

Un Chivaler e sa dame e un clerk: Deception and Self-Deception in an Anglo-Norman Fabliau

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Manuscript Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 50, from St Augustine's, Canterbury, and the second half of the thirteenth century, contains a Latin genealogy of the kings of Britain, Wace's *Brut*, a French list of kings of England to Henry III, *Amis et Amiloun*, *Les quatre filles de Dieu*, *Gui de Warewic* and, in the central place, the only copy of a narrative poem entitled in the lower margin *Romanz de un chivaler e de sa dame e de un clerk*.¹ This text is accepted in the canon of Old French fabliaux as one of the few Anglo-Norman examples. Outside the two complete collections of fabliaux it has been rarely edited and almost as rarely studied.² Such critical attention as it has received has been focused on either its analogues or its generic coherence or incoherence, for it seems to begin in the world of courtly romance and to end in that of the fabliau.³ I shall not argue that it is of high literary quality, but I do hope to show that it is interesting in the ways it adopts and adapts both courtly and fabliau topoi, motifs and spirit, moving between generic references to create shifting expectations in far more complex and destabilising ways than that simple dichotomy suggests.

The story is as follows. A clerk falls in love with a lady, who like her knightly husband is the model of courtesy, and pious besides. Her lady-in-waiting (who is the knight's sister) falls in love with the clerk; both fall ill for love. Wishing to help the clerk, the origin of whose illness she does not know, her sister-in-law encourages the lady to visit him out of pity. He declares his love, and persuades her that Christian charity requires her to grant him her love as he will otherwise die; she agrees to grant more than love, provided he can recover his health

sufficiently to serve her adequately; he jumps up, cured. The lady-in-waiting reports their arrangement to the knight, who goes to the rendezvous disguised as the clerk. His wife recognises him and shuts him in a room to wait till she has welcomed some guests; she enjoys, indeed exhausts, the clerk, sends him out of the country, and then sets the household on her husband to beat him as being, she tells them, the impudent clerk. He reveals himself, she begs forgiveness and lives a blameless life before dying in a state of grace.

The plot is clearly that of a fabliau – sexual infidelity, trickery and violence, indeed the second part is an obvious analogue of *La Borgoise d’Orliens*⁴ – while there is an unmistakable courtly aspect, particularly in the first part, though this too has a partial fabliau analogue in *Guillaume au faucon*.⁵ *Un Chivaler* starts by presenting a couple who are perfect courtly characters, models of their type, living a chivalric life, the whole concisely evoked through topoi of beauty, valour, hunting and tourneys. The lady is deeply pious, a characteristic which will become significant – and which already suggests that she goes beyond the courtly type. Even more does the nature of the marital relationship: husband and wife love each other, whenever the knight goes off hunting or tourneying his wife prays for him, and on his return they immediately make love. The other characters are the initially loyal lady-in-waiting, almost as beautiful as her mistress, the local priest, an excellent pastor, and his clerk, who is good at his job and a fine example of Nature’s handiwork. But already there is a disjunction. Everyone is a perfect example of their kind, but their kinds do not belong in the same literary context. Though it is not remarkable in itself to find chivalric characters in a fabliau, the co-existence of knight and lady with priest and clerk indicates that we find ourselves between worlds: the priest and the clerk belong in a fabliau and evoke fablialesque expectations – each should be the lover or suitor of a married, usually enthusiastically adulterous, woman – while the extreme piety of the lady distinguishes her both from a typical courtly heroine and from a fabliau wife, just as the loving marital relationship undermines both courtly and fablialesque norms.

For we are not in a fabliau either, in spite of the clerk and the priest and the urban setting. The priest, almost uniquely in the fabliaux, is a good man, the explicit negation of the fabliau type:

En cele vile, si com sout estre,
 Estout un vicaire, un prestre
 Que fu prodomme en sa manere:
 Ne fud glotun ne lechere,
 Bien ama Deu e seinte Esglise
 E bien sustint le servise;
 Clerks amoit ke bien chanteient
 E ke melodie feseient
 En esglise pur Deu loer:
 En li n'i aveit quei reprover. (43–52)

[In that town, as it happened, there was a vicar, a priest, who was a good man in his way of life; he was neither greedy nor lecherous, he loved God and Holy Church and maintained the liturgy well. He liked clerks who sang well and made music in church to praise God; there was nothing in him to reproach.]

