenity is a reproving, mocking laughter as well as an expression of joy or pleasure. Thus the role of obscenity, more so than other subjects, is to combine moral and comic effects; obscene tales call directly for social reproval, yet invariably cause laughter. They make it possible for human beings to laugh at immorality, unlike its manifestations in real life;\textsuperscript{15} as in Isabeau’s story, immorality is demystified, removed from a church context, made into a factor of life over which the ordinary person has some control and which he accepts as normal. Ultimately, in this way, laughter too has a purpose, a useful, human function, if not an ethical one.

Morals provide a theme which the \textit{nouvelles} illustrate, but the tales do not exist as a function of their morals. By their form they often resemble the moral statements of Philippe de Vigneulles’s noncomic narratives and of the \textit{exempla}, and as such are a part of a moralizing tradition. But in these \textit{nouvelles} the tradition is loosened and relaxed, whittled down to human scale, so that it is clearly laughter which predominates. Nothing illustrates this better than number 46, a \textit{nouvelle} whose format is that of the \textit{exemplum}. It states a theme near the beginning, in the form of a moralized proverb or a didactic formula: “\textit{Il est assés congneu à ung chacun que, qui veult faire ung beau feu, il ne fault point mettre le vert bois dessoubz et le sec dessus.}” The proverb has a double meaning: its semantic context is the domestic scene (how to build a good fire), which provides the setting for the tale, but its immediate interpretation is as an erotic metaphor, based on the common \textit{équivoque} on fire. The illustration of the proverb elaborates the second meaning, as the tale proceeds to relate the misadventure of an old man who took a very young wife (which the narrator decries by calling the old man “folz et incencez’’). The wife naturally satisfies her desires (for the old man soon runs out of steam, “\textit{et luy cheut le fouldre ez Brayes}’’) by turning to younger men, and when on a cold night the husband accidentally falls into the fire, she chooses to let him remain there, thus revealing to all present how little she loves him. The moral is as stated in the proverb, but it is entirely dominated by the comedy of the scene, is in fact parodied by its development (and the ironic opposition of the
absence of fire in the man’s pants to the fire he falls into). The moral is perverted, invaded by the comic, demonstrating its lack of real significance. It would hardly be possible to call it a moral, indeed, were it not for its format.

In sum, ethical rules of behavior are subjugated to the more pervading (and prevailing) valorization of comedy and amusement for the sake of pleasure. If there is any ultimate moral or message, it is provided not by the moral statements but paradoxically by the very comedy of the tales. One final example will show how the comedy may carry a particular kind of didactic purpose. A young husband in number 65 learns of his bride’s premarital sexual adventures with her father’s valet and finds this blow to his honor reason enough to take a very moralizing attitude toward her: he decides to leave her to her reprehensible behavior and wants to send her back to the valet. “Estes vous doncques telle!” he says. But the real moral of the tale follows a second scene in which the bride’s mother reveals that she too had lovers before her marriage. Her husband overhears this unexpected confession and ruefully concludes, “Mon genre, vous avés ouy que c’est de ses diables de femme.” Hardly an example of a negative moral not to follow, this summary indicates that the only course open to man is to accept this immoral behavior as a part of normal existence, which is the real lesson learned by the young man: “Le jeune compaignon, ouyant son sire ainsi parler et qui prenoit la chose si doucement, ne se peust tenir de rire. . . . ‘Puis, dit il, que j’ay compaignon.’” The funny situation the young man is in teaches him the ultimate lesson: whatever immorality or other problems may exist need to be indulged or taken with a grain of salt, since one cannot do otherwise. Such problems are met with resignation and countered with a reaffirmation of human kind. Philippe’s characters show that the best remedy is laughter and that the problematic aspects of life are to be ignored for the funny side of life.

Without making of Philippe de Vigneulles a philosopher he was not, there is, nevertheless, throughout the collection a perceptible discourse on the rights and condition of the human being, particularly as revealed through his times of amusement (as opposed to his work or his religious purpose). Basic to the human condition is the right to laugh, as Jeanson elaborated in Signification humaine du rire. Although mocking laughter is the laughter of a moralist, the mocker is more preoccupied with destroying his object than reforming his behavior. He is claiming for him-
self the right to laugh, "ce ‘droit’ de l’homme spirituel, détaché de tout, supérieur à tout, pleinement assuré d’une liberté" (p. 186); his laughter is an affirmation of himself at the expense of others. He cultivates and imposes on others his ego and declares thus his liberty. This is the type of laughter which pervades the *Cent Nouvelles*. It is the final purpose of this work of the imagination to provoke a liberating, humanizing, self- assured, and self-assuring laughter.
Chapter Four

A New Realism

In writing his only work of fiction, Philippe de Vigneulles gave considerable attention to presenting it as a true picture of the life he knew at Metz. No relatively sophisticated reader would be so foolish as to maintain that the events of the tales are historically real, simply because they are so presented. Reality serves not as raw material, but as a formal picture, to borrow Auerbach's distinction (Zur Technik, p. 1). The reality of life in and around Metz provides a source of inspiration for the creation of this formal picture, whose presence is so insistent and whose force is such that the collection can be described as a fresco of life in Metz at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Such a tableau, like a Breughel painting, would be replete with informative details and facts attached to the day-to-day existence of the bourgeois and paysan. In the next few paragraphs I have attempted to narrate this imaginary picture, culling items from the fictional work as a whole.

In general, city residents work at various trades (shoemaker, tanner, jeweler, merchant, often right in their homes, 20B, 38), while villagers work mostly in the fields (vineyards, farms, etc.). A man leaves home early in the morning, before his wife or his children are up (93), takes his tools with him if he needs them (91C), spends an exhausting day at work (91B), sometimes in the woods (35), and returns for dinner in the evening. His wife stays home (70) and cleans house (with a broom, 94), may wash the laundry very early in the morning in the village fountain fed by a stream (33), chats with her female neighbors while spinning (91D), sits in front of her doorway (18), and prepares dinner (94), sometimes in a pot hanging in the fireplace (89). If she is a good wife she is industrious (78A); she carries on her person the keys to her house (17). She may stay home while her husband eats dinner “en ville” (94), or spends his evenings, sometimes till dawn, drinking and telling tales with his friends in a tavern (52, 53), or participating in a ruckus for
which he may be fined (52). The tavern, however, is also a place for business dealings (53). Evenings may be spent at home in mixed company playing cards (36).

A wife must obey her husband’s wishes as he has the right to command (18), and in order to go to Metz a village wife asks her husband’s permission (91D). Permission is also sought for pilgrimages (42, 62A) and for wearing a disguise during carnival (40). Likewise the husband both upholds her honor to prevent shame (15) and punishes her for immoral acts (40), for even when committed through ignorance an adulterous act can be severely chastised (66), perhaps with the threat of death (15).

When food is prepared, salted meat is used (8, 52), or, as a great delicacy, partridge (3, 4, 59, 91D) or chicken (5E). A luxurious meal includes several kinds of foods (16). Tripe is served for lunch (28). Milk seems to be a staple food (78A), kept in an earthenware pot. Wine is served (claret, vermeil, blanc, 16) from pots (20C, 41), and each guest has brought his own knife (16). Soup may be served in a cup (escuelle, 81), drinks in a glass (15), and meats on plats (16). A rich family may have silver plates and cups (17). All wash their hands before dinner (15, 16) in a basin (81) and sit on benches at a table (17). A birthday (43) or a wedding (29, 96) is cause for a fancy meal, and one invites the priest to dinner after mass when one wants to honor him (3, 16). Banquets are also a standard part of an amorous rendezvous (17, 18, 48, 49, 96), as are baths (18, 42), although only the well-to-do have a private bath; others use the baths outside the village (42). Likewise, a common oven is used to bake bread (96). Bedtime may be immediately after dinner (91D).

Children are seldom seen and more rarely heard, but they are obedient (on pain of a beating, 8) or are spoiled and treated like kings (28).

Traveling strangers may lodge with a family if there is no room at the local hotel (36, 37D, 96), or with the priest (81).

A sense of family bonds and the importance of inheritances govern major actions: so a courting man calls on his girlfriend and her parents and extolls his wealth in goods and real estate (26); so a man wounded in honor calls on his relatives and his wife’s relatives for help and support (18); so a man whose cow is strangled by a wolf calls for friends and relatives to hunt the wolf (31). The family wealth must go only to
legitimate children of the father (45), and one of a father's concerns is how his son will handle his inheritance in the future (28).

Village people go to Metz for provisions (19B, 27, 29, etc.) carrying a hotte (19B), usually taking with them some fruit (29) or eggs, butter or cheese (91D) to sell to make money for purchasing other things or to give at a wedding, as is the custom (29). Unless they are well off, village folk go to Metz on foot (19B, 29, 91D) and they may well be barefoot (66); if they are lucky they drive a cart (20C) which they fill up with provisions. Along the road they gather branches for a fagot (69, 77) which contributes to a good fire in winter around which everyone gathers (46).

Sanitary installations are limited—the great outdoors is most useful (16, 25, 81, 93), but a well-to-do house has a retraict which may be just outside the door (17). In any case a chamber pot for nighttime is handy (15).

Besides farmyard animals such as a goat (31, 91A), a cow (8), geese (19A), chickens (20A), a pig (52), and horses which are kept, if possible, in a stable (4, 70) or in a barn (47), household pets include a fox (74), a cat and hunting dogs (54, really a nobleman's pets), lap dogs (22), and a bird of prey called a mirru (20A).

People relate to figures of authority with deference. They are usually obedient to the courts (18); they pay their taxes or fines (31, 82A, 91A). Servants are sometimes beaten (36), sometimes seduced (39), or are required to do the "dirty work" such as pursue an intruder (74) or chop off a drunk master's finger (80).

