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**FOOD AND BEVERAGE IN
*LE CHEVALIER DÉLIBÉRÉ***

Le chevalier délibéré (1483) by Olivier de la Marche has an extensive hermit scene: the hermit receives the author, Acteur, gives him food and drink and instructs him in the important issues of life. Le chevalier délibéré thus stands in two main Western European literary traditions: stories about hermits as such (who do or do not provide travellers with food and shelter) and stories in which food and drink have an allegorical function. This paper will discuss both traditions, without attempting to cover all hermit stories or all allegories about food and drink¹.

***Le chevalier délibéré* of Olivier de la Marche**

Olivier de la Marche (c 1425-1502) spent his whole life in the service of the Burgundian dukes. He started his career as a page and rose to be *maître d'hôtel*, *ambassadeur* and *poète*. He followed the dukes around on their travels as much as he could, and thus found himself on the battlefield where Charles the Bold lost his life in 1477. Taken prisoner he was only released after payment of a large ransom. His literary heritage is extensive and varied. He wrote about the organisation of the ducal household, composed an allegorical text about dress and also wrote down his memoirs.

In 1483 Olivier de la Marche completed his most important literary work: *Le chevalier délibéré*². The text is not wholly original: he himself admits in stanza 5 that he was inspired by the *Pas de la mort* of Amé de Montgesoie:

Dois tu oublier ou que soye
Ce traictié qui tant point et mort

¹ I would like to thank Livia Visser-Fuchs for translating this paper.

² O. DE LA MARCHE, *Le chevalier délibéré*, edited by C.W. Carroll, Tempe (Arizona), 1999.

disguised as a beggar, arrives at his cell and begs the saint for alms. St Josse gives him a quarter of the bread he has. Our Lord disguises himself as another beggar and receives another quarter of the saint's bread, and so on, again and again¹⁰.

The nameless Chevalier à la Charette (who turns out to be Sir Lancelot), in the story of the same name by Chrétien de Troyes arrives at a church with a walled churchyard (line 1837). He enters the church to pray; when he has finished his prayers he catches sight of a hermit and asks him what is behind the wall. A churchyard, the hermit says, and together they go and inspect the tombs, the most magnificent to be found anywhere, from Donbes to Pampelune. Every tomb bears the name of him who will be buried in it: Gawain, Lionel and Yvain, but there are also the names of other renowned knights. In the centre of the churchyard is a very large marble tomb and the hermit explains that its inside is even more magnificent than its outside, but the nameless knight will not be able to open it. The tomb bears an inscription:

Cil qui levera
 cele lanme seus par son cors
 gitera ces et celes fors
 qui sont an la terre an prison,
 don n'ist ne clers ne gentix hon
 des l'ore qu'il i est antrez;
 n'ancors n'en est nus retornez:
 les etranges prisons retient;
 et cil del pais vont et vienent
 et anz et fors a lor pleisir. (r. 1900-1909)

The knight lifts the lid off the tomb effortlessly and the hermit then reveals that he must be the knight who will liberate everyone from the land from which no traveller has ever returned...¹¹

In Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* the eponymous hero visits a hermit in chapter X. This hermit turns out to be his uncle and Perceval is made very welcome, but he has to eat what is set before him – however miserable the food is. The hermit eats what his uncle, the Fisher King, eats. The Fisher King eats no pike, lamprey or salmon, for the Host alone, brought to him in the Holy Grail, is sufficient, as he has wholly forsaken material things. The hermit does the same, but as he does not possess the Grail, he cannot live quite as simply. He has to survive on what he finds in the fields. Perceval and the hermit live on roots, chervil, lettuce, watercress, barley, bread made with barley or oats, and water from a clear spring. Perceval's horse is given straw and a box full of barley (lines 6390-6518)¹².

10 JACQUES DE VORAGINE, *La légende dorée II*, traduction de J.-B. M. ROZE, Paris, 1967, p. 462.

11 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Le chevalier à la charette*, publié par M. ROQUES, Paris, 1981.

12 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Perceval ou le Conte du graal*, traduction de J. DUFOURNET, Paris, 2001/
 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Perceval of het verhaal van de Graal*, trans. R.E.V. STUIP, Utrecht/
 Antwerpen, 1979.

Wolfram von Eschenbach includes this same passage in his redaction of *Perceval, Parzival*, but there are some notable differences. The hermit has a name, Trevrizent, and the food is even more simple. We are told that Trevrizent eats no bread and drinks no wine, but it is only when Parzival shares his food that we find out how this is done. Trevrizent digs for roots; these roots, with a few herbs, are washed in the stream and then eaten in the hermits' cell, raw, for the hermit has nowhere to cook. Nonetheless, at the end of the meal, Parzival feels as satisfied as after the best meal he has ever had (paragraphs 485-486)¹³.