Indeed, apart from a couple of brief appearances as a concerned employer, the priest plays no part in the narrative; if he has a function, it seems to be to establish a link with the fabliaux while undermining it by his atypical character. The clerk too is presented, not like his peers as frivolous or seductive, but as a model clerk, albeit a very handsome one:

Bien savoit chaunter e lire
 Li clerk, e si savoit li sire.
 Li clerk fu de bele estature,
 Bien out en li overé Nature.
 Qui de beauté vousist contendre,
 En li n'avoit quei reprendre.
 Apert avoit la viere,
 Sur tote rien fud debonere.
 La gent le amoient pur sa bounté,
 Pur sa pruesce, pur sa beauté.
 Le vicaire mult le ama,
 Kar sages e umbles le trova. (55–66)

[The clerk was good at singing and reading, and so was his master. The clerk cut a fine figure, Nature had done good work in him. If anyone were to compete with him in beauty, there was nothing in him to criticise. He had an open face, he was supremely amiable. People loved him for his goodness, his courage, his beauty. The vicar loved him greatly, for he found him sensible and humble.]

Unusually, his social background is given: the orphaned son of a knight, he is entering the priesthood to earn a living (vv. 67–72), so it is his birth which gives him the qualities for which he is generally loved. Equally unusually, the lady's maid is her knightly husband's sister and thus high-born like the clerk.

After the presentation of these perfect but literarily ambivalent characters, the action begins, and with it a clear move towards the fablialesque, against a background of courtly love. The clerk meets the lady and her maid every morning at church – in several fabliaux an opportunity for seduction. In a change of pace which will recur at subsequent turning points, we hear that

Tant passa li tens avant
 Ke li clerk devint amant:
 Ama la dame sanz reison
 Ke fud de grant religion (87–90)

[Time passed, until the clerk fell in love. He loved the lady immoderately, who was very devout]

and soon, even more brusquely, that '*La chamberere le clerk ama / Tant ke pres se aragia*' ['The maid loved the clerk so much that she nearly went mad'] (vv. 107–08). The contrast between the irrational love of the clerk and the girl, and the piety of the lady is repeatedly emphasised:

La dame del clerk ne sout novele,
 Ne li clerk de la dammoisele:
 Mult furent les dous tormenté.
 La dame n'i miht unc sa pensé:
 Ne ama li clerk si en Deu nun.

Li clerk par fine foleisun
 Ama tant ke il enmaladi:
 Sa colur, sa beauté perdi. (115–22)

[The lady had no tidings of the clerk, nor the clerk of the girl. Both were sorely tormented. The lady never thought about it: she loved the clerk only in God. The clerk in sheer madness was so much in love that he fell ill: he lost his colour and his beauty.]

The foolishness or insanity of love will become a leitmotiv, together with repetition of forms of *amer/amur* to highlight the contrast between the lady's love of God and husband and the foolish love of the clerk and the girl. Already in the 47 lines starting with the clerk's falling in love (vv. 88–135), the notion of irrationality occurs six times⁶ and forms of *amer* 18 times, so much exaggerating the Ovidian topos of love-madness as to give it a wholly negative cast; while the lady is described as specifically not frivolous, but rather pious, charitable and faithful:

La dame rien ne savoit
 Ke li clerk tant l'amoit;
 Ne pensa nient de folie
 Deu ama e bone vie:
 Chascun jor, kant ele mangeit,
 Treis povres devant li pesseit. (101–06)

[The lady was quite unaware that the clerk loved her so much; she had no flighty thoughts, she loved God and a good life: every day, when she ate, she fed three paupers before herself.]

Her charity here sets up an initial narrative tension and will both motivate and condemn her taking pity on the clerk. At the same time, it builds upon the presentation of love to confuse our expectations of a courtly, or alternatively a fabliau, ethos.

Love and folly map the development of the tale. Like the clerk, the girl is afflicted by the courtly topoi of love-madness and love-sickness:

Por poi ke sun sen ne rechaungat;
De fin aunguisse est enmaladi:
Poi manga e meins dormi,
Perdi force e colur. (126-29)

[She nearly lost her mind; she fell ill for sheer anguish. She ate little and slept less, and lost strength and colour.]

Then the characters are put in the picture themselves with a second cluster of love terms. The girl declares her love for the clerk, and the clerk reveals his for the lady. The girl's love conforms to the highest courtly standard:

La dammoisele, ki Amur destreint
- Amur est celi qui tut veint -
Ne se pout plus detenir. (195-97)

[The girl, whom Love oppresses - Love is the one who conquers all - could not contain herself any longer.]