Religious services are attended by all except the laziest (13, 78A); at the very least one confesses at Easter time or Christmas (2A, 13, 30). When sick, a person may make a vow to accomplish a pilgrimage to one saint or another (42, 52, 62A) if he recovers. The dying are anointed with oil (63A, 63B). The dead are sewn into a sheet (76A, 83A). Funerals are followed by a procession to the cemetery with the bereaved wailing behind the coffin (83A). Births are aided by a midwife (67) and several neighborhood women; paternity cases are decided in court, with lawyers pleading for each side (58).

All these descriptive details—and many others—contribute to an exhaustive accounting of the "reality" of the time and place portrayed by the tales. The fact that we react to such descriptions as if they corre-
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spond to reality raises the important question: is this realism? The answer is a qualified yes: this manner of narration places the text in a certain tradition, a realistic intentionality which exists in a historical textual tradition. By writing about “life in Metz,” Philippe de Vigneulles is evoking not so much the actual reality of that life as the tradition of realistic writing—the referent is not reality, but the tradition of realism.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

Realism is one of the terms most widely and readily applied to the short comic narrative in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, yet rarely is the term clearly defined and its implications examined, nor are its component aspects distinguished. Frequently, the critic’s use of the term implies that the situations, characters, or events described are drawn from the ordinary aspects of life, such as it was at the time. In this sense it is often defined negatively: characters are not, for instance, highly symbolic of certain virtues; events are totally free from miraculous or fantastic qualities; situations are not divorced from the physical aspects of everyday human experience. Hence, for example, the fabliau is described as a “realistic” genre when compared to the lai. For critics of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, “realistic” was the term which best described the kind of narrative in which nonedifying events occurred; to be specific, the term was applied to any sexual or scatological story, any tale about ordinary human attributes (such as avarice) among normally superior figures (such as priests), and any text in which a significant role was given to lowborn people. By all these criteria, Philippe’s tales fall into the realistic genre. Recently, the definition of the term on moral and social grounds has been recognized as inadequate, not to say false, but a satisfactory definition is yet to be found, in my opinion.

It is certain that there exists a traditional realistic intention which Philippe imitated. This intention is present, for instance, in the few literary sources which he mentions, all of which, like the Cent Nouvelles, make an appeal for a realistic reading. If there is a problem in defining realism, it is clearly a problem for the reader, and one that is greater for the modern reader than for the contemporary reader. First of all, our very concept of what constitutes “reality” cannot fail to differ from the early sixteenth-century Messin’s. And our historical perspec-
tive easily distorts our notion of the reality of time and place, which we can perceive only through the mediacy of uncertain testimony. Furthermore, we are inevitably lodged in the position of the nonnaive twentieth-century reader, yet we must suspend our post-nineteenth century prejudices about realism. For all these reasons, the appeal to the reader’s judgment is in grave danger of misinterpretation. We are treading upon perilous territory. Failing the ability to adopt the attitude of the sixteenth-century reader, we need to look objectively at the evidence before us. Ultimately, we are perhaps no worse off than the contemporary reader, for a firsthand knowledge of the reality of life in Metz in the sixteenth century would lead only to the conclusion that the tales are or are not similar to that reality. Far more important are the methods used to create realism, for which the textual intentions and effects are more revealing; they shall furnish the surest guide. Rather than attempt to define different kinds of realism, we can speak of two aspects of realism which depend on the relationship between narrator and reader: the intentions of the narrator, and the effect on the reader. The intentions are directed toward the reader, or the reading, and the effect is to demand a participation by the reader in the perception of realism; the implication is that realism is a function of the reader.\(^2\)

**THE NARRATOR’S INTENTIONS**

*The Claim to Truth and Reality.* Included in the discourse of the narrator are many types of statements attesting to the truth and reality of the events described. One finds such a claim throughout the period in the genre—Kasprzyk calls it a popular tradition of the genre as typified, she says, by the *exempla* (Nicolas de Troyes, p. 326). There are three forms of truth statements, according to Kasprzyk: reference to real or direct sources, affirmation of the quality of the informant, and the naming of literary authorities. All three types of authenticity arguments occur in the *Cent Nouvelles*, although there are very few direct references to other literary works. A rather curious reference to the *Decameron* in tale 94, contrary to the tradition which esteems literary sources above creative invention, seems to deny the value of such a source and stresses instead the real truth of the story: “et jaiçoit ce que une telle ou semblable nouvelle soit on livre des *Centz Nouvelles Florentines*, si est cest cy veritable et en advint comme vous en avés ouy.” Although this state-
ment may be a roundabout way of naming a source, it is a definite modification of the traditional naming of authorities. Perhaps naively, Philippe would seem to rank the claim of the historical reality of an event above the authoritative value of a literary source.

The reference to direct sources—that is, named or nameless people whom the author claims to be real and the author’s own presumed observation of events—is a constant reminder of the narrator’s intention to write about events which really occurred in historical fact. Tale 25 begins: “Au temps que mon pere, dont Dieu ait l’ame, estoit jeune et encor à marier, advint ceste adventure, comme depuis je luy ay ouy compter et à plusieurs aultres aussi qui de ce l’en advouoient.” The first person pronoun signals the narrator’s role as eyewitness, as, for example, in the conclusion to 58: “Et je, Phelipe, ay depuis veu ledit enfans estre une belle grande fillette. Et plus n’en çay ne qu’elle devint.” Correlating with such statements is the explicit use of “vray” or “véri- té” which occurs in about one-fourth of the stories where the beginning is not missing. One feels strongly the conventional nature not only of such phrases but also of the naming of direct sources. Pabst demonstrated that the convention, which existed in the novels of late antiquity and in Virgil, is found in Macrobius, who calls it “adtestatio rei visae.” It was probably one of the more important requirements of narrative literature (*Novellentheorie*, pp. 17–18).

The Contractual Dialogue. Philippe de Vigneulles takes care not to let such statements stand alone—it is as if he were fooled by his own pretenses, for he enters into the convention wholeheartedly and makes a contract with the reader to narrate “real” events, a contract which he expects the reader to maintain for his part. He says, for instance, that all the facts concerning Braye, the main character in 83A, would fill a book larger than this one, but: “je n’ay pas marchandez d’ainsi le faire sinon qu’au plaisir de la compagnie.” Thus it is that a dialogue establishes itself between narrator and listener, constantly supported by the narrator’s direct address to the reader. The blatant claims to reality also found in other short narratives of the medieval and Renaissance periods are here surpassed by the contractual dialogue, a more subtle and more effective form of reality statement. Not only does the author pretend to uphold his end of the bargain by telling tales, “en acquictant ma promesse” (82B), the reader too must join in. When the narrator says he
will tell a tale “pour resjoir la compagnie et aussi affin que, en racomp-
tant, que chacun ait sa livrée” (80), this is a gentle reminder to the 
reader/listener of his part in the narration; he is made to participate as 
the receiver of the narrative event. Thus, explicitly, the appreciation of 
realism depends in part on the role of the receiver.

**Compositional Factors.** Compositionally, several procedures contribute 
to the maintaining of the reality contract. A traditional refusal to divulge 
the name of characters and places implies that the character is real—so 
real that the narrator must not reveal his name so that the reader will not 
recognize him. The most common form of this refusal is the formula 
“auquel vous en aiderés à celer le nom” (39). Of course, this is a sty-
listic technique, not proof of the reality of the characters, but it has the 
desired effect of implying their reality and of so persuading the reader. 
Linked with this technique is the feint of limited knowledge by the nor-
mally omniscient narrator, which usually takes the form of the expres-
sion “je ne şçay” but is also present in such terms as peut-estre, par 
aventure, possible as an adverb, and so on. By implying that the true 
facts of the story exist somewhere but are not necessarily available to 
the narrator, these phrases contribute to the pretense of truth and 
realism. They pretend to refer to a specific series of events or a story 
which is real. Partly on the basis of the presence of similar expressions 
in the *XV Joies de Mariage*, Jean Rychner was moved to call that work 
nonnarrative. The result of this discourse process in the *XV Joies* is 
similar to its effect in the *Cent Nouvelles*, but the “reality” or truth 
referred to in the *XV Joies* is a generalized social reality (the moral 
behavior of married couples, particularly of wives), which Rychner 
called a “système.” The intervention of such discourse statements in 
the *Cent Nouvelles* has the effect of evoking a reality of which the 
narrator, as a source of information for the reader, has more or less 
complete knowledge. Through this compositional device, the effect of 
reality is suggested, in accordance with the narrator’s contractual obli-
gation.

Curiously, tale 26 is referred to internally near the end of number 87. 
That is, the characters in 87 laugh at the foolishness of the two main 
characters and say they were more foolish than the character in 56 (actu-
ally 26) who wanted a crucifix and something new. The effect of this 
reference within the context of the tale (and not externally in the au-
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The author's discourse which is directed toward the reader) is to create a fictional "reality" for both tales.

Dialogue has often been discussed in connection with the fabliaux and other nouvelles as a factor in realism. One may contrast its use in these forms to its virtual absence in the facetiae and exempla. Its importance in the Cent Nouvelles is incontestable; indeed, some tales appear more like plays, with dialogue bearing the weight of the narration. This is most apparent in number 78 in which 109 out of 166 lines are direct discourse. As a general rule, wherever possible Philippe uses dialogue; it is far rarer for a conversation to be reported in indirect discourse. Although number 78 is an exceptional example, the use of dialogue is more preponderant in Philippe's collection than in the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles and in the fabliaux. (In the latter case, of course, its use is subject to the rigors of the verse form.)

