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STUDIES IN THE TEXT AND CONTEXT OF OLD FRENCH NARRATIVE IN HONOUR OF JOSEPH J. DUGGAN

Edited by Sophie Marnette, John F. Levy & Leslie Zarker Morgan

MEDIUM ÆVUM

Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature

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The Editors

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FRAMING DISCOURSE: THREE VERSIONS OF *DE LA DAMOISELE QUI NE POOIT OÏR PARLER DE FOUTRE*

Sophie Marnette

There is now a sizeable collection of invaluable books and articles written about the medieval French fabliaux, from Bédier, Nykrog and Rychner's seminal studies to the more recent works by scholars such as Bloch, Boutet, Crocker (ed.), Gaunt, Lacy, Levy, Ménard, Muscatine, Pearcy or Schenck, and myriad articles, chapters and translations.[1] Of particular interest are the studies that compare different manuscript versions of the same stories since they shed light on the *mouvance* of medieval texts and sometimes on the possible personalities of authors, *remanieurs* and scribes.[2] The

[1] Joseph Bédier, *Les Fabliaux: études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 6th edn (Paris: Champion, 1964); R. Howard Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Dominique Boutet, *Les Fabliaux* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985); *Comic Provocations: Exposing the Corpus of Old French Fabliaux*, ed. by Holly A. Crocker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Simon Gaunt, 'Genitals, Gender and Mobility, The Fabliaux', in *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Norris J. Lacy, *Reading Fabliaux* (New York: Garland, 1993); Brian J. Levy, *The Comic Text: Patterns and Images in the Old French Fabliaux* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Philippe Ménard, *Les Fabliaux: contes à rire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983); Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux* (Geneva: Droz, 1973); Jean Rychner, *Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux: variantes, remaniements* (Neuchâtel: Faculté des Lettres, 1960); Roy J. Pearcy, 'Intertextuality and *La Damoiselle qui n'ot parler de foutre qu'i n'aust mal au cuer*', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 109 (1993), 526–38; Mary Jane Stearns Schenck, *The Fabliaux: Tales of Wit and Deception* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1987). For a detailed up-to-date bibliography, see Anne Elizabeth Cobby, *The Old French Fabliaux: An Analytical Bibliography*, Research Bibliographies and Checklists, New Series 9 (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2009).

[2] This term was famously first formulated by Paul Zumthor in order to refer to the 'mobilité essentielle du texte médiéval' (Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 72).

present article is squarely located in that tradition, with an added stylistic perspective that envisages how discourse is framed and quoted in a fabliau preserved in five manuscripts in three different versions: *AEC* (*De la Damoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre*), *B* (*De la Damoisele qui n'ot parler de fotre qui n'aüst mal au cuer*) and *D* (*De la Pucele qui abevra le polain*).[3]

This fabliau tells the story of a young girl who cannot hear any crude words, especially the word *foutre*, without fainting or feeling sick; however, a young man hears about her curious disposition, pretends to feel the same way and manages to have sex with her through their mutual use of metaphors to describe their genitals and their actions. The core of the story is formed by a dialogue in Direct Discourse between the young girl and the young man, which presents only minimal changes of content across the three versions. However, a close stylistic analysis will show that it is what the characters say and do before the dialogue that makes these versions very different to the point that one could almost consider them as distinct narratives. Hence, by displacing our attention from the more obvious target of direct speech to the less obvious focus of its framing, this stylistic approach will significantly enhance our understanding about the dynamics of relationships in the texts — notably gender and class relationships but also the connections between the various narrators and their characters and thus the texts' complex and contrasting construction of voices, identities and irony. In doing so, this article will therefore also grapple with a major conceptual issue at the core of current medievalism, i.e. how do we best handle (and interpret) different versions of the same story in a post-Rychner/Bédier world?

[3] All examples and line numbers will be quoted from Rychner's edition, which publishes the three versions in parallel (Rychner, *II. Textes*, pp. 120–35). The *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van den Boogaard, vol. IV (Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1998), pp. 57–89) presents critical editions of *AEC* and *B*, and just a diplomatic edition of *D*. *AEC* stands for MS *A*: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 837, MS *E*: Paris, BnF, fr. 1593, and MS *C*: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Hamilton 257. *B* stands for MS *B*: Bern, Bibliothèque de la Bourgeoisie, 354. *D* stands for MS *D*: Paris, BnF, fr. 19152. See Rychner (*I. Observations*, p. 9) for short descriptions of the manuscripts and further references.

The Three Versions and their Previous Interpretations

Version *AEC* can be opposed to the two others on three crucial grounds: the girl is of noble birth, she gets married to the young *vallet* before they go to bed together and she is the one who initiates the dialogue by touching his body and asking what the various parts are, to which he responds by using metaphors (e.g *poulain* for penis, *sas a l'avaine* for testicles). In versions *B* and *D*, the young girl is the daughter of a rich peasant, the young man is hired by her father as a labourer, and she decides that he should sleep in her bed at night. The young man then proceeds to touch her and to ask about the various parts of her body. She does not initiate the dialogue or the touching but she is the one who first devises metaphors. One of the most significant differences between versions *B* and *D* is that the young man is *uns vallez* named David in the first but *uns clers* in the second.