It is not inappropriate for these two to feel courtly passion, in spite of their social subordination, for they are both of gentle birth. But while the personification of love is courtly, the throwaway quality here of the Virgilian definition '*Amur est celi qui tut veint*', deflates the allusion, and her rapidly following disturbance is now less the insanity of love than the psychological anguish of having been made to feel foolish:

Cele se tint bien afolee
Kant out celi amee,
E tel amoit ke ne li amat. (215-17)

[She considered herself abused because he loved the other, and she loved someone who did not love her.]

In a further Ovidian and romance echo, the clerk sends the lady's maid as a go-between to her mistress:

Li clerk la dammoisele requist
 Ke un message li feist
 A sa dame priveement
 Tant tost, pur quei e coment
 Suffri pur li paine e dolur;
 E si il ne eust de li le amur,
 A bref terme de duel morreit,
 Tant li tint Amur en destreit. (223-30)

[The clerk asked the girl to take a message for him to her lady, secretly, at once, saying why and how he was suffering distress and pain for her sake; and if he did not have her love, he would shortly die of sorrow, Love kept him in such oppression.]

In conveying her message the girl acts in a courtly way while appealing to the lady's love of God which contrasts with the desire of both clerk and girl and which will have such ambivalent expression in action:

Mes tant fist ele de corteisie
 Ke son message ne cela mie:
 Dist a la dame le grant dolur
 Ke li clerk suffri pur s'amur,
 Requist k'ele eust de li pité,
 Alast le veer pur l'amur Dé. (235-40)

[But she was courteous enough not to conceal his message: she told the lady of the great pain which the clerk was suffering for her love, and asked her to have pity on him, and to go to see him for the love of God.]

In the 46 lines 195-240, there are eleven instances of *amer/amur*, this second cluster pinpointing the second stage of disclosure. There is a final cluster of *amer*, this time as a noble sentiment, at the very end of the fabliau, when the husband, persuaded of his wife's fidelity by his beating, loves her all the more, while she loves both him and God (vv. 570, 575, 578, 581).

Clustering and echo, then, underline the power and the folly of love, love whose literary echoes give an ongoing courtly reference to the tale. Echo also highlights a contrasting theme, one central to the fabliaux and similarly present throughout: deception and self-deception, honesty, belief and mistaken belief, and so trickery. At the beginning everyone loves everyone else and is frank, but then ill-matched sexual desire breaks through and destroys this: honesty turns to lies, discretion to dissimulation, frankness to calculation. Silence is at first presented as wise discretion: the clerk '*koy se tint, e fist ke sage*' ['he kept silent, wisely'] (v. 100), the girl '*pur hounte ne pout discoverir*' ['could not, for shame, reveal'] her feelings (v. 109). When she visits him with the lady's greeting, the clerk reveals that he would be well if the lady wished, but '*a cel eure ne dist plus*' ['at that time he said no more'] (v. 194). His revelation is enough to break the discreet silence: in a reversing echo of line 109, the girl

Ne se pout plus detenir;
Tost li covenist a discoverir
Son corage e son talant. (197-99)

[Could not contain herself any longer; she had to reveal at once her feelings and her desire.]

The echo continues:

Des ore ne peut li clerk celer
La peine e le grant encombrer:
A la pucele se discoveri. (209-11)

[The clerk could no longer hide his distress and his great affliction: he revealed himself to the girl.]

Discretion has given way to honesty, and then returns as dissimulation; knowing herself rejected, the girl

Al clerk ne fist unc semblant
De sa dolur tant ne kant:
Tut granta quanqu'il voleit dire,
Mais al quor out duel e ire. (219-22)

[She gave nothing at all away to the clerk of her pain; she agreed to all he said, but in her heart felt sorrow and distress.]

This is a turning-point for the tale, when both clerk and girl have revealed their love and must now dissimulate. Even so, the lady's maid speaks loyally one last time: '*Mes tant fist ele de corteisie / Ke son message ne cela mie*' ['She was courteous enough not to conceal his message'] (vv. 235–36).