By creating the impression that the events of a story are happening before the very eyes of the reader and that he is hearing the actual words spoken, dialogue contributes to the pretense of truth and reality. This is a simple compositional technique which is directly effective in underlining the realistic intentions of the text. It is in the form of direct discourse that the reader sees the sadly ignorant priest in number 4 confuse the archpriest's Latin request for moderate and good food — modicum et bonum — for his donkey called Modicum. The priest hears the one Latin word he presumably knows and repeats "Modicum?" only to hear the archpriest repeat, "Et voir, voir, . . . qu'ilz ayent modicum." Not only does the direct discourse add considerable vivacity to the story, it dramatizes the priest's ignorance of Latin by demonstrating it.

Concreteness. Besides the compositional and discourse elements of the text which firmly establish the author's intention to create a realistic impression, certain aspects of the content support and reinforce this intention. One of the most powerful is the allusion to historically real events, such as wars, sieges, the passage of the plague, and the death or change of rule of princes and monarchs. Such facts supply a context rather than a subject or theme; they are referred to rather than told in detail, and they function as a constant reminder of the hic et nunc of this collection of tales. The plague is listed as the causative event in 76B; the Rome jubilee of 1500 provides the background for number 11; and the war between the duke René of Lorraine and the city of Metz (1490) is
mentioned in 38. The theme of the tale may or may not depend on the historical event, but the reference to the context of historical reality is a clear, if implicit, statement of the intention of being realistic.  

Like the adroit use of historical realism—the historical context—the use of concreteness in descriptions creates a kind of realism which one might call realization. One of the most insistent instances of concreteness is in the settings: unlike the *facetiae* and the *exempla*, and even some *fabliaux* and other *nouvelles*, the *Cent Nouvelles* are never abstract; the physical setting is almost always given in considerable detail. This includes descriptions of houses, clothing, food or meals, furniture, animals, etc., in addition to precise locations. The main character of 89 lives “à Mets en la rue de Franconrue” (a real street). Such naming of locations gives the reader the occasion to imagine the scene as if it were happening in effect; he is able to evoke a mental picture of the events. Yet naming the location is largely a matter of convention. Most other *nouvelles* of the period also give a more or less precise location. Again, it is not the actual physical reality of the location or the setting that is important for the story—about three-fourths of the stories for which Livingston was able to name a literary (i.e., written) source or a close analogue are located in a real place which was not named in the source. What is significant is the intent to provide a background which is concrete, not abstract, to invite a realistic interpretation on the part of the reader. 

Besides concrete settings, the tales are actualized by details about customs or habits which are comparable to what may have been the reality of day-to-day life. The social habits described in some detail in the tales are extremely numerous and cover a wide range of activities: domestic situations, legal matters (such as trials, judgments, police activities), mercantile matters (sales, purchases, trips to the market, deals, and trade agreements), religious behavior of all kinds (living style of monks and nuns, church procedures and ceremonies, including confessions), superstitions and popular beliefs, and various other social conventions such as inviting people to dinner, birth and death rituals, tavern behavior, etc. The manner in which such details serve to concretize the narration is exemplified in the forty-fifth *nouvelle*. The narrative outline for this tale was provided by a Bebel *facetia*, about an adulterous woman whose confessor requires that she tell her husband which of her children was not fathered by him. In adding a lengthy explanation about
the legal as well as moral reasons for revealing the existence of her bastard child, Philippe has modified his model in the direction of greater social realism. He has attached the story line to an actual social reality from which he draws the values and mores alluded to in the tale. Although the story can—and did—exist without the attachment to that particular reality, the reference to it provides the reader with a concrete sense of the events. This device is regularly used, in a high proportion of the tales, as a causative factor in the plot, like the above example, or as the main point of the tale. The details of this social reality are in many cases verifiable: they can be confirmed by reference to nonfictional works such as contemporary chronicles or modern histories of the period. While concrete details about social reality do not make the tales in fact true, they do make it easy for the reader to see the work as realistic, at least in background if not in event.

Contributing to the realistic background is the portrayal of social classes in the texts. Although historical information on the class structure of Metz society is rather sparse, the 301 characters in the Cent Nouvelles, of which 211 are described by status or class, comprise a society which is comparable to the real society of the area at the time. Twenty characters are from the secular upper class, while fifty-four are clergy. Most are from the popular classes, generally designated compagnon or bourgeois. The latter term designates either a person of some rank by birth, or a paysan who has become a qualified resident of the city (like Philippe de Vigneulles himself). A lengthy discussion of the different qualities of city residents can be found in the beginning of 28; it implies that status and honor can accrue to those of “petit estat” by the sweat of their brows and that conversely rich people of good family sometimes behave badly. An example of the role of the statused bourgeois in Metz as seen in the Cent Nouvelles is provided by several stories which refer to the guarding of the city walls and gates. This function was assigned to the male bourgeois, who served a week at a time in turn at the wall, as explained particularly in 17 and in 51. A person who failed in this duty could be fined, as number 61A shows.

Another very common way of designating the characters is by giving their occupation. There are about thirty different jobs mentioned throughout the collection. In his attempt to make the characters comparable to real people, Philippe frequently furnishes a description of the kind of occupation they pursue; again, the intention is to provide a con-
text of day-to-day existence. In many cases, the character’s occupation is also significantly related to the events of the story.

These descriptions of social classes in the *Cent Nouvelles* are not in disagreement with those found in Philippe de Vigneulles’s historical works and in later studies such as Cailly’s, Bégin’s, and Klipffel’s. It has been said that there was not at the time a clearly defined middle class, that the only distinctions were between noblemen, clergy, and the remainder of the population. However, in Metz itself the qualification of “bourgeois” generally meant a resident within the walls of the city, according to certain municipal regulations, but differences in status based mostly on wealth or occupation did exist. The contemporary reader of the *nouvelles*—and, to a lesser extent, the modern reader—could readily identify the social position of most characters. And to make such identification easier, Philippe occasionally used real people as characters. While the *nouvelles* do not depict a specific social reality, and characters are not real people, the author has nonetheless relied on and used his firsthand familiarity with the social class structure of his society in order to support his intention to make the work realistic.

It is interesting to compare the tales and the events they recount to the author’s historical works, for all reveal a similar mentality on the part of the author: the curiosity for the interesting event, the *fait-divers*. Both the *Mémoires* and the *Chronique* can be seen as collections of stories about historical events. Only a very few of the historical events, however, are similar in nature to those described in the tales; the latter contain only the amusing and entertaining side of life, but the former abound with killings, maimings, rapes, undue revenges, robberies, natural disasters, and so on. If the intention is to show a “slice of life,” the pieces are nevertheless cut in such a way that only amusing events fall into the *Cent Nouvelles*. One example will show the difference in tone. The curious tale of Verton in number 73, who beat his wife until she pretended to be dead to punish him, has an analogue in an item recounted in the *Chronique* (4: 101), where the man, on the advice of his neighbors, flees the city to escape the severe punishment he would face as a murderer. The wife, however, recovers in the story told in the *Chronique*. The *nouvelle* transforms this event by means of a clever resolution: Verton knows his wife is only pretending and proves it by lifting her skirt and placing a bundle of burning straw between her legs. The miraculous recovery of the wife provides the comic outcome.
In sum, Philippe used concrete realism to establish a context or frame of reference in support of his claim to reality. This concrete realism comes down repeatedly on the reader, overwhelms him with detail, actualizes the stories, and makes him visualize them, so that he cannot neglect his part of the contract. Through the claim to truth and reality, and by compositional devices, Philippe imposes this contractual obligation on his reader, then makes it relatively easy for him to be persuaded, through the use of the historical allusions, the concrete depiction of day-to-day factors of existence, the creation of a coherent image of society, and a fairly consistent portrayal of social groups. Not an actual historical reality, all readers will admit, but a true-to-life image of a historical reality, the tales contain a specific “local color” which can be considered a kind of realism. Although the referent is the literary tradition of realism, Philippe carried it to an extreme limit. The various techniques described so far imprint the collection with a vivacity of tone and manner, a three-dimensionality greater than that tradition had yet brought forth. If the depiction of Metz life is a mere maquillage, a conventional form of transposition of placeless and timeless goods into a hic et nunc dependent on the author’s own experience of life, it is more of a maquillage than any other. It fools the reader—even the modern reader—into perceiving the stories as very much like real life. It is easy to imagine that the contemporary reader saw in them a reflection of his life, agreeing thus to an intuitive impression of realism.

THE EFFECT ON THE READER

This documentary realism is only half of the story. Considered from the point of view of the reception by the reader, the narratives reveal a much more important and vitally new form of realism which has fundamental philosophical implications and makes the art of the tales appear, in comparison to their predecessors, strikingly modern. Herein lies the real uniqueness of Philippe’s opus. For there is a built-in problem, a contradiction inherent in the genre itself, which the Cent Nouvelles best overcame.

The problem is that the tales purport to tell of unusual, strange, odd events. This was an essential element in the definition of the nouvelle: an event is worthy of recounting when it falls outside the bounds of ordinary, banal, day-to-day existence. Some of the events told are in-
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deed outlandishly extraordinary. And yet the author adopts the convention of their reality and supports that claim with an overwhelming "documentation." As some critics have put it, realism in the fabliaux, the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, and the Grand Paragon does not extend to plot, which is probably an apt distinction in those cases. But Philippe, as a naive believer in his own truth statements and insufficiently familiar with the realistic convention to recognize it as mere convention, apparently perceived the contradiction in his own discourse and was not satisfied to let that contradiction stand without an attempt at neutralizing it. The need to find a solution to the problem is, to my mind, the origin of one of the most outstanding features of these narratives, a kind of realism which I call motivational verisimilitude. Surpassing the local color verisimilitude which is typical of the short comic narrative in general, Philippe motivates his tales not only through an appropriate use of dialogue for character delineation and for realism in events, but also by the narration of all details necessary to the plot.