Rychner studied the texts in terms of style and composition.[4] He was interested in finding the best version, which would be, in his view, the closest to the original:

> La version originale, ou la plus fidèle à l'original, est la plus cohérente et la mieux écrite; les remanieurs, qu'ils le veuillent ou non, en altèrent l'organisation ou la facture.[5]

For Rychner, *A* could not have been close to the original version for two main reasons: first, the young girl should not be the one taking the initiative given her prudery but should on the contrary be the one initiating the use of metaphors through her answers;[6] and second, because the marriage eliminates the trick of the 'valet rusé' (p. 90) on which the fabliau is based. Moreover, the transfer of the action into an aristocratic milieu removes a 'ressort burlesque' (p.

[4] Rychner, *I. Observations*, pp. 84–91.

[5] Ibid., p. 91.

[6] Rychner declines to expand on this point, saying 'il me semble en effet, à tort ou à droit, mais sans que la décence me permette d'exposer mes raisons, que les réponses du jeune homme n'ont de sens que par rapport à celles de la demoiselle' (ibid., p. 90).

90) since the excessive prudery of a peasant's daughter is more incongruous and therefore can be more open to ridicule than that of a baron's daughter. Of the two other versions, he judged *B* superior because it was better written and composed and would satisfy a demanding audience while *D* was more of a 'restitution' (p. 90) from memory on the part of a teller who catered for a less sophisticated audience.[7]

Pearcy agrees with Rychner to say that the *B* version is the best and the closest to the original because he detects in it some elements of courtly parody (i.e. intertextual elements referring to Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* and *Perceval*).[8] He sees the *AEC* version as lacking in psychological subtlety and in intertextual references (p. 534–35). He gives more credit to version *D* although he also notes its lack of intertextuality and its veering towards a more moralistic and anti-feminist attitude (p. 536–37).

Gaunt justly points out that Rychner's 'readings of these texts are perhaps more revealing of twentieth-century rather than medieval assumptions about gender'.[9] He notes that *B* is actually no more plausible than *AEC* since the girl invites the young man into her bed. Prudery is not condemned in either text. Gaunt highlights line 68 in version *AEC*, which comes at the end of the *vallet*'s answers to the young girl's questions about his body and before he starts asking her questions: *Sire, mout estes bien apris*. For Gaunt, the damsel's comment acts as a signal that the young man has accessed the right code:

> This fabliau needs not be read as the tale of an aristocratic woman suffering at the hands of a ruthless man because of her prudery, but rather as a text in which a young woman has sex on her own terms. The same is also true of *B*, though perhaps less explicitly so, given the absence of *AEC*'s line 68.[10]

[7] Ibid., p. 90.

[8] Pearcy, 'Intertextuality and *La Damoiselle qui n'ot parler de foutre qu'i n'aust mal au cuer*', pp. 526–38.

[9] Gaunt, 'Genitals, Gender and Mobility: The Fabliaux', p. 234.

[10] Ibid., pp. 282–83.

Gaunt then goes on to show that *D* is the only text that conforms to Rychner's vision of the story since it explicitly condemns prudery in his misogynistic narrative comments (especially in the moral at the end) while also ridiculing the young girl, notably when she uses a metaphor that is more vulgar than the item she wishes to avoid naming (using *coilles de mouton,* on line 147, to refer to her breast):

> The damsel is here portrayed as victim of her own scruples. Hoisted by her own petard, she loses control of the body she wishes to describe through metaphors. Whereas in *AEC* and *B* the damsel exploits discourse to her own ends, here the clerk exploits discourse and the woman.[11]

Gaunt thus concludes that:

> The same narrative can be deployed to make opposing points about relations between men and women, even though the roles they play appear superficially unchanged. This is not inherently a tale about men exploiting women, offering a constant portrait unequivocally as a satire of a particular social class, either the courtly class's euphemistic language or the peasant class's failure to use it properly.[12]

The present article significantly expands Gaunt's point and adds to it through a close analysis of speech and thought-presentation strategies (briefly defined and described in the next section). I will first examine two figures who have received less consideration by scholars, namely the father and the young man, before looking at some of the young girl's reported thoughts in *AEC*. I will then highlight how each text's original treatment of class and gender dynamics as well as their construction of textual identities generate their own specific ironies before offering some conclusions as to how fruitfully these discrepancies can be read.

[11] Ibid., p. 284.

[12] Ibid., p. 284.