Terms expressing honesty, discretion, and believing or misbelieving, characterise many of the crisis points in the story and tie them to its fablialesque development. The first overt reference to dishonesty marks the lady's entry into the domain of sex. She decides that charity requires her to respond to the clerk's desire, and her maid's thoughts reinforce the shift with the equally fablialesque motifs of trickery, treacherous words and mistaken belief:

- Ma dame, a vostre pleisir seit!"
 Dist la pucele, mes el penseit:
 De la dame aveit envie,
 Com cele que quidout estre amie
 E del clerk quidout avoir ami. (357–61)

['Lady, whatever you wish!' said the girl, but she thought otherwise; she was envious of the lady, for she had thought to be a lover and to have had a lover in the clerk.]

Soon her dissimulated thoughts turn to treacherous action:

La dammoisele tut escouta,
 A ki cest covenant mult peisa;
 Mes de ceo semblant ne fist:
 En sun quer pensa e dist
 Ke lur covenant contereit
 A son frere, kant le verreit. (403–08)

[The girl listened to it all, and did not like this arrangement at all; but she gave nothing away about it: in her heart she

thought and said that she would tell her brother of their arrangement when she saw him.]

She does so, and the knight's response takes the tale fully into fabliau territory. The pace changes, he insults her repeatedly, accuses her of lying and madness, but then rapidly decides to spy on his wife:

“Fole garce, dist il, tu menz!
 Unc ma femme nel pensa:
 Pur nient le dites, nel creirai ja!
 Mau gré vus sai de la novele!
 La dame est tant bone e bele
 Ke ele ne freit ceo pur nule rien:
 Vous estes fole, jeo le vei bien,
 Il semble ke vus eiez la rage!

.....
 Jeo serraï meimes lur espie:
 Mar penserent la folie,
 Si jeo les peus entreprendre! (424-31, 445-47)

[‘Mad wench,’ he said, ‘you are lying! Never did my wife think that. You are wasting your breath, I will not believe it! I do not thank you for the information! The lady is so good and beautiful that she would not do this for anything. You are mad, I can see it well: it seems you are deranged! [...] I shall spy on them myself: it was to their shame that they considered indulging their lust, if I can catch them at it.’]

He shows himself a deceiver like his sister: saying he is going to a tourney in preparation for impersonating the clerk, ‘*le seigneur tut el pensa*’ [‘the lord thought otherwise’] (v. 457), and lies in wait for his wife in the garden.⁷ She meanwhile, we are repeatedly told, remains in ignorance: ‘*la dame de ceo mot ne savoit*’ [‘the lady knew nothing of this’] (v. 449), ‘*la dame quidout qu’il deist veir*’ [‘the lady thought he was speaking the truth’] (v. 455), ‘*mes la dame de ceo ne sout*’, [‘the lady did not know of this’] (v. 462). As soon as she encounters him she is undeceived and reacts with her own deception:

Reguarda, conust son seingnur,

Pensa que ele fust traïe.
 Pur tant ne s'amaya mie:
 Suf le prist par la main,
 Li demanda si il fust tut sein. (474-78)

[She looked, recognised her lord, reflected that she had been betrayed. Nonetheless she was not dismayed. She took him gently by the hand and asked if he were fully recovered.]

The final episode is wholly of the fabliaux. After lengthy sexual activity with the clerk, the lady, feigning to believe that he is the intruder, has her husband beaten. Punishing the knight for his trick while claiming to foil that of the clerk, the lady foregrounds deception with close-range repetition of *quider* [believe, misbelieve] along with new, insulting words to accompany the newly violent action:

Un clerejastre, un menestraz
 En ma chambre est abatu.
 Gardez k'il seit tant batu
 Ke bien seie de li vengié:
 Fole me quidout aver trové. (526-30)

[‘A wretched clerk, a good-for-nothing, has intruded into my room. Make sure he is so well beaten that I am well avenged on him: he thought to find me wanton.’]

La dame se feint mult corucé;
 Respondi com par mult grant irrur
 Ke ceo ne fud pas sun seingnur,
 Mes fud le clerejastre de la vile,
 Ke deceivre la quidout par gile.
 “Mei quidout honir e mon baron!”
 Il osta dunc sun chaperun,
 E la dame le reconuht;
 Tantost a ses pez coruht:
 “Sire, dist ele, pur Deu, merci!
 Ki vus quidout ore aver ici? (556-66)

[The lady pretended to be very angry; she replied, as if in great wrath, that this was not her lord but the wretched clerk of the town, who thought to deceive her by cunning. ‘He thought he would shame me and my husband!’ Then he took off his hood, and the lady recognised him. At once she fell at his feet. ‘My lord,’ she said, ‘mercy, in God’s name! Who would have thought to find you here?’]