**Dialogue.** Besides visualizing—or "auralizing"—events, dialogue can show rather than tell about a character's personality or demonstrate how he reacts to events. An obvious example is the use of exclamations, swear words, and other expletives, which occur with considerable regularity whenever a character finds himself in an exceptional situation. Two cart drivers find a bloody body: "‘Ha, hay! venés veoir! —Qu’essee? dit l’autre, qu’i ait il? —Helas! dit il, regardés cy la pitié de ce pouvre homme qu’on ait ainsi murdris. —Ha, Mere de Dieu! dit l’autre, il y a cy entour quelque mauvais garçon. Pour l’amour de Dieu, tiron oultre’" (20C).

Dialogue also conveys the tone of voice, thus better describing a personality than narration can. The fool in 84 whose behavior is described throughout as haughty and secretive speaks with spite and indignation to judges who accuse him of stealing a chalice: ‘‘Et de quoy, dit il, t’en vueil tu mesler, car je n’en feroie rien pour toy. —Tu n’en feroie rien pour moy? dit le juge. —Non, vrayement, fait il. —Et pour quoy l’as tu prins? dit le juge. —Et qu’en as tu affaire? dit le fol. —Dea, se dit le juge, dis au moins où tu l’as mis. —Et vrayement, dit il, tu n’en sauras rien, car j’ay meilleur maistre que tu n’as; tu ne m’en oseroie rien faire. —Et qui est il, ton maistre? se dit le juge. —Va y, fait il, veoir et tu le sauras.’” This is a fine example of character delineation through
dialogue. In 93 a woman wants a barber’s valet to visit her to heal her painful tooth, or so she says. When her husband asks her where her pain is, she replies in a double entendre which demonstrates and reinforces her cleverness: “et si [je] sces bien le lieu où toute la doleur me gist et n’aurez jamais bien tant que on me l’aura tirez dehors.” Her “pain,” of course, is strictly sexual.

That dialogue can render an event more believable is demonstrated by a scene in number 91D where a woman bent on fooling her husband persuades him that he is fully dressed, although he hasn’t a stitch on. It is asking a lot of the reader to think the man believes his wife, in face of the extreme likelihood of the contrary. But an exchange of several sentences reinforces the narrative statement which describes the wife’s deceiving words: “luy en dit tant et d’une et d’autre.” Here is the dialogue: “‘Et bon gré ma vie, dit il, je ne puis trouver ma chemise ne mes habis. —Tu ne les puis trouver? dit elle. Que grant dueil viengne au groz lovet coquairt! Mais n’est tu pas vestus? Dis, folz. —Je suis vestu? dit il. —Voir, dit elle, tu es vestu. —Et par Dieu, dit il, non suis et ne me semble point que je le soie. —Et si es, dit elle, bon gré ma vie, despeche toy et si t’en va.’” Also more realistic is the success of an outlandish confidence scheme perpetrated by two wily fellows in 98, thanks to the use of dialogue. There is a lengthy discussion between them which is actually a minidrama acted for the benefit of their two victims. One can imagine that the reader sees how he too might have been taken in by such a swindle.

The Accumulation of Detail. The second aspect of the narration which contributes to motivational verisimilitude is the accumulation of detail in descriptions and actions. Everything is explained, all aspects of a character’s behavior are justified, time functions realistically, and the reader is left without a single question either as to causes, events, or outcomes. No element is included which does not have a part, and conversely, all details which are needed are supplied. The lover in 64B whose spurs accidentally pull the covers off his mistress’s naked body has naturally arrived on a horse, which the author has taken care to tell the reader twice, and the fact that he jumps into bed with his spurs still on is explained by his impatient desire for his mistress whom he has not seen for a time. A cuckolded husband in 43 swears revenge by chopping off the heads of flowers in the field and later holds his cuckolder’s
horse so the horse’s feet will not freeze: this discrepancy in the seasons is explained by the fact that the lover has been away for a few months, which is also the cause for his visit to the lady in question—he has missed her while away. The author even gives the approximate dates: “car c’estoit au temps d’esti” and “car c’estoit environ la Sainct Luc” (a date in October). The same attention to encyclopedic detail is found in both the Chronique and the Mémoires, the most fascinating example being the long narration of Philippe’s captivity with his father (Mémoires, pp. 45–114; Chronique, 3:194–255). The effect of this technique is to leave nothing to the reader’s imagination or conjecture, a manner hardly typical of the fabliaux and the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles of the fifteenth century. In true reportorial fashion, Philippe eventually gives the who, the where, the when, the what, the how, and especially the why. Thus something of the chroniqueur is carried over into the conteur. Fiction is historicized. What has occasionally been described as boring or drawn-out narration is actually part of Philippe’s attempt to motivate plot; in this he is more modern than his models.16

Details about a character also motivate plot. It is as if Philippe tried to convince his readers that characters are real by endowing them with characteristics that are coherent and consistent. He creates psychologically accurate portraits. Thus characters behave in accordance with the desires and attributes the narrator takes care to supply. Whereas in the fabliaux and the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles the reader does not always understand why the characters behave as they do, in Philippe’s nouvelles their motivation is usually true to human psychology. A wife who is planning a rendezvous with her lover does not simply grin and bear it when her husband returns home unexpectedly. She makes every effort to convince him his stomachache is nothing and he should return to the gate which he is to guard for the night (17). The young wife in 15 who is tricked into sleeping with her confessor behaves from beginning to end in a moral and naïve manner. It is her extreme conscientiousness that motivates her to submit to the priest’s admonitions for payment of the “dîme” (a tax in kind on marital relations); it causes her agitation and insomnia when she forgets to pay the “dîme” as well as her refusal to tell her husband about it since the priest has specifically told her to keep the payment a secret. Thus the husband musters patience and appeals to her further sense of duty in order to find out the name of the priest: he says he must invite him for dinner, as it is
the custom and he has been remiss. This leads directly to the husband's highly effective revenge on the ignominious priest, so that all aspects of the plot are thus motivated.

This kind of psychological realism usually appeals directly to a fund of familiar, ordinary experience, to something that is perhaps inherently human. The individual human experience of the reader is invoked as a ratification of the event; the implication is that the reader would experience the same feelings if he were in the character's place. No more striking example of this technique occurs in the *Cent Nouvelles* than number 16, the story of the unfortunate monk who decides to relieve himself in his boots. As his growing discomfort is described, the reader is inevitably drawn to feel it himself and to feel as well the tremendous release when he urinates all over the dinner table. However unlikely or even physically difficult such an event might be—especially doubtful is the feasibility of the monk's way of relieving himself—the situation in which he finds himself is part of basic human existence and one which every person has come to face at one time or another.

I do not argue that motivational verisimilitude necessarily succeeds in convincing all readers that the tales actually narrate real events. Sometimes, in fact, characters are made to appear more real than people in real life—such as the exaggeratedly conscientious wife in number 15. An occasional stretch of the imagination is required. In the scatological tales, for example, one wonders why the characters do not notice the presence of fecal matter before it is too late. In number 23, the servant dresses his helmet without noticing what is between the lining and the outside. The reader refuses to accept such an inconsequence, just as it is hard for him to imagine the perpetrator of this dirty trick sewing the lining back in after defecating in the helmet. Similarly, the element of chance is great in number 60, where three Germans, who learn only three French phrases, are accused of a crime. Replying to the French judge with the three phrases in the order in which they learned them, they comically inculpate themselves.

In sum, the effect on the reader may or may not be to convince him that such events could happen—that may depend on the relative sophistication of the reader. The important fact is the presence in the tales of a conscientious attempt to so convince the reader, through the use of motivational verisimilitude. Such verisimilitude is frequently lacking in the fifteenth-century *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, in the *fabliaux*, and the
Grand Paragon des Nouvelles Nouvelles; its absence is virtually total in the *facetiae*. Whatever claims to truth may exist in those works remain unsupported by an appeal to the reader’s obligation to so perceive them. It is as if the narrators of these works are unconcerned about proving or demonstrating their realism or do not perceive the important role that realism can play. Not only does Philippe’s manner of writing betray a greater concern for his audience, a concern which might well be described as a naive conception of the role of the storyteller, he has also understood a fundamental raison d’être of the *nouvelle*: it can satisfy a basic human need to “have an adventure”—if only vicariously by hearing about someone else’s adventure. By motivating even outrageous events and carefully explaining them so that at least internally they are possible, Philippe facilitates that experience of adventure: compared to the works mentioned above, it is rare that the reader is moved to murmur that people do not behave as they do in the tales or that human nature is bent and distorted beyond all reasonable expectations. Step by step, the reader is led from the common to the uncommon, from the usual to the unusual, from the familiar to the unfamiliar; the realistic backdrop plays an important role in this process. Philippe is far more successful than his models in making the unique event likely.

Besides the reference to a literary tradition of realism, the new realism in Philippe’s tales is a direct appeal to a psychological entity, something akin to a collective consciousness, for the second tendency of Philippe’s realism is a psychological function of the reader, both as an individual and as part of a group. It holds the key to solving the problem of the uniqueness of the event. Through the appeal to the psychology of the reader, the inherent contradiction is maintained. Philippe is saying that the event is unusual and extraordinary and, at the same time, part of life. Realism is actually in the service of the claim to tell of the interesting and unusual. By informing the reader that the story is unique and then convincing him that it is real, the narrator makes the event all the more interesting because the reader feels it is part of his experience—the unique event may happen to him. In a way, the narrator fools the reader into perceiving the contradiction as not impossible at all.