Speech and Thought Presentation Categories

In Direct Discourse (in bold in all examples below), the reporting speaker evokes the original speech/thought situation and conveys, or rather claims to convey, the exact words [ideas] of the original locutor (speaker in the text). The pronouns, tenses and deictic words of the original discourse stay the same: they are not transposed (see example [1] below).[13]

In Indirect Discourse (underlined in all examples below), the reporting speaker transposes the original utterance in his/her own words. The reported discourse is subordinated to a reporting verb and is introduced by a subordinating conjunction (e.g. *que*). The pronouns, tenses and deictics of the reported discourse are switched to the reporting situation of enunciation. However, since in Old French literature, the story is often partly told in tenses linked to the present (indicative present, present perfect and future), Indirect Discourse can retain these tenses instead of using the past (see example [8] below).[14] In Narrated Discourse, we are dealing with verbs and/or lexical expressions that refer to an activity of speech or thought but without being followed by a completive, e.g. *Si il a l'ostel demandé / Por Deu et por saint Nicolas* (*B*, vv. 56–57). The pronouns, tenses and deictics are those of the reporting situation of enunciation.[15]

Free Indirect Discourse (in italics in example [9] below) is characterized by the presence of features of Direct Discourse (direct questions, exclamations, deictics, colloquialisms, etc.) reported in the fashion of Indirect Discourse, i.e. with shifted pronouns and tenses but without being syntactically dependent on a reporting clause (i.e., without being directly subordinated to a *verbum dicendi* or *sentiendi* and without being co-ordinated to a previous reported clause). As with Indirect Discourse, the tenses of medieval Free Indirect Discourse are not necessarily in the past because the

[13] For more details see Sophie Marnette, *Speech and Thought Presentation in French: Concept and Strategies* (Amsterdam/New York: John Benjamins, 2005), p. 180.

[14] For more details, see ibid., p. 180.

[15] For more details, see ibid., pp. 85–130.

narration itself is partly told in the present tenses. Moreover it is important to realize that Free Indirect Discourse does not always follow an Indirect Discourse but can appear on its own.[16]

The Father

One of the issues to which scholars have not paid much attention so far is the importance of the father in version *B* and *D* as opposed to his relative absence in *AEC*.

In *AEC*, the narrative introduces the father in vv. 3 and 4, as a *baron qui mout estoit de grand renon*, but then focuses on his daughter. He is briefly mentioned in line 38 when his daughter asks him to give her the young man as husband, a request he grants in brief Direct Discourse: *Fille, dist il, molt volentiers* (l. 40). There is no dialogue between the father and the young man. The father is thus part of the background: his noble status places the narrative in an aristocratic setting and the word 'renon' accords with the 'elevated' register of the text (see below) while also being ironically linked to line 11, which ends the description of his daughter's peculiar behaviour: *Mout en fu grant la renommee*).

In versions *B* and *D* however, the father plays an integral role in the story, though manifested differently in each. In *B*, he is introduced after his daughter (vv. 10–13) and in relation to her: because he has no other child, he loves her so much that he does everything she wants: *plus ert a li que ele a lui* (l. 13). He is first referred to as a *prodon* (l. 17) and the word *vilain* used to qualify him only appears in line 36. What is emphasized here then is the difficult character of the young girl (*orgoilleuse, felonesse, desdaigneuse* vv. 3–4) and his doting on her. The first dialogue of the narrative occurs between the father and the young man, first in Narrative Discourse (3 lines) and Indirect Discourse (8 lines), then in Direct Discourse (15.5 lines for the father, 8.5 lines for the young man). The father asserts that he does not want to lose his daughter on account of foul words. When the girl overhears the

[16] For more details, see ibid., p. 181.

vallet saying that hearing the word *foutre* makes him sick, she tells her father to hire him:

[1] "…
Se vos m'amez ne tenez chiere
Retenez lo, gel vos comment.
- Doce fille, a vostre talant!"
Fait li vilains, qui molt ert beste. (*B*, vv. 104–07)

One should note that in [1] above, the qualifying phrase *molt beste* is applied to the father in respect of his unquestioning devotion to his daughter. The father asks his daughter where David should sleep and she suggests her own bed, to which he agrees:

[2] - **Ma fille, a vostre volanté**
Faites do tot!" fait li prodon (*B*, vv. 118–19).

What is emphasized in the portrayal of the father is his peculiar indulgence and complete deference towards his daughter.

In version *D*, the father is introduced first (as in *AEC*) but this time the narrator uses the word *villain* straight away and emphasizes how rich he is, owning substantial goods and lands (vv. 6 to 11) before mentioning the daughter.[17] There is no allusion to the father's love for his daughter, nor to the fact that she is an only child. Rather than focusing on the daughter's character, *D* seems to concentrate on the clerk's shrewdness in opposition to the stupidity of the two other characters. His first trick is to disguise himself so as to conceal that he is a clerk (by hiding his tonsure):

[17] In describing the *villain*'s riches, the narrator could in fact be using an ironic metaphor since the *villain* lives near a wood (*bois*) that does not get many visitors while the young girl uses the word *bois* to metaphorically refer to her sex (as opposed to meadow in the two other versions):

Quar molt avoit large pasture.
Delez .I. bois où il manoit,
Asez de terres i avoit;
N'i repairoient gaire gent (*D*, vv. 8–11)