Fabliau situations and fabliau emotions have turned lady-in-waiting, knight and lady into truly fabliau characters, into natural deceivers. Thus what began as a tale which seemed to be about courtliness and virtuous example has been derailed by the addition of fabliaesque plot elements and emotions, but, as we have seen, the language and spirit of both strands have been present throughout.

It remains to consider the tale’s central crisis point, which adds a layer to both the courtly and the fabliaesque. When the lady decides to visit the clerk at her maid’s request, love becomes part of a theological argument. First the girl, then the clerk appeal to the lady’s love of God and to Christian charity. The maid tells her mistress that it is a work of mercy to visit the sick:

- Dame, ceo dist la meschine,
 Ceo comande la lei devine
 Ke hom deit le malade visiter:
 Deu vus en rendra bon loer!” (259–62)

[‘Lady,’ the girl said, ‘Divine law commands us to visit the sick: God will reward you well for it!’]

The clerk uses a term which is rare in the corpus of fabliaux but found four times here: *allegger/aleggance* (alleviate, relieve). He begs the lady to have mercy on him, which she professes to understand as ‘forgive’ and says only God can forgive his sins:

- Jeo merci? fet ele, de quei?
 Ne me mesfeites unkes de rien
 Ne jeo vers vus, ceo savez bien:
 De voz pecchez vus face merci
 Deu meimes, kar ceo est en li. (284–88)

['I, have mercy?'], she said, 'for what? You never offended me in any way, nor I you, as you well know. God himself forgive you your sins, for it is in his power.']

It is obviously the courtly notion of *merci* (accepting and granting love) that he intends, which she wilfully misunderstands, but he turns her interpretation to his advantage by arguing that if he dies for love of her she will be guilty of his death before God:

- Allas, dist li clerk, ore sui mort!
 Certes, ma dame, vus avez tort!
 Ne soliez bien Deu amer?
 E volez ore un chaitif tuer!
 Si jeo meur pur vostre amour,
 Jeo requer nostre creatur
 Ke il prenge de vus vengeance.
 Kant faire me poez aleggance,
 Si issi morir me lessez,
 Apert homicide serrez!
 Le main mal deit hom eslire
 Pur eschure cel ke est pire. (309-20)⁸

['Alas,' said the clerk, 'then I am dead! Indeed, my lady, you are wrong! Did you not use to love God? and now you want to kill a poor wretch! If I die for love of you, I pray our creator to take vengeance on you. When you can bring me relief, if you let me die here, you will be an outright murderer! One must choose the lesser evil to avoid the one which is worse.']

His specious argument exploits the lady's love of God by introducing theological concepts of remission of sin and lessening of punishment. Twice earlier the clerk had made similar connections using the same word, always speaking to the lady:

"Li sire qui de la Virgine nasqui
 E deingna pur nus morir
 Vous rende, dame, cest venir!

Mult me avez aleggé de ma paine. (270-73)

['The Lord who was born of the Virgin and deigned to die for us reward you, lady, for coming! You have relieved me greatly of my distress.']

- Dame, dame, li clerk respount,
 Bien sai ke de tut le mund
 Est Deu juges et seignur,
 Mes sacez ke ja ma dolur
 Ne ert aleggé si par vuus nun. (289-93)

['Lady, lady,' the clerk replied, 'I know well that God is judge and Lord of all the earth, but know that my pain will never be relieved unless by you.']

The word *aleger/alegance* (which seems to have been more common in Anglo-Norman, at least in religious contexts) is used, for example in *La Lumere as lais*, as a technical term for remitting punishment (*peine*) due for sin or lightening the penance imposed in confession.⁹ It is occasionally used in other fabliaux, again associated with *peine* or *dolor*, but only in this text is it repeated several times.¹⁰ Intensified by clustering, *alegger* focuses attention on the theological sophistry of these passages about suffering and salvation where the clerk - a theologically educated man - appeals to the lady's piety, misapplying both the virtue and the word in an attempt to confuse her reasoning by specious theology and provoke her charity. And he seems to succeed: she capitulates to his rhetoric, concludes she would indeed be guilty of his death and returns to him, claiming the word as her own:

Dunc dist la dame: "Lessez ester:
 Se jeo vuus voleie m'amur granter,
 Ne mie pur delit que jeo eie
 Mes pur tant ke jeo vodreie
 Alegger vostre maladie,
 Kei vus vaudreit aver amie,
 Quant vuus n'avez le poer