The epistemological implications of realism are striking. Montaigne as “reader” of human nature felt that “les tesmoignages fabuleux,” as long as they were possible, served as well as real ones: “Advenu ou non
advenu . . . , c'est toujours un tour de l'humaine capacité, duquel je suis utilement avisé par ce recit.'” Able to profit from the story “également en ombre que en corps,” the reader can learn from what might have happened as well as he can from what did happen.17 Philippe’s effort is to make what might have happened appear as if it did happen. The effect of reality, its shadow, has as much of an attraction for the reader/listener as reality itself—if not more. Can we suggest that Philippe understood the mimetic role of fiction? Realistic art builds a construct similar to reality, but in which the created world is dominated by writer and reader, for, unlike real life, the creator retains control of his creation. As long as it is familiar, as long as it describes “un tour de l'humaine capacité,” the creation functions effectively. Created reality can thus supply a satisfactory model for reality, all the more powerful for its realism.
Conclusion

One cannot help but feel that the *Cent Nouvelles* is a significantly personal work, for the personality of the author, such as it is presented especially in the *Mémoires*, pervades the tales. Two essential manifestations of this somewhat subjective quality imprint the collection with originality and lend it its uniqueness; they are the feeling of pride associated with the city of Metz and the elaboration of a coherent set of values.

In his unique manner, the bourgeois merchant-turned-author celebrated events of his hometown, peopling his book with real persons whom everyone knew (“Assés de gens ou la pluspart des habitans de la cité de Mets congnoissent ou ont congneuz ung noble chevalier de la cité nommez messire Phelippe de Ragecourt,” 54), situating events in familiar places which anyone could visit if he wanted to, and buttressing them with significant real events which served as chronological landmarks. It is for a Metz audience Philippe wrote, even if occasional characters are not from the Metz region (60, 76B, 83A, 84, etc.). Thus certain tales are rendered more “authentic” by the presence of a citizen of Metz, even when the events may be situated elsewhere. Tale 98 takes place on the road to Rome, in Rome, and in Florence, but its link with Metz is assured by the presence of a young cleric named Nicole Sauvaige, who became “curé de Lessey devant Mets et archeprebtre du Vaulz,” and his friend who became “chappellain à Rouzeruelle.” The point of departure is also specified: “ung village nommez Sainct Aignel delà Mets on hault chemin.” Similarly, although the main characters in 81 are a couple from Rouen and a priest from a village near Lusignan, where the story takes place, the whole tale is linked to Metz by their traveling companion, Jaiquemin Phelippin, living on Fornelrue and a “noble bourgeois . . . lequel de son mestier estoit coustellier faisant couteaux, dagues et espées.” This authoritative direct source acts as
Philippe’s emissary, an extension of his Metz viewpoint outside the region.¹

Not only is the work written for Metz, one might say the region is one of the “authorities” cited alongside the literary works mentioned in the prologue and elsewhere. Indeed, Metz is the principal factor that renews and remakes the traditional tale. The notion that events which occurred in Metz are as strange or amusing or in any case worth telling about reveals the process of this renovation: in number 55 some characters who are telling about foreign countries and strange events are subordinated to others who would prove that events just as strange happen here and now. They tell five stories of which they claim to have personal knowledge.

For the modern reader the presence of Metz is felt largely in details which supply local color. Unique to Metz is the high court called Les Treize, and it is before this eminent body composed of the most important citizens of Metz that the dimwitted Goffin (61A) answers an accusation of not discharging his duty as part of the guet at the city walls—truly another important element of local color. The system of parages, the familial tribes from which the governing members of the city administration were chosen, is referred to in 18 to demonstrate the intrinsic worth of the characters. Surely any contemporary reader knew what it signified to be “de bon paraige.” Probably such a reader also recognized places; the modern reader must take Philippe’s word for it that painters lived in the “rue de Taixon” (91D); that the place ordained for skinning animals is called “aux Wassieulx” (55); that Chaste1 Saint Germain is politically allied with the city but Noveroy is subject to its enemy, the duke of Lorraine (19B); that the Saint Loys cemetery just outside the city walls is full of bones because it completely decomposes a body in only nine days (76A).

So too the Metz audience must have known that one bought candles by weight; “ung quarteron de chandeilles” meant one-quarter pound, and not twenty-five candles, and the ignorant newly married man in 19B who doesn’t know the difference can be mocked. A uniquely messin flavor is supplied by dialect, although rarely. In two instances a lack of understanding of a French word reveals the unschooled nature of the character, both times a servant. The first does not understand the word guet until it is associated with a passage of water; for him the right term is wez (4). In 82C a valet who is asked to buy “macreaulx” for dinner, a
name he does not know, suddenly remembers "richoux" by a funny association which the author explains to the reader: "richou . . . vaut autant à dire à nostre langue d'ung homme ou d'une femme qu'on dit richou ou richouze, c'est autant à dire en françois comme de macreau ou de maquerelle." Such a joke undoubtedly meant much more to a Messin than to the modern reader. It is really a kind of in-joke, whose point might have been totally lost on the casual modern reader if Philippe, in typical exhaustive manner, had not taken the trouble to explain the association.

Commensurate with the presence of Metz and its region is the presence of the author in the work. He is a character in 77, is part of a group present at the events recounted in 24, 53, 55, and 82C. Besides placing himself into the tales, it is clear that the first person pronoun always refers to Philippe de Vigneulles himself. He is no fictional narrator; in 81 he affirms in these terms that the story was told to him: "Et moy, l'escripvain de ceste, as ouy certiffier." His professional interests enter into at least two scenes; one is the description of the Paris marketplace in 28, the other a brief reference to a certain area of the Paris market where fish was sold, in 82C. These scenes offer a merchant's eye view. His evident pleasure in recounting them lies in his pride about his specialized knowledge. It is interesting to note that Philippe as a narrator is at his best in the Chronique and the Mémoires precisely when he is recounting a personal event.

The presence of Philippe as narrative voice is a departure from the practice of most of the predecessors—such as the Poggio and Bebel facetiae, for the most part lacking any narrative voice, and the Decameron and the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles, in which the narrator is more fictionalized. If the author of the fifteenth-century Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles had written such narratives we would possibly not be at such a loss to name him.

It was shown that both in prologues or openings and in concluding statements the use of discourse sometimes presents the author with highly personal remarks. Whatever the content of the tales themselves, these statements show him to be a very morally concerned person. Lying and cheating in the tales themselves are usually decried. The word finesse is often associated with malice or mauvaiseté; in 30 the sergeant is "fin et mauvais"; in 4 it is said of the main character in 3 that he got away with his "finesse" because of his "cautelle et malice"; the
priest in 45 concluded that neither "mauvaité ne finesse" were lacking in today's women. The liar Jehan Gallepenat suffers not just one but two setbacks in 25. A rustique in 23, Philippe notes with a sense of pride, mends his deceitful ways until "je l'ay veu depuis estre ung saige homme."

But the moral statements are subordinated to comedy and amusement, which is considered a good thing. Besides drinking (52, 53, 91D), telling tales is highly rated with Philippe (81, 100, among others). Jokes are good (unless they hurt someone); Philippe himself recounts how he fooled some people on a visit to the salt mill at Salins (Chronique, 4: 117–20). Two streams, one fresh and one salty, run close to each other and are indistinguishable. Given a glass of one of them, Philippe tastes it, keeps a straight face, and pretends it tastes good. Then the glass is given to a woman, "laquelle, dès incontinent qu'elle en eust santus le goust, elle fist la plus terrible chier de jamaix, et recrachait tout dehors; car il n'y ait rien plus amer que celle eau." One of the workers of the salt mill says that Philippe is "passé maistre, pour ce que en buvant je avoie tenus bonne migne."

Philippe's philosophy of life thus gives considerable weight to amusement. But other values are found in the tales too. Religious practice in general is condoned, as this brief interjection in 2A shows: "Et vint . . . la Quaresme et la Grand Sepmaine là où tous crestiens se doibvent confesser et repentir de leurs pechin." Numerous pilgrimages were undertaken by Philippe and others; they are recounted in the Chronique and the Mémoires. This too was a part of the life of his characters (42, 54, 62A, 81). Fear of excommunication—or, more exactly, fear of the social opprobrium linked with excommunication—governs the behavior of some churchgoers in 37B and 37C. A dying man's suggestion that a priest take the sacred unction to a tavern and wait there until he is ready for it seems mildly sacrilegious (63B). Saying something in church that is inappropriate to religious propriety is mocked in 2B and 83B. Yet, as in the last two examples, even religious "errors" are good subjects for funny stories.

Philippe implies that modern life is problematic and full of difficulties for those who are not clever enough, like the monk Jehan Pare in 5: "il n'estoit point fin assés pour le temps qui à present court." There is a definite sense of compassion for those who suffer because of their ignorance: "Moult de pouvres gens et ygnorantes personnes sont . . . des-
truis . . . par leurs ygnorances et qu’ilz ne se scevent excuser” (84). If some unfortunate characters are able to deal with their problems, like the poor man in 31 (“Mon loup”), where ethical values are restored, others who are inadequately endowed suffer from the complications of the modern world. Anyone can be the victim of an “adventure,” as Philippe says in his prologue to 86 (all that is left of that tale): “Plusieurs adventures viennent aux gens dont il ne se donnent garde: les unes sont bonnes et viennent en dormant sans avoir grant peine, et pareillement d’autres mauvaises qui semblablement viennent que l’on ne s’en donne garde.” Philippe tells his stories so that his audience can learn from the adventures—good or bad—of others and give heed to the fact that such things do happen. Thus behind the tales is a philosophy of aiding and succoring (the prologue of 53 makes it clear that the tales are to warn people about dangers). One answer to the problem of dealing with these difficulties is to learn to be patient; this is the message in 2A and 19A. In the latter, the character who has been treated to a practical joke says, “Or bien, bien . . . je vois bien comment il va, car ce n’est pas la premiere que vous avés fait.” A tone of resignation is dominant in several tales which use the following expression, actually a kind of interjection or commentary by the author: “Mais quoy! il n’y ait remede et faut prendre la pacience” (81; similar expressions in 4, 28, and 30).