[3] Une coife a mist en sa teste:
Vint au vilein qui molt fu beste; (*D,* vv. 45–6)

Contrary to *B* (see [1] above), the qualifying phrase *molt beste* is accorded to the father as regards his interaction with the clerk. As in *B*, the first dialogue occurs between the young man and the father but here it starts immediately in Direct Discourse: the young man begins by offering his services (7 lines). The father's Direct Discourse (19 lines) differs from *B*: he explicitly says that the young man seems well mannered and must hail from a good background and then offers him a lot of money provided that the young man does not say *foutre*, a word that, in turn, provokes the young man's indignation (15 lines in Direct Discourse). Clearly the narrative insists on the fact that the peasant is rich, foolish and completely beguiled by the clerk. Once the girl overhears the latter's reaction, she hires him on the spot, specifying how much he should earn (*dix sous*). The final intervention on the part of the father is to tell his daughter to make the young man a bed in the barn (3.5 lines of Direct Discourse); in response, she suggests that he should sleep in her bed since he might be frightened on his own, which amuses the clerk. What is subtly recurrent here, therefore, is the opposition between the clerk and the two other characters, whom he intends to fool, a point I will return to in the next section.

The Young Man

The position of the clerk in *D* is particularly interesting and has been rather overlooked by scholars. The three versions of the story each offer different descriptions of the young man, of his intentions and his speech. In *AEC*, he is just *un vallet*, without any other qualification. His intentions, expressed in Indirect Discourse (underlined), are rather bland, not necessarily devious:

[4] Un vallet ot en la contrée
Qui a oïes les noveles.

A merveille les tint à beles
Et jure Dieu, à qoi qu'il tort,
Ne lera qu'il ne voist à cort
Por soi deduire et deporter. (*AEC*, ll. 12–7)

The young girl is first convinced by his behaviour (he pretends to faint when she faints), not by his words. The narrative does not mention his reaction when the girl asks her father to let her marry him, nor when he is first in bed with her. His first words in Direct Discourse (in bold) very obediently answer the girl's direct question (and direct touching):

[5] La damoisele, ce me samble,
Li mist la main droit sor le pis:
"**Ice que est**," fet ele, "**amis?**
- Douce, par sainte patrenostre,
Quanqu'il i a ce est tout vostre." (*AEC*, ll. 51–52)

The most detailed description is that of his penis and his testicles, making him more of a toy boy than of a conniving trickster. Once the young girl expresses her approval of his 'knowledge' (l. 68, see *supra*), he kisses her and then starts exploring her body and asking questions, withdrawing his hand when he arrives at *une autre haveüre* ([another hole], i.e. her anus, l. 90), which she describes as the guardian (*guete* = lookout) of her fountain and meadow (her vagina). It is only when the girl tells him not to be afraid of the guardian and to feed and water his colt (penis) that he gets into action but all the subsequent intercourse is described in strictly metaphorical terms, by him and by the narrator, which is in line with the courtly atmosphere parodied in the text.[18] The last Direct Discourse of the dialogue is that of the girl who orders him in no uncertain terms to continue (see [14] below). Nothing is said about

[18] However this is still very humorous: see next section and note 19. Indeed despite Rychner's reservation about the behaviour of the female character and his contention that this version lacks humour, there are other fabliaux where the woman's pleasure and/or her manipulation of language are similarly at the forefront (see for example *Li Sohait des vez* or *Porcelet*).

the pleasure of the young man. Again, he seems rather subordinate to the will of the young woman.

In version *B*, the narrative offers more details about the young man while also pointing repeatedly to the difficult character of the young girl, especially to the fact that she hates men and does not care for what they do or say:

[6] Tant c'uns vallez par avanture,
Qui mout savoit barat et guile,
Herbergiez fu en cele vile,
Qui aloit gueaignier son pain,
Oï parler de ce vilain
Et de sa fille qui aoit
Les homes, et cure n'avoit
Ne de lor faiz ne de lor diz.
Icil vallez ot non Daviz;
Si aloit toz seus par la terre,
Comme preuz, avanture querre.
Qant il sot veraie novele
De l'orgoilleuse damoisele,
Qui estoit de si mal endroit,
A la maison en vint tot droit
O ele estoit avec son pere; (*B*, vv. 32–47)

Although David is said to know how to trick (*barat* and *guile*), there is no mention of his actual intentions. Repetition of the words *avanture* and *preu* possibly points to his noble status (since knights typically seek adventures) but it might also be construed parodically since he is also said to *gagner son pain* (something knights definitely do not do). In the latter sense, then, both characters would have aspirations that do not match their status: the young man in pursuit of knightly adventure and the young girl yearning for courtly language.[19] Unlike the clerk in *D*, David does

[19] Vv. 124 to 127 in *B* might be pointing to the young girl's inadequacy in this regard:

Blanche ot la char con flor d'espine;

not protest against the idea of going to bed with the girl and, once in bed, there is no mention of his desire either, even though she is described as beautiful (see note 9). However, once David starts asking questions, he seems to begin to dominate; he is the one who points out that his colt is hungry and then thirsty, thereby prompting the young girl to invite the colt into her meadow and then into her fountain. It is he who utters the last Direct Discourse (l. 203), after which the text departs from the metaphorical vocabulary in order to highlight more crudely the young man's performance before one last brief metaphor at the very end:

[7] Daviz respont: "**Ce est bien dit**!"
Atant li met el con lo vit;
Si fait son boen et son talant
Si qu'ele nel tient pas à lant
Que . IIII. fois la retorna,
Et se li cornerres groça
Si fu batuz de .II. jumaus.
A icest mot faut il fabliaus. (*B*, 204–10)

Line 206 above is rather ambiguous: a literal translation could be either 'so he satisfied himself [did his good] and his desire' or 'he satisfied her [did her good] and her desire [to her]' (if we postulate an elliptic *li*). In the first case, the balance would seem to shift from the young girl to the young man (a possibility perhaps emphasized by the crude expression *la retorna*), but in the second, the text seems rather to acknowledge the girl's satisfaction with the young man's performance (both in terms of quality and frequency). This ambiguity as to whether the young girl is 'used' by the young man or simply enjoys him can be found in many other fabliaux such as *De la Dame qui se fist foutre* or *De la Damoisele qui sonjoit*.[20]

S'ele fust fille de raïne,
Si fust ele bele à devise.

[20] This is astutely noted by Lacy (*Reading Fabliaux*, p. 124), amongst others. Incidentally both *De la Dame qui se fist foutre* and *De la Damoisele qui sonjoit* actually also appear in MS *B*. See Busby (Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, vol. I (Amsterdam / New

Returning to the *C* MS, we have already noted this version's emphasis on the clerk's cunning. A look at his Direct Discourses has shown that it is through clever use of language that he convinces the rich peasant and then his daughter that he is worth keeping as a labourer. His shrewdness and motivation are actually highlighted in his very first indirect discourse:

[8] Tant c'uns clercs parler en oï,
Qui durement s'en esjoï,
Et dit, par l'ame de son pere,
Qu'il velt ore que il i pere,
Se il set or mais point de guile. (*D*, vv. 39–43)

Notice that, whereas in version *B* the words *barat* and *guile* appear in the narrative proper (*B*, l. 33), here the word *guile* is used by the character himself (*D*, l. 43). The clerk is thus acutely aware of his talent and sets out with the clear intention to deceive, unlike in the other versions. Another example of deceptive speech absent from the other versions occurs when the girl tells her father that he should sleep in her bed: the clerk secretly rejoices but ostensibly refuses, which ironically prompts her to insist that he should, while reassuring him of her intentions (see Direct Discourse dialogue vv. 117–34). An even better example of irony and *double entendre* can be found in vv. 98 to 100 just after the young girl decides to hire him as labourer:

[9] Et cist dist laborer savra,
Batre et vener et bien hoer;
En la fin s'en porroit loer,
Onques mais n'orent serjant tel. (*D*, vv. 98–101)

York: Rodopi, 2002), p. 446) for perceptive suggestions as to how to undertake a contextualized reading of the fabliaux contained in this manuscript.

The first part is in Indirect Discourse without *que* (underlined) but then switches to Free Indirect Discourse (italicized).[21] The verbs *laborer, batre, vener* and *hoer* used can clearly function as metaphors for sexual intercourse; *batre* is in fact used by the girl herself later on (l. 217) and by the narrator (l. 221). The Free Indirect Discourse is doubly ironic, first because, unlike the other characters, we already know that he is not a *serjant* but a clerk, and secondly because, in line with the sexual metaphor he just used, he will indeed bring entire satisfaction to the young girl in the end, something that a fabliau audience would expect. One could, however, argue that the italicized lines above are not the clerk's words (i.e. not a Free Indirect Discourse) but rather the narrator's, who comments ironically on the situation.[22] I would argue that this ambiguity is not only perfectly possible but might even be intentional given the special connection existing here between the narrator and the clerk.[23] It seems particularly important to note the use of Free Indirect Discourse here as this category of reported discourse is rarely used in the fabliaux in general (as opposed to other short narratives such as lais, for example) and it is absent in versions AEC and *B,* but it seems very appropriate here in order to express the empathy between the narrator and his character.[24] Indeed, in contrast to the other versions, the narrator is particularly interested

[21] What I call 'Indirect Discourse without *que*' is a reported discourse that is transposed within the reference frame of the quoting speaker and dependent on a *verbum dicendi* but without a specific marker of subordination such as *que*, etc. This category is not similar to that of Free Indirect Discourse (which is sometimes wrongly called 'ID without *que*') since in the case of 'ID without *que*', the *verbum dicendi* clearly cannot stand on its own, e.g. **et cil dist* in [9]. So although the subordination is not expressed syntactically, it is expressed morphologically (transposition of persons and sometimes of tenses) and semantically. See [4] above for another example. For more details see Marnette, *Speech and Thought Presentation in French*, pp. 182–86.