Ke vus pussez od li juer?
 Mes si jeo tant vuus amasse
 Ke jeo m'amur vus grantasse,
 Ke vuus jussez en mun lit
 E feissez de moi vostre delit,
 Quant quidriez estre de vigur
 Ke faire peussez le juy d'amur
 E servir une dame a talent?" (369–83)

[The lady said: 'Enough of that! If I were to grant you my love – not for any pleasure I might have, but just because I would want to relieve your illness – what good would it be to you to have a lover, when you do not have the potency to make love to her? But if I loved you enough to grant you my love, so that you would lie in my bed and take your pleasure with me, when would you expect to be vigorous enough to play the game of love and serve a lady as she would like?']

Stephen Wailes centres a defence of the unity of the text and its humour on this quasi-theological argument, whose sophistry he says 'any Christian of her social class and period would have rejected'.¹¹ He also suggests, surely correctly, that the lady is in fact by no means taken in by the clerk's logic, but hides behind a show of innocence and takes advantage of his case to fulfil her own unavowed desire. She opportunistically allows her love of God, evoked through the clerk's misapplication of a theological term underlain by poor theology, to lead to apparent self-deception and so to sex with the clerk, through adopting his poor theology herself. At the same time, in literary terms, the text shifts suddenly from courtly to fablialesque motivation while preserving both frames of reference, and so enables both characters to achieve their desires.

At the very end of the text there is, unusually for the fabliaux, a return to the *status quo*. The knight, convinced of his wife's fidelity, evicts his sister, loves his wife and she loves him and God, doing penance for her sin and eventually rendering her soul to God. In *La Borgoise d'Orliens* and comparable fabliaux this is by no means what happens: rather, the husband's belief in her fidelity gives his wife

freedom to be as unfaithful as she likes, and we can infer that she does not hesitate. Here, the language of morality and piety has been knowingly subverted by the clerk in the service of a fablialesque plot, but the author allows these virtues the last word, albeit perhaps tongue in cheek: the charity which, misdirected, led to the lady's 'having mercy' on him, is redirected and makes satisfaction for the sin it generated, while wife and husband return to the safety of a comfortable marriage.

So what does all this tell us about the nature of this text? Far from being a romance which turns into a fabliau, it gives notice of its fablialesque affiliation and motives from the start, linking its parts together through enduring patterns and themes reinforced by the clustering and echoing of significant terms. At the same time the continuing courtly reference forces adaptation and transformation of the fabliau conventions. The multiple generic, and also theological, references make it aberrant in relation to each tradition.

It also diverges in some respects from the generality of Anglo-Norman fabliaux. The canon as represented by the *NRCF* includes seven, of which four have extant continental versions and three - I include *Un Chivaler* - do not.¹² Most of them have aristocratic characters and settings, and all the others are relatively brief and notably obscene.¹³ *Un Chivaler e sa dame e un clerk* has noble characters (though its setting is neither court nor castle, but a town) but it is not obscene, and it is double the length of any other Anglo-Norman fabliau.¹⁴ In this respect, as in so many, it is *sui generis*. Could it be as much as anything a monastic joke, whose theological casuistry would be appreciated by the monks of St Augustine's Abbey who placed it as light relief between its historical, romance and devout neighbours?¹⁵

Notes

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- 1 Folios 91'-94'. Digitised at <<https://parker.stanford.edu>> [accessed 17 July 2018]; described by Nigel Wilkins, *Catalogue des manuscrits français de la bibliothèque Parker (Parker Library), Corpus Christi College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 1993), pp. 26-32. Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, Faux Titre, 221-22, 2 vols (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002), II,

760–61, suggests the manuscript might actually have been made in and for St Augustine's Abbey. See also Keith Busby, 'Esprit gaulois for the English: The Humor of the Anglo-Norman Fabliau', in *The Old French Fabliaux: Essays on Comedy and Context*, ed. by Kristin L. Burr, John F. Moran and Norris J. Lacy (Jefferson, McFarland, 2007), pp. 160–73 (161–62), on the generic mixture in this manuscript.