Another answer to the tribulations of modern life is hard work. The diligent father in 28 has made a good life for himself; Philippe obviously approves. Likewise the two young clerics who expect to receive magnificent rewards in Rome in exchange for a magic gem learn about the “pierre de diligence” (98). Other advice is of a very pragmatic nature: number 28 urges education for children; 64A, 65, and 72 warn not to tell a spouse about one’s infidelities, and 45 implies it was not wise of the priest to urge Isabeau. Similarly, a May–December marriage seems impractical (44, 46). Philippe’s tales seem to have found a ready-made set of values—the author’s own, surely, and a particularly solid one at that—which is adopted wholeheartedly and made into a prime mover of the collection.

All these factors—the local color of Metz, the personality of the author, his expressed or implied moral values—contribute to a last original aspect, the “running frame.” References to other stories in the collection, thematic groupings, the commentary present in prologues, in morals, and even in the body of the text all have the effect of creating a
framework or external structure into which the tales themselves are fitted. This form of a frame is not traditional. Moreover, it has the curious effect of creating a background of reality (that is, a reality for the tales) which does not exist explicitly or independently and is not textually present anywhere. The effect is similar to that achieved by Balzac in the *Comédie Humaine* by cross-references to characters and events. The background of bourgeois values pervading the work lends it a special aura that markedly distinguishes this collection from those which precede and follow it.

Two fundamental qualities of human beings—their foolishness and their cleverness—furnish the two basic themes of the *Cent Nouvelles* in an imaginative mirror of man. Portrayed in a variety of social situations, the men, women, and children about whom Philippe de Vigneulles writes are nevertheless the object of a scrutiny bearing more on their mental states—their abilities or inabilities to deal with situations and with other characters, their understanding, or lack of understanding, of their very immediate world, and especially their desires, their hopes, and their needs.

But to speak of characters in such terms is to imply the reality of what is after all—and first of all—only fiction. What then is a fiction which pretends to be real? Fiction pretends to be real in order to lead the imagination among its creations, to create an illusory world in which universal mental reality is concretized by narration and rendered imaginable to the reader. Fiction portrays invented characters and dreamed-up plots in accordance with the terms of a contractual obligation to the reader which the Middle Ages and authors like Philippe de Vigneulles proclaimed naively and without guile, but which the post-nineteenth century reader recognizes in other formats. In order to recognize the validity of the medieval contract the modern reader must learn to read its language. An important difference in this old *nouvelle* language is in the very baldness of narrative, its linearity and unity, its directness, its coherence, its simplicity, and indeed its narrowness. Modern expectations do not admit of such narrative, but such narrative does not recognize the "horizons of expectation" (Jauss, "Littérature médiévale," p. 81) that are today in vogue. To define the narrative form of the *nouvelle* by any terms and in any context other than its own is an error in reading and speaking the language of the contract. The modern reader’s enjoyment
of the *Cent Nouvelles* depends on a willingness to enter into the "deal" proposed by the author in his prologue and "running frame," a constant reminder of the author’s conception of tale-telling and its role in life.

Enjoyment is the primary purpose of the *nouvelles*. While pretending to moralize on man’s foibles, the tales create multiple opportunities for the comic imagination. Their adherence to the moralizing tradition does not detract from their value as diversion; rather, it liberates their pleasurable and amusing function from any ethical constraints. For a truly moralized narrative one must look to the *Chronique* and the *Mémoires* which by contrast to the *nouvelles* appear as a compendium of noncomic narratives, in which vices are not laughed at and virtues are more sober and more honest than the qualities applauded in the *Cent Nouvelles*. The nature of Philippe’s fiction is put most readily into focus by its differences with the "adventures" recounted in his two historical volumes. Thus the author’s intentions define his literary *nouvelle* as a realistic or true-to-life story told to amuse.

It is such a singleness of purpose which is responsible for the unity of the work, for the overwhelming similarity in the basic plot structures which the reader inevitably feels. At the same time one cannot deny the diversity of themes and the variety of situations which occur in the *Cent Nouvelles*. Although in this study I have concentrated on the common structures underlying the tales, drawing unity out of variety, I hope it will have become apparent to the reader through the summaries of many of the tales how broad the range of subject matter really is.

A true evaluation of the work of Philippe de Vigneulles must be comparative, but for such a comparison a common ground must be found and pursued rigorously across the various collections of *nouvelles*. It would be useful to establish a catalog of themes in short comic narratives of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, using a common method, and to compare their narrative structures or models. The brief study of the weight of tradition in the *Cent Nouvelles* demonstrated their relative originality. Historically, the *nouvelle* according to Philippe is both a traditional form and a renewal of that form. It is irrevocably tied down to the event, the *nouvelle* as an occurrence, which, when told, because of its newness (its difference), renews or remakes the literary form of the *nouvelle*. The young genre is reaffirmed and strengthened by Philippe’s collection, later to reach its greatest development in the middle of the century.
The *Cent Nouvelles* was only the second work in French using the term *nouvelle* in the title; the three major collections that followed, those of Nicolas de Troyes, Marguerite de Navarre, and Bonaventure des Pâriers, used the term also, and Philippe’s collection takes its place among them. Livingston demonstrated convincingly that these three authors as well as Rabelais may have used as sources some of the *Cent Nouvelles*, although no proof beyond textual similarities is available.

Nevertheless it is clear that Philippe de Vigneulles’s work betrays more a late medieval mentality than a Renaissance mind. Humanism in its various erudite forms did not touch the life of this bourgeois merchant. He knew of no transcendent mode of intellectual existence. I see Philippe’s *nouvelles* as the récit of human life, a tale of existence; they supply a semantics of life, suggest a hermeneutics of our place on earth. The use of traditional forms, adopted, revised, and innovated, emphasizes the ontological permanence of the human experience, independent of time and place. For the same reason, the work looks forward to a future time, is thus eminently readable—and hearable—for readers of our time. (I have retold some of Philippe’s stories, briefly and in my own words, with considerable pleasure.) Not a work of humanistic endeavor, the *Cent Nouvelles* was nonetheless surely an authentic voice speaking out on behalf of humankind, proclaiming the ethos of the *nihil humanum*. Not a scholar’s output, nor the work of a literary establishment, it was the joyful invention of a vivacious observer of his immediate surroundings, the exploratory effort of a frank and naive curiosity, tempered by a dip into a traditional mold.
APPENDIXES
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Appendix A

List of Short Titles

For purposes of reference, this list supplies in very brief form a title (not found in the text) based on either the main event or the main character of each tale.

1. Messire Didier
2A. Symonnat et le curé
2B. Nices propos du curé
3. Les perdrix
4. Modicum et bonum
5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E. Finesses et simplezses de Jehan Pare
7. Les brayes du curé
8. La vache du curé
11. Le trésor du curé
13. Le rustique et sa confession
14. Simonnet le frère du curé
15. Le dîmage
16. La dame et le moine
17. Le bourgeois et la vaisselle du curé
18. Le gros membre du curé
19A, 19B. Finesses de Rouse: L'avoine pour les oies; Le quarteron de chandel-les
20A, 20B, 20C. Finesses de Mannis: Les écailles d'œuf; Le tanneur de cuir;
   Les charretiers
21. Le compagnon qui échappe d'être battu par des femmes
22. Les chiens camus
23. La salade du valet
24. L'étron gelé
25. Borgne et demi
26. L'orfèvre et les deux armoires
27. Le chapeau plein d'œufs
28. Le marchand de tripes
29. La mesure des souliers
30. La volonté pour le fait
31. “Mon loup”
32. Le paiement au jour du Jugement
33. Le Cordelier trompé par un questain
34. Questain qui sait le conseil de Dieu
35. Les reliques de foin
36. Le soufflet mis en gage
37A, 37B, 37C, 37D. Jehan Clerey et les deux questains
38. La drapière et “l’Allemand”
39. Le seigneur qui croyait coucher avec sa servante
40. Le mari déguisé surprend sa femme
41. Le mari qui cherchait du vin
42. Pèlerinage sur le dos
43. Le mari qui tient le cheval
44. La “cornette”
45. Le “loup” et l’enfant bâtard
46. L’hôte qui tombe au feu
47. Les amoureux et le porceau
48. L’étton dans le pâté
49. La trémie du moulin
51. Les mauvais esprits et la garde
52. La Tortemawe
53. Marchandises
54. Le chat chassé dans un pot
55. Histoires de bêtes
56A, 56B. “Je sais bien ce que je ferai”
57. Le faux devin
58. Le boîteux, le borgne, et le sot
59. Réponses des moines
60. Les trois Allemands qui apprennent le français
61A. “Ho Guet!”
61B. Le souffleur d’orgue
62A, 62B. Simples réponses sur le pèlerinage et la confirmation
63A, 63B. Simples réponses sur l’extrême-onction
64A, 64B. La dame qui raconte son cas
65. La mariée bien apprise
66. Les souliers contre l’amour
67. L’enfant qui avait couronne
68. Hannes et sa femme
69. Le boîteux, sa femme, et le forestier
70. Le couillage
71. Le seriz
Appendix A

72. Le mari qui confesse à sa femme
73. La femme qui faisait la morte
74. Le valet et le renard
76A, 76B. Les morts vivants
77. L’homme qui plaidait sa cause
78A. Le pot au lait
78B. Les trois souhaits
80. Le doigt déchié
81. Le curé et son clerc qui couchèrent avec la dame de Mardonville
82A. Jaiquemette et Pierson Chaussette
82B. Le charretier et Thiriat Maillat
82C. Des richoux
83A. Le fou du roi de Sicile
83B. Folies de Howay
84. Le fou qui ne voulait pas parler pour se sauver
85. Comment amolir les houseaux
87. Le crucifix vivant
88A, 88B. “Nouer la queue” porte bonheur
89. Jehan Peu-de-con
91A. Hannes et sa femme se vendent une chèvre
91B. L’avare qui mange un œuf entier
91C. Hannes écorche le français
91D. Les trois commères et leur gageure
92. La dent de la mère de Jennesson
93. La grosse dent rouge
94. La huge
95. La verrière magique et le sac de blé
96. Le tabourin, les deux moines, le prêtre, et sa maîtresse
97. Le meunier, son fils et l’âne
98. Les escrocs qui vendirent une pierre
99. “Dyamant faulx, lamazabathani”
110. Des forces
Appendix B

Classification of Adultery Tales

Because of the homogeneity of the adultery stories in Philippe’s collection, they can easily be classified into types. The tree diagram opposite demonstrates the similarity in sequence of events.