[22] It is especially difficult to identify the subject of *pourroit*. Is it a third-person feminine (i.e. *ele s'en pourroit loer*) or masculine referring to the clerk or neutral (*on s'en porroit loer*)?

[23] It is not unusual for Free Indirect Discourse to be ambiguous (see Marnette, ibid., pp. 104–09).

[24] For a comparison of the use of Reported Discourse in fabliaux and lais, see Sophie Marnette, 'Oralité et locuteurs dans les lais médiévaux', *Diachroniques*, 3 (2013), 21–48.

in the clerk's feelings and reactions. The narrator describes him as having fun (*s'en esjoï* (l. 40), *s'en envoise* (l. 115)), as clever and quick witted (*vistes et proz* (l. 50), *bien enseigniez* (l. 79)) and he insists on his physical desire for the young girl once he is in bed with her:

[10] A poi li clers d'angoise n'art
Por la pucele que il sent.
Si atant fait de hardement,
Sor ses mameles mist sa mein: (*D*, vv. 140–03)

The attention paid to how much the clerk enjoys himself could furthermore be linked to some of the narrator's interventions (also absent from other versions) mentioning the enjoyment created by his tale [11] and in hearing words such as *foutre* [12]:

[11] RACONTER vueil une aventure
Par joie et par envoiseüre;
Ele n'est pas vilaine à dire,
Mais moz por la gent faire rire. (*D*, vv. 1–4)

[12] Et c'est à toz .I. molt doz mot.
El monde n'a sote ne sot,
Ne vielle de .IIIIXX. anz,
Qui ne soit durement joianz,
Quant el en oit .I. sol mot dire,
Au meins l'en estuet il à rire. (*D*, vv. 27–32)

Since it is possible and even likely that the author of the text was himself a clerk,[25] his narrator's empathy with his young male

[25] As noted by Bédier (*Les Fabliaux*, p. 390) and Ménard (*Les Fabliaux: Contes à rire du Moyen Âge*, p. 91), some fabliaux present themselves as written by clerks (e.g. *Le Povre mercier, Des Trois dames qui trouverent l'anel*). Including our *D* version, at least ten fabliaux have a clerk as one of their protagonists: *La Borgoise d'Orliens, Les Braies au cordelier, Le Clerc qui fust repus derrière l'escrin, Le Cuvier, Gombert et les deux clers, Del Meunier et des II clers, Le Povre clerc, La Pucele qui voloit voler, Un Chivalier et sa dame et un clerc* (also see Stephen L. Wailes, 'Vagantes and the Fabliaux', in *The Humor of the*

character is quite plausible and this would also explain his ridiculing of the young girl and her father, both of them being resolutely 'others' and thus victims of the clerk's tricks. As shown above, the figure of the father and his speech function explicitly in contrast to the clerk: the peasant is *molt beste* (l. 46) while the clerk is *vistes et proz* (l. 50); he is rich while the clerk is presumably poor. The way the author frames and expresses the discourse of the girl also stands out against the clerk's astute discourse. As Gaunt points out, her botched metaphor of *coilles de mouton* (l. 147) for breast (both hardly euphemistic and less than flattering) showcases her lack of control of both language and her body.[26] One can also laugh at the way she describes her anus as a *cornerres* that often gets out of breath from sounding the horn, thereby candidly revealing that she farts a lot (vv. 164–67). This clumsiness can be contrasted with the artful (if prurient) way in which the clerk describes his horse's (i.e. penis) thirst (vv. 201–09). The text thus cleverly complements the already inherent oppositions grounded in status on the one hand (peasant versus clerk, father versus bachelor) and gender on the other (female versus male).[27]

Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), p. 52). Several scholars have observed that clerks are consistently treated positively in these texts as opposed to other typical male figures such as fathers, husbands and priests (see amongst others Bédier, *Les Fabliaux*, p. 393; Ménard, *Les Fabliaux: contes à rire du Moyen Âge*, p. 92; Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux*, pp. 132–33; Jean-Claude Payen, 'Goliardisme et fabliaux: interférences ou similitudes? Recherches sur la fonction idéologique de la provocation en littérature', in *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium, Münster 1979: Proceedings*, ed. by Jan Goossens and Sodmann Timothy (Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 1981), p. 285; Arié Serper, 'Le Monde culturel des fabliaux et la réalité sociale', in *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium*, ed. by Jan Goossens and Sodmann Timothy (Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 1981), pp. 392, 398, 401). They see that trend as proving that some of the fabliaux's authors were indeed clerks themselves.

[26] See Gaunt, 'Genitals, Gender and Mobility: The Fabliaux', pp. 283–84. Some scholars such as Muscatine (p. 144) see the use of *coilles* as an 'authorial slip' but Gaunt's interpretation makes more sense.