- 2 *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, 10 vols (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1983–98), x, 115–42 (no. 123). Quotations are taken from this edition. The title is correctly printed above the text as *Un Chivaler e ...*, but the running head, table of contents and all other references have *Un Chivalier et ...* Other editions are by Paul Meyer, 'Le chevalier, la dame et le clerc, fabliau anglo-normand, publié pour la première fois d'après un MS. de C.C.C.C.', *Romania*, 1 (1872): 69–87; Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIII^e et XIV^e siècles, imprimés ou inédits*, 6 vols (Paris, Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1872–90), II, 215–34; Ian Short and Roy Percy, *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, Anglo-Norman Text Society Plain Texts Series, 4 (London, Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2000), pp. 18–25 (a very interventionist edition); Jean-Luc Leclanche, *Le Chevalier paillard: quinze fabliaux libertins de chevalerie, édition bilingue* (Arles, Actes Sud, 2008), pp. 118–53.
- 3 On incoherence see Per Nykrog, 'Courtliness and the Townspeople: The Fabliau as a Courtly Burlesque', in *The Humor of the Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 59–73: 'a strange hybrid [...] this compound story is a most unfortunate enterprise' (p. 70); and Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux: étude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale*, 2nd ed., Publications Romanes et Françaises, 123 (Genève, Droz, 1973), pp. 66–69. Natalie Muñoz, *Disabusing Women in the Old French Fabliaux*, Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures, 230 (New York, Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 40–48, disputes Nykrog in a discussion of its courtliness or uncourtliness undermined by not a little misquotation, mistranslation and misinterpretation. On analogues, see Göran Börnas, 'Le cocu battu et content: étude sur un conte de La Fontaine', *Studia Neophilologica*, 44 (1972): 37–51 (especially pp. 47–49); and Frauke Frosch-Freiburg, *Schwankmären und Fabliaux: ein Stoff- und Motivvergleich*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 49 (Göppingen, Kümmerle, 1971), pp. 170–76. A more positive appreciation is given by Roy J. Percy in two articles: 'Anglo-Norman Fabliaux and Chaucer's Merchant's Tale', *Medium Ævum*, 69

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- (2000): 227–60, and ‘An Anglo-Norman Prose Tale and the Source of the Seventh Novel of the Seventh Day in the *Decameron*’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 37 (2008): 384–401; also by Stephen L. Wailes, ‘The Unity of the Fableau *Un Chivalier et sa dame et un clerk*’, *Romance Notes*, 14 (1972–73): 593–96, and Melissa Furrow, ‘A Fableau Called a Romance: Where and When, How and Why, and Then so What?’, *Notes and Queries*, 250 (2005): 293–95. Furrow argues that the term *romanz* should be taken as a generic marker humorously misapplied. I shall not engage here with the meaning of this multivalent term, other than to note that the entries in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. by William Rothwell ... [et al.], 1st ed. (London, Modern Humanities Research Association, 1992), p. 662, <<http://www.anglo-norman.net>> [accessed 17 July 2018; entry soon to be superseded], strongly suggest that the sense in Anglo-Norman is predominantly linguistic, not generic.
- 4 *NRCF*, III, 337–74 (no. 19). This part has traditionally been seen as derived from *La Borgoise*, but Percy argues the reverse (see references in note 3).
 - 5 *NRCF*, VIII, 215–45 (no. 93).
 - 6 *Sanz reison* (v. 89), *folie* (v. 103, also v. 97, ‘licentiousness, lewdness’), *aragia* (v. 108), *foleisun* (v. 120), *sun sen [...] rechaungat* (v. 126).
 - 7 Underneath an apparently superfluous pear tree – perhaps another ‘high’ reference, to the Latin *comœdia Lidia* (cf. Percy, ‘Anglo-Norman Fableaux’, p. 249 and n. 49, p. 260).
 - 8 The accusation of homicide (*homicida, homicidium*), though not the theology, nor the failure to eat as actual cause of death, is found in Andreas Capellanus: *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, edited with an English translation by P. G. Walsh (London, Duckworth, 1982), pp. 94–95, 98–99. Cf. Percy, ‘An Anglo-Norman Prose Tale’, pp. 392–93: ‘There is some likelihood that the pleading of the clerk [...] owes something to two particularly aggressive and cynically casuistic attempts at seduction in André’s fourth and fifth dialogues.’
 - 9 *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. by Stewart Gregory ... [et al.], 2nd ed. (London, Maney for the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005–), pp. 90–91, <<http://www.anglo-norman.net/>> [accessed 17 July 2018], svv. *alegance*, *alegement*, *aleger*. Adolf Tobler and Erhard Lommatzsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, Weidmann; Stuttgart, Steiner, 1915–2002), I, cols 278–82, svv. *alegement*, *alegier*, *alejance*. *La Lumere as lais*, by Pierre d’Abernon of Fetcham, ed. by Glynn Hesketh, Anglo-Norman Texts, 44/45, 56/57, 58, 3 vols (London, Anglo-Norman