Numbers in parentheses identify subdivisions. The figures after each subdivision indicate the tales which fit each type; those in italics are tales in which adultery situations occur not as the main theme. An [X] indicates the absence of that variation from the collection. “Interruption” means that the lovers are caught in the act.

In addition to the notable preponderance of adulterous wives, as tradition dictates, the diagram shows that adulterous women are always successful. Only two wives are punished (subdivision 3), one of them rather mildly (94); the “revenge” on the lover is usually insignificant (69 and 70; in 94 and 95 the lover is another woman’s husband and is “punished” when his wife is seduced by the injured first husband); and most often there is no punishment or revenge, as in subdivisions 2, 5, and 6. The “punishment” in tale 71 (subdivision 7) is effected by the lover himself on the wife. Compared to this testimony to woman-kind’s wiliness, the adulterous husband in 39 fails altogether to meet with his lover, while the husband in 72 confesses to his wife and both he and his lover are punished by her (subdivisions 10 and 11).
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Notes

Introduction

1. For a discussion of the parages, see Bégín, Histoire des Sciences, p. 347.
2. “Mise en prose du roman Garin le Lorrain,” MS no. 847 [97] of the Bibliothèque Municipale of Metz. This manuscript, burned during World War II, was never published, although the author’s preface and a table of contents with a reproduction of miniatures from another manuscript of the translation has been published anonymously (La Chanson de Geste de Garin le Loherain [Paris: Henri Leclerc, 1901]).
3. References to the work are cited in the text. An important feature of the edition are the notices preceding each tale, consisting primarily of a study of sources and analogues; hereafter cited in the text as notices.
4. A thorough description of the manuscript can be found in the Introduction on pages 21–26. See also Livingston’s ten articles in which are published a total of seventeen tales from the MS. They are numbers 4, 7, 24, 48, 54, 59, 60, 64, 71, 74, 78, 82 (third part), 84, 91, 95, 96, and 99.
5. Tales missing altogether are numbers 6, 9, 10, 12, 75, and 79. Others not included for the most part in this study are 50, 86, 90, and 100. Only fifty-two tales are complete.
6. See Armine Kotin, “Le titre des nouvelles de Philippe de Vigneulles: Un éclaircissement,” for a detailed examination of the possible origin of the mistaken title. In this study I shall refer to the work simply as Cent Nouvelles.
7. Varga, “Pour une définition de la nouvelle à l’époque classique,” p. 53. See also the comment by Guiette on p. 244 of that volume.
8. Auerbach names as the first French nouvelles the Roman de Troilus and the Griseldis story from the Mélangier de Paris, both dating from about 1390 and neither called a nouvelle (Zur Technik, p. 43). Even earlier were the “self-contained units of narrative” that Ferrier finds in the later Arthurian romances (Forerunners, p. 7). She also sees a nouvelle in the broad outlines of the first two-thirds of Le Petit Jehan de Saintré (1456), usually considered to be a roman (p. 56), whereas Söderhjelm sees the final episode of the same novel as a nouvelle (La Nouvelle française, p. 110). Toldo goes so far as to call the nouvelle “la salsa che condisce ogni più diversa vivanda” (Contributo, p. vi).
9. The chief proponent of the Oriental theory was Gaston Paris in his “Les Contes Orientaux dans la littérature française du moyen âge,” pp. 75–108. See also Auerbach, Zur Technik, p. 4.
10. The two other changes Sozzi observed were the tendency to exemplify by the addition of explicit morals and the restriction or reduction of certain themes to a “gaulois” model (such as the modification of stultitia sacerdotum to gluttony and eroticism of priests). He calls these changes a “dilatation gauloise” (“La Nouvelle française au XV e siècle,” pp. 71–72).
11. See Kasprzyk, Nicolas de Troyes, pp. 278–79; Redenbacher, Die Novellistik, p. 9;
Notes

Pabst, Novellentheorie, pp. 8, 23; Auerbach, Zur Technik, p. 57; Dubuis, "La Genèse,"
pp. 12–14.

Notre Dame, Le Jongleur de Notre Dame by Jean le Marchant, La Vie des Pères, La Vie
de Sainte Thaïs, Le Roman des sept sages, Le Disciplina Clericalis, and others. Ferrier
(chapters 1 and 2) gives Aixiandre l’Orphein, la Mort Artu, works of Jean de Meung,
Nicolas Bozon, and others. Rychner, in his review of Ferrier’s book (p. 334), mentions
La Fille du comte de Pontieu, some miracles of Gautier de Coinci, Le Vair palefroi, Le lai
de l’ombre, La Châtelaine de Vergi, etc. Söderhjelm mentions, in addition to works
named by others, Aucassin et Nicolette, Li contes dou roi Constant l’Empeureur, Le roi
Flore et la belle Jeanne (pp. 1–25). Kasprzyk gives a long list (Nicolas de Troyes, pp.
278–88).


14. The stories divided into parts indicated by capital letters are 2, 5, 19, 20, 37, 56,
61, 62, 63, 64, 76, 78, 82, 83, 88, and 91.

15. According to Ferry’s note in the margin of the prologue, the other manuscript from
which he copied the explicit was by the hand of the author (see Introduction, p. 25).

Chapter One

1. The fragment is about three inches long by about one and one-half inches wide,
undoubtedly a remnant of the first page of the prologue. It is published in the edition, p.
413.

2. This theoretical statement against supernatural events does not exclude the possibil-
ity of belief in spirits and devils, which is the subject of stories 49, 51, and 96. The only
supernatural event in the collection is the granting of three wishes in 78B. It is told as an
allegory or parable (unique in the collection), an illustration of what can be gained by not
fighting with one’s spouse.

3. A. de Rineck is mentioned in the Mémoires, p. 333, and in the Chronique, 2: 404.

4. The trickster in 20 does many "nouvelletez pour gens rire," which directly connects
the idea of nouvelles with laughter and a social situation. Number 82 is called a "petite
joyeuseté," told "par maniere de passetemps."

5. In the prologue to 42 the author recalls number 41 and says, "ores à ce propos je
vous en veue encor compter une petite."

6. Questains are frères quièteurs, rather unorthodox monks who travel, preaching in
the name of certain saints. The questain stories are numbers 33 through 37D; curés are
discussed near the beginning of the work (4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 are all
about priests, although only 8, 11, 14, and 15 are so identified); stories 82A, 82B, 82C,
87, 88A, 88B, and 89 are all simplesse tales; and there is a group of stories about women
including 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43.

7. "Tromperies" and "finesses" are justified as subject matter in the prologue to 53 by
referring to "plusieurs livres et hystoires" from former times, an argument of authority
which is also a possible indication of yet another literary heritage, namely, the fabliaux.
However, the fabliaux had disappeared as an active literary genre more than 150 years
before Philippe’s time, as Livingston observes, among others ("The Fabliau 'Des deux
Anglois et de l'anel,'" p. 220). Even the stories about questains could be assimilated into
a traditional category because of their distinct resemblance to the traditional themes of
priests’ gluttony, stupidity, or eroticism.

8. Tales with summaries in prologues are numbers 4, 43, 58, 60, 64, and 72.
9. The more common term for something that happens is *adventure*. Two other terms, *fait* and *cas*, are used in the most basic way to indicate the situation or the facts or the actions that are to take place or have taken place. Often, as in number 40 these terms are used to designate the story up to the point at which it is retold.

10. The convention can be found in the *Livre du Chevalier de La Tour Landry*, in the *Heptaméron*, in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* of the fifteenth century, even in the *fabliaux* in some cases. There is a reading of the *Heptaméron* which sees it as a moral statement for the author’s times, opposing the pastimes of the speakers, the countryside of the frame story, and the goodness of God to the same elements in the *Decameron* (Delègue, “Au-tour de deux prologues: l’Heptaméron est-il un anti-Boccace?”).

11. See a concise discussion of the medieval respect for tradition in Jodogne, “Observations sur la tradition et l’originalité littéraires au Moyen Age.” A highly illuminating discussion on conventionality in medieval literature can be found in Haidu’s “Making It (New) in the Middle Ages: Towards a Problems of Alterity.”

12. Based on Livingston’s opinion regarding each complete *nouvelle*.

13. Poggio’s *facetiae* number 232 is about a pair of underpants left by a Minorite at the bedside of a woman he was “confessing.” To help the husband hide his shame, the Prior pretends they are St. Francis’s breeches, a sacred relic, which are then carried “devoutly . . . on a silken napkin,” with uplifted hands, in a processions during which they are kissed by husband, wife, and passersby (see *The Facetiae or Jocose Tales*, 2:163–66). In Philippe’s version, the breeches fall during a church service. The deacon fails to understand the priest’s gestures and thinks he wants them carried to the people to be kissed, which he does with great ceremony, holding them in a clean cloth.


15. There is a farce in which this very “fausse compréhension” occurs, called *Farce nouvelle à deux personnages*, c’est à savoir, *le Brigant et le Curé* (see Cohen, *Recueil de farces françaises*, pp. 79–82). This is a possible source, or at least a very close analogue, not mentioned by Livingston in his notice. As in the *nouvelle* number 13, the priest must say the words of the confession and the dialogue is as follows:

le Curé: Or dites donc, je me confesse.
le Brigant: Dy-le pour moy.
le C.: Je me confesse à Dieu.
le B.: Et maulgré bieu du vilain prestre,
T'en veulx-tu desjà aller?
le C.: C'est ung mot de confession.