[27] In theory, the father is shown as exercising power over the clerk in two domains: he has paternal authority over his daughter and has lots of money. But as Hutton (Gabrielle Hutton, 'La Stratégie dans les fabliaux', *Reinardus: Yearbook of the International Reynard Society*, 4 (1991), 111–17) has

The Young Girl

The female character's behaviour and discourse have already been discussed quite extensively in the course of this article but it is worth looking at one more instance of reported discourse to grasp the differences existing between *AEC* and the other versions. As I have indicated, it is the young man's action rather than his speech that convinces the *damoiselle* in *AEC* to marry him.

[13] Quant li vallés la vit pasmée
Tout maintenant goule baée,
Se lest cheoir comme pasmez,
Et quant il se fu relevez
Et la pucele fu levée,
Mout en fu grande la risée,
Et dient tuit par la meson
C'or a la pucele baron,
Car ele meïsme jura
Que ja mari ne per n'aura
S'ele n'a celui qui se pasme,
Quar ele cuide bien et asme
Qu'il soit auques de sa maniere;
A son pere en a fait proiere:
"Donez le moi, biaus pere chiers.
- Fille" dist il, "mout volentiers." (*AEC*, 25–40)[28]

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insightfully shown, fabliaux tend to favour those who have *savoir* (creative use of intelligence) as opposed to those who have *avoir* (power based on external sources, such as place in society or wealth).

[28] The above lines can be analysed in two ways. On the one hand, vv. 34 to 37 can be interpreted as being embedded within one single Indirect Discourse uttered by the people surrounding the young girl: 'They all remark throughout the household that the young girl now has a husband since she swore in person that she would never have a husband and equal unless she has the one who faints because she believes and judges him to be of the same kind as herself'. On the other hand, there could be two separate Indirect Discourses: 'They all remark throughout the household that the young girl now has a husband. Indeed she swore in person that she would never …'.

It is the young girl who determines that she wants as her husband and equal somebody whose action makes him similar to her. This resolution can be contrasted to the young man's own earlier on (see [4] above), which also uses the verb *jurer* and to that of the clerk in *D* (see [8] above). Although the *damoiselle* is definitely presented as in charge of her own destiny, this does not detract from the ironic stance of the narrator, since the subjunctive *soit* after *cuidier* in line 37 shows that she is mistaken in her belief about the young man. That said, however, there seems to be more verbal irony in the text (in terms of contrast between language and actions) than irony of values;[29] in general the discourse of the narrator uses the same type of courtly vocabulary and even the same metaphors as the two main characters, the girl in particular.[30] For example, even the narrator's detailed description of the *vallet*'s penis comparing it to a *baston a champion* (a champion's staff) links it to the courtly setting of jousting while the last lines describing the young man's actions continue the metaphors used by the young girl (contrary to *B*). Version *AEC* is the only one to use a term of address to designate the audience at the very start (*seignor*, l. 1) as well as the expression *par Dieu le pere esperitable* next to the last metaphor (l. 118), just as both characters systematically employ both things in their own discourses (contrary to *B* and *D*).[31] Given the potential link between the narrator and the clerk evoked in *D*, the similarities

[29] D. H. Green, *Irony in the Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 287–325.

[30] Examples of courtly or aristocratic vocabulary linked to battles and/or love poetry are: *renon* (l. 4), *renommee* (l. 11), *deduire* and *deporter* (l. 17), *chanté de geste* (l. 44), *fresté* (l. 56), *baston a champion* (l. 57), *par aventure* (l. 90), *s'en ot grant joie* (l. 103), *honiz et deceüz* (l. 108), *bati, frapa* (l. 119), *las dolant* (l. 121); Girl: *guete* (l. 92) *ferez, batez, hurtez, boutez* (l. 113), *ociez* (l. 114); young man: *trahitor* (l. 111). Note the use of *guete* (lookout) as a metaphor for *anus*, a word that both refers to the setting of *alba* and *chanson d'aube* and to that of a chanson de geste, a connection which does not exist for the metaphor *cornerres* (trumpeter) in *B* and *D*.

[31] The girl uses the words *ami* and *sire*, the young man uses *bele, douce, amie, bele* and *amie bele*. Religious expressions used by both characters — especially the girl — when introducing their various metaphors are: *par sainte patrenostre* and *por Dieu,* for the young man and *por Dieu le roi celestre, por sainte Elaine, par Dieu qui fist et mer et onde, por Dieu le creator* for the girl.

between the narrator's and the *damoiselle*'s discourse in *AEC* appear particularly interesting: her milieu and her own motivation seem to determine the language used by both the narrator and the young man and while it is the latter who initiates the metaphors, it is hers (the fountain's lookout needing to be beaten) that is deployed by the narrator and generates the pun of the tale:

[14] - **Sire, por Dieu le creator,**
Ferez, batez, hurtez, boutez,
Batez le tant que l'ociez,
Si que l'estordissiez trestout
Que ne se face si estout."
Que vous feroie longue fable?
Par Dieu le pere esperitable,
Tant le bati, tant le frapa,
Que onques puis mot ne sona;
Tant le bati, le las dolant,
Qu'il li fist l'alaine puant. (*AEC*, vv. 112–22)