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- Text Society, 1966-2000), III, 176, glossary svv. *aleger*, *aleg(i)ance*, *allegement*.
- 10 It is used twice in *Les deux Anglois et l'anel* (NRCF, VIII, 171-81 (no. 90)) - not an Anglo-Norman poem, but, interestingly, one with English protagonists.
- 11 Wailes, pp. 594-95.
- 12 I count it as a unique text because *La Borgoise d'Orliens* is an analogue of only the final third. Continental versions: *Le Chevalier qui fist parler les cons* (NRCF, III, 45-173 (no. 15)), *Cele qui fu foutue et desfoutue* (NRCF, IV, 151-87 (no. 30)), *Les quatre sohais saint Martin* (NRCF, IV, 189-216 (no. 31)), *Les trois dames qui troverent un vit* (NRCF, VIII, 269-81 (no. 96)). Unique texts: *Le Chevalier a la corbeille* (NRCF, IX, 263-78 (no. 113)), *La Gageure* (NRCF, X, 1-10 (no. 114)), and *Un Chivaler*. Short and Percy print 18, of which 11 form part of Marie de France's *Fables* and the *Chastoiement d'un pere a son fils* and are therefore not considered fabliaux by the NRCF editors.
- 13 In the first article devoted wholly to the topic Nico van den Boogaard, 'Le fabliau anglo-normand', in *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium, Münster, 1979: Proceedings*, ed. by Jan Goossens and Timothy Sodmann, *Niederdeutsche Studien*, 30 (Köln, Böhlau, 1981), pp. 66-77, identifies a 'décor aristocratique qui est de rigueur' ['obligatory aristocratic setting'] and suggests that in England 'le fabliau était essentiellement regardé comme une histoire très courte qui provoquait le rire surtout par des détails obscènes' ['the fabliau was essentially seen as a very short story whose comedy came mostly from obscene details'] (pp. 70, 77). He maintains that these characteristics derive from the social background of writing in French in England, supposedly for aristocratic circles isolated from a continental literary frame of reference, who would not appreciate the intertextual allusions found in continental texts, unless it were the poets themselves who did not understand them (pp. 68-69, 76-77). Though he rejects Jean Rychner's term 'version [...] dégradée' ['degraded version'] (*Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux: variantes, remainements, dégradations*, Recueil de Travaux publiés par la Faculté des Lettres, Université de Neuchâtel, 28, 2 vols (Neuchâtel, Faculté des Lettres; Genève, Droz, 1960), I, 46), and admits that Anglo-Norman versions are not 'moins bien racontées' ['less well told'], van den Boogaard still assumes continental versions are normative: 'elles sont plutôt racontées autrement et par là elles s'écartent davantage d'un original qu'on peut essayer de reconstruire' ['rather they are told differently and thus diverge further from an original which we can try to

reconstruct'] (p. 68). John Hines, *The Fabliau in English* (London, Longman, 1993) gives an overview of the Anglo-Norman fabliaux before summarising and critiquing van den Boogaard (pp. 37–42). Not until Percy's two articles do we find a positive valorisation of Anglo-Norman fabliaux, albeit with some imprecision. For him too 'an elevated social setting was a distinctive and deliberately chosen feature of Anglo-Norman fabliaux' ('Anglo-Norman Fabliaux', p. 245). See also Keith Busby, 'Conspicuous by its Absence: The English *Fabliau*', *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, 12 (1982): 30–41 (36–38).

- 14 Short and Percy draw a further distinction: 'The logical twists and turns [...] are atypical of Anglo-Norman fabliaux' (p. 4).
- 15 We have no way of knowing that; but for evidence of similar mixtures in monastic compilations see Madeleine Blaess, 'Les manuscrits français dans les monastères anglais au moyen âge', *Romania*, 94 (1973): 321–58 (though Busby, *Codex and Context*, II, 749 n. 313, warns of inaccuracies); or Peter Dronke, 'Latin and Vernacular Love-Lyrics: Rochester and St Augustine's, Canterbury', *Revue Bénédictine*, 115 (2005): 400–10.