(II. 84–88)

16. Garapon defined jargon as “toute forme de langage étranger employé . . . en vue de produire un effet comique” and distinguishes four kinds: Latin, juridical, foreign, and pure jargon, or verbal nonsense (see *La Fantaisie verbale*, pp. 37–44).


18. Most of the adulterous wives and their husbands are characterized more completely than their counterparts in the *fabliaux*. Examples are found in numbers 43 and 93.


21. Heinrich Bebel's Facetien, pp. 66–67; facetia no. II, 62. Far from being a "dilata-
tion gauloise"—an amplification in the direction of the obscene or the erotic—as Sozzi
described three French imitations of Poggio's facetiae, Philippe's imitations frequently

22. By bourgeois is meant the dominant social atmosphere of the city of Metz in
Philippe's time.

23. The term discourse is here used in the specific sense explained by Benveniste in
Problèmes de linguistique générale, 1:238–42, and elaborated by Genette in Figures II,
pp. 61–67.

24. Formulas of introduction naming the time, the place, and the characters are nearly
identical in the two works, as is the pretense to hiding the same elements if necessary: the
third tale of the fifteenth-century work uses the phrase "dont l'ystoire presente passe le
nom," which can be compared to Philippe's expression, "duquel vous en aideres a celer
le nom" (41). Phrases like "et pour abréger" (43) and "comme chacun scet" (5) are also
found in Philippe's tales. The idea of "furnishing" a nouvelle is common to both collec-
tions. Compare the expressions "fournir ma nouvelle" (25) and "ou rence des aultres la
cinquiéme, j'en fourniray et diray ainsi" (5) from the fifteenth-century work to "fournir
ceste presente nouvelle" (37) and "ceste petite joyeuseté . . . mise . . . on rans des
aultres" (82) in Philippe's tales. The cited text of the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles of the
fifteenth century is edited by Franklin P. Sweetser.

25. See especially Söderhjelm, La Nouvelle française, p. 222; and Toldo, Contributo,
p. viii.

Chapter Two

1. Model can be defined thus: "une entité abstraite qui doit aider à repérer les articula-
tions structurales de l'objet étudié. Le modèle est donc une structure ou explicitation des
éléments constituant de l'objet et leurs relations mutuelles" (Godzich, "Etude d'un

2. The moral is not properly a part of the sequence of events, even when it is stated by
a character in the story rather than by the narrator.

3. Misadventure tales are numbers 8, 16, 32, 47, 49, 54, 74, 76A, 76B, 78A, 78B, and
97.

4. Simplicity stories are numbers 4, 5D, 66, 67, 68, 82A, 82B, 82C, 83B, 88A, and
88B. Stupidity stories are numbers 25, 26, 28, 29, 84, 87, and 89.

5. Joke stories are numbers 1, 5B, 5C, 5E, 7, 14, 19A, 19B, 20A, 20C, 22, 27, 36,
and 51. Cleverness stories are numbers 2A, 11, 31, 37A, 73, 91A, and 92. Trickery
stories are numbers 33, 35, 37C, 37D, 52, 53, 91D, and 98. (20B is also at least in part a
dirty trick, but because of its particular nature it is classified as scatological.) Ruse stories
are numbers 3, 13, 21, 30, 34, 37B, and 83A.

6. Many of the Verbal Humor stories are combined in one tale. These are 2B, 5A,
56A, 56B, 61A, 61B, 62A, 62B, 63A, 63B, 64A, and 91C. Others are 55, 58, 59, 60, 65,
77, and 85. Many are the same as those called by Philippe réponses.

In addition to the stories where verbal jokes are the main event, there are at least
twenty-three examples of the same procedure in other stories. These are numbers 2A, 4,
8, 13, 15, 19B, 25, 31, 32, 34, 36, 39, 41, 42, 45, 46, 51, 57, 68, 83A, 89, 93, and 96.

7. Adultery stories are numbers 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 64B, 69, 70, 71,
72, 93, 94, and 95.
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8. Tales about Libidinous Priests are numbers 15, 17, 18, and 96.

9. Dubuis found that for the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles the terms surprise and inattendu summarized the outcome of every tale. See his Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age, pp. 102–3, 125, and 563, among others.

Chapter Three

1. Todorov used narrative modalities in his Grammaire du Décaméron, pp. 46–50, but his usage is different than mine.

2. The four modalities would be named savoir, pouvoir, vouloir, and faire semblant in French. Benveniste mentions pouvoir and devoir. The absence of devoir, or duty, obligation, is perhaps a significant characteristic of the comic narrative; in fact, in the case of this corpus of texts, faire semblant, or pretense, is substituted for devoir. In the comic mode, the mask, the disguise, or comedy in the sense of role-playing takes the place of the duty or obligation. There is thus a value placed on deception.

3. “La quête” is present in all the fabliaux, according to Godzich, “Etude d’un genre: Les fabliaux,” p. 115. Godzich also states (p. 153) that the three large articulations of narrative activity are “désirer, communiquer, lutter.” Greimas’s reworking of Propp’s thirty-one functions arrived at this extreme reduction as well (Sémantique structurale, pp. 196–201).

4. Beyer, Schwank und Moral, p. 126. Küchler (31:85) observed on the contrary that the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles provide not only the what but also the how.

5. The social functions of laughter are discussed by Saulnier in Le sens du comique, Sully in An Essay on Laughter, Dupréel in “Le Problème sociologique du Rire,” and others. Laughter can express solidarity, deference, or mockery. It can punish vices or follies, maintain customs, further social cooperation. Dupréel divides laughter into two basic opposite types, welcoming and excluding (p. 228). Any group can exclude members of another group that the laughers think little of.

6. This happens in 49, 56A, 73, 88A, and 88B, for instance.


8. Whereas in the Cent Nouvelles a joker is always cause for amusement, a “bon raillant” in the Chronique (4:206–7) is described without humor and is punished.

9. Other tales with morals that are illustrated by the tale are numbers 8, 15, 46, 63B, 78B, 87, and 91.

10. Other tales in which characters learn a lesson are numbers 48, 60, 81, 91D, and 94.

11. Kasprzyk examined the morals of many Renaissance nouvelistes, including some Italians, and concluded that the “conception médiévale, suivant laquelle toute narration doit servir la cause de la morale” was alive and well in the Renaissance in France. It was the common opinion that any tale must be moralized, so it would be edifying. See Kasprzyk, Nicolas de Troyes, pp. 316–26, especially pp. 324–25.

12. In the fabliaux, according to Nykrog’s thematic classifications, 72.1 percent or 106 of 147 themes are erotic. See Les Fabliaux, p. 55.


14. Freud found tendentious wit more comical than other kinds in Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, p. 102. The idea that laughter can be the only possible reaction to antisocial behavior is expressed by Beyer (p. 116) as well as by others.

15. A tale of adultery and infanticide, only one of several such examples of severely punished immorality, can be found in the Mémoires, p. 292.
Chapter Four

1. Realism is discussed in the works of Reynier, Söderhjelm, Jourda (in his introduction to *Conteurs français du XVIe siècle*), and Dubuis.

2. Throughout this chapter, "reader" implies audience or listener as well, meaning the receiver of an oral communication.


4. Among studies mentioning dialogue in the *nouvelle* in general are Küchler, "Die Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," 31:71; Söderhjelm, p. 152; Mustacchi, "Levels of Realism in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," p. 151; and Jourda, pp. xvii, xxi.

5. Historical events are important in numbers 11, 17, 19B, 25, 37A, 37D, 38, 51, 54, 61A, 72, 76B, 82C, 98, and 99. They are also present in 14, 18, 28, 37B, 40, and 97.

6. It is interesting to note the various forms used to indicate an "address." Sometimes a parish is named, such as in 72: "au bourg Saint Arnoul devant Metz en la paroisse Saint Beguy"; or a village with its location, "village de Valerat, . . . à trois ou à quatre lieues de Metz en la duché de Bar" (45); or a location near a church, like the man in 58 who has a hotel "derrier Saint Gergonne"; or the jeweler in 26 "devant Saint Salveur." A specific region in Metz is mentioned in 61A: "à la cité de Metz . . . au Quartal sur le tour de la rue." Or very specifically: "ladicte cité de Metts . . . en icelle cité en une rue nommée Ayest auprès du couvent des Carmes" (18) and "à Metts en la rue des Bons Enfans emprès la Teste d'Or" (88B).

7. The Bebel facetia referred to is the number II, 62, in Heinrich Bebels Facetien, pp. 66–67.

8. As an example of such confirmation, the habit of the Paschal confession as the most important (or, since this is a comic collection, the only) time for confession is referred to as the principal religious action of the people in Duby and Mandrou, *A History of French Civilization*, p. 221.

9. One description of the *guet* around the walls of the city is given in the *Chronique*, 3:291–92. And in the *Mémoires*, p. 121, Philippe states that he served at the Porte des Allemands.

10. See Livingston’s list of some of them, p. 28 in his Introduction.


13. Livingston researched the named characters and has identified many of them through genealogies and other historical works. See the index of characters in the edition of the text.


16. Hasenohr, in her review of the *Nouvelles* published in *Romania* (1975), talks of "la platitude de certains contes" (p. 124); and Lorian, in his article "Deux Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles," p. 169, says "ce recueil me paraît assez monotone et plein de maladresses stylistiques."

Conclusion

1. Tale 100, a story about the pagan Saladin, had the most exotic subject matter, but it was preceded by a long prologue which sets the tale-telling scene in Metz.

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