This can be compared to the less subtle ending in *B* (see example [7] above) and the moralistic focus in *D*:

[15] - **Par foi,"** fait ele, **"non feroit,**
Et, se il groce por nul mal,
Si soient prest li mareschal:
Si le batent errant molt bien
Se il grouce de nule rien."
Abevré l'a, à l'ainz qu'il pot,
Mais li corneres n'en dit mot,
Et il fu bien batuz toz dis
Et des mareschauz molt laidis.
Par cest essanple monstrer vueil
Que femes n'aient point d'orgueil
De foutre paller hautement,
Quant il foutent tot igalment.
Mieldres raison est que se haucent:
Teus en parolent qui l'essaucent,
Quar molt a entre faire et dire;

Mais li cus plus que corde tire.
Por la fille au vilain le di,
Qui tantost si se converti,
Que le poulain au bacheler
Fist à sa fontaine abevrer. (*D*, vv. 213–34)

Class and Gender Dynamics, Identities and Irony

By downplaying the position of the father in the narrative (i.e. no emphasis on father-daughter relationship, no interaction between father and young man), the *AEC* version pays less attention to familial hierarchy and social hierarchy than the other versions. Rather, it concentrates on a *damoiselle* who is looking for the Same, a man who behaves and talks as she does, whom, once found, she is willing to marry. She acts as if she could, as a woman, decide upon which man will fit her best, thereby subtly questioning the traditional gender balance. Her noble status might well — as Rychner (p. 90) and Pearcy (p. 535) note — take away some of the more obvious comic effects found in the other stories. Here, humour mainly comes from subtle verbal irony and resides in the contrast between discourse (i.e. the courtly language commonly shared by the characters and the narrator: vocabulary, metaphors, terms of address, use of religious expressions) and action (i.e. what is actually happening between the *damoiselle* and the *valet*).

In version *B,* humour derives partly from the fact that a peasant girl affects the prudery of a noble lady, thereby showing aspirations that do not match her status.[32] There is thus a discrepancy between discourse and personal status *as well as* discourse and actions. In addition, version *B* highlights the upturn of the normal patriarchal hierarchy: the father, for whom his daughter is more important than his own self, does whatever she wants and gets ridiculed

[32] Pearcy ('Intertextuality and *La Damoiselle qui n'ot parler de foutre qu'i n'aust mal au cuer*') astutely links this to the numerous intertextual references to romances which he detects in the text and which he sees as signs of courtly burlesque (e.g. the reference to the fountain, reminiscent of *Yvain* or the name David for the *vallet*, a Welsh name like Perceval's, etc., the similarities between the father in the fabliau and Perceval's mother).

instead of behaving like a strong man. *B* also insists on the young woman's unnatural rejection of the male Other, since she hates all men and does not care for their actions nor their words (vv. 37–38, see [6] above). This contrasts strongly with the fact that she invites David into her bed and then offers her 'fountain' to the 'colt'. Irony therefore also arises from the distance between the narrator's words repeatedly portraying her as difficult and her actual discourses and actions, since she implicitly enjoys the male Other that she so ostentatiously rejects. In other words, the *damoiselle*'s discourse and behaviour are triply inadequate, as a peasant, as a daughter and as a woman.

D highlights the actions and motivation of the clerk as opposed to the *pucele* and her father. This is clear even from the fabliau's title, D*e la Pucele qui abevra le polain*, which showcases how she satisfies the colt (thereby announcing the metaphor) instead of insisting on her condition, *De la Damoiselle qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre* for *AEC* and *De la Damoiselle qui n'ot parler de fotre qui n'aüst mal au cuer* for *B*. In *D*, we find clear collusion between the narrator and the clerk, which might be due to the fact that they have the same social status (as well as the same gender). Dramatic irony arises from the audience's sense of discrepancy in the face of characters (the *villain* and the *pucelle*) acting in ignorance of their situation. Moreover verbal irony frequently occurs through local incongruity between statements and their immediate contexts. What seems at stake here is thus more akin to social satire (a poor but clever clerk fooling rich but dumb peasants) rather than — mostly — gender warfare as in the other versions (which focus on the *damoiselle* rather than on the young man).

Conclusion

A comparative stylistic analysis of the three versions has thus shown that the framing and the reporting of discourse are instrumental in determining the variations in the interaction of gender and class hierarchies within each text as well as in defining the relations of affinity or alienation between the narrator and his characters. Indeed, although we are dealing with very short texts (from 122

lines for *AEC* to 223 for *B* and 235 for *D*), they each manage to create rather specific identities for their protagonists and their narrators as well as offering fairly different reasons to laugh. As we have seen, the discrepancies *between* the texts can be read along the ironic discrepancies *within* the texts.

Since the three versions each present distinctive narratives, it is rather unhelpful to discard any of them. As our analysis convincingly shows, we should, on the contrary, appreciate each text for its own sake *and* for its points of contrast with others, thereby enjoying the *mouvance* that reveals both what they are and what they are not.

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