The hero of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* goes mad in the course of the story and like a wild man he wanders through the forest, until he reaches a little hermitage. The hermit hides in his cell, but out of pity puts some bread and water out on the windowsill. The bread is sour and coarse, because it was made with barley and straw, and it is mouldy and hard, but Yvain eats it with pleasure, for hunger is the best sauce. Yvain runs back into the forest, to hunt deer. From then on Yvain puts the animals he has killed outside the hermit's door, and receives food in exchange: unsalted and unseasoned meat and water from the spring. The hermit takes the venison to market and is thus able to buy better bread¹⁴.

René d'Anjou in his *Livre du Cuer d'Amours esprits* describes several people who lead solitary lives, or rather he does not mention anyone else living in the houses of these personages. Esperance lives in a tent; Envy in a hermitage; Melancholy in a little, broken-down hut with a thatched roof; the hermit who gives shelter to Esperance lives in a chapel. Esperance is a middle-aged woman who sets Cueur and Désir on their way after a short stay. Envy refuses shelter to passers by, even when Désir has asked her very courteously. Next day Cueur and Désir follow the Stream of Tears which rises from the Fountain of Happiness and reach a wide, deserted valley. On the bank of the stream is the hut of Melancholy, who throws them some bread. The last hermit they meet provides the three wandering companions – Désir and Cueur have been joined by Largesse – with proper hospitality. They dine with him and their horses are taken care of. Next morning they gather in the chapel, where the hermit celebrates a mass of the Holy Ghost¹⁵.

Tirant lo Blanc is a perfect knight, the protagonist in the book by Joanot Martorell. This work of circa 1460 inspired Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quichot*, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and even Shakespeare's *Much ado about nothing*. In chapter 28 (of 487) Tirant lo Blanc is on his way to a tournament which is to be held in honour of the wedding of the king of England. Tirant falls asleep

13 WOLFRAM VAN ESCHENBACH, *Parzival*, trans. and annotated L. BEUGER, Amsterdam, 2002.

14 CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Yvain, le chevalier au lion*, adaptation par J.P. TUSSEAU, Paris, 1993
 / CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES, *Ywein, de ridder met de leeuw*, trans. C.M.L. KISLING, Amsterdam,
 1994.

15 RENÉ D'ANJOU, *Livre du Cueur d'Amours esprits*, introd. and annotated F. UNTERKIRCHER,
 Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1975.

on his horse. A hermit, reading a book, looks up to see the sleeping knight coming towards him and wakes him up. When the knight opens his eyes he is confronted by a hermit clothed in rags, with a white beard, emaciated and pale with continual penance, his eyes swollen with weeping. Tirant realises that he is a very holy and admirable man. They introduce themselves and the hermit instructs Tirant in the ideals of chivalry. They do not eat or drink, but instead discuss the knight's arms and armour in allegorical terms (chapters 34 and 35). The breastplate, for example, protects the body, but also the Church, and just like the helmet protects the head itself, so the chivalric spirit should excel at defending the people. The vambraces and gauntlets mean that knights should take up arms actively in the defence of those who are in danger and not leave such work to others. The rerebraces represent the knight's obligation to protect the Church from magicians, and the greaves remind them that they should mount their horses immediately, or go on foot if need be, when they know the faithful are threatened by the infidel. The length of the lance represents the Church, which has existed for so many years. The Church also resembles a lance on the field of battle. The two edges and the point of the sword, which allows it to cut as well as stab, make this the noblest weapon. The swordbelt means that the knight encircles himself with chastity. Grasping the hilt of his sword he takes hold of the defense of the Faith and the fact that a sword is shaped like a cross is supremely significant. The knight's horse represents the common people, which he protects like he does his horse. The gilt spurs show that a knight despises earthly riches, for the gold is at his feet. With his spurs he encourages his horse, just as he encourages the people to be steadfast in their faith¹⁶.

In Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* the knights Carlo and Ubaldo are ordered to search for Rinaldo (canto XIV). During their quest they reach the cave of the Wise Man of Ascalon, a magician who lives like a hermit and receives them hospitably. In stanzas 48 and 49 he shows them his underground palace (no simple hermit's cell): a cave with many great halls and lofty bedchambers, full of sparkling objects. More than a hundred servants appear to see to their every need and lay the table with gold, silver and crystal. When they have been well fed it is time to continue their journey, with the magician's permission. But before they leave he tells them that Rinaldo has been trapped by the love snares of Armida. Lady Fortune will take the two knights to where the lovers are¹⁷.

Hermits are rare in classical antiquity, the concept of forsaking the world in order to meditate is christian rather than pagan. It is surprising, therefore, that Poliphilus in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* describes one woman as 'looking like an anchoress'. The story is set against a pagan classical background, not a christian one. Its protagonist, Poliphilus, arrives at three gates, inscribed *Gloria Dei*, *Gloria Mundi* and *Mater Amoris*. He opens all three to find

16 J. MARTORELL, *De volmaakte ridder Tirant lo Blanc*, trans. B. DE NIJS, Amsterdam, 2001, pp. 63-66.

17 T. TASSO, *Jeruzalem bevrijd*, trans. F. VAN DOOREN, Amsterdam, 2003, pp. 400-401.

out who or what is behind them. The first gate he opens is the one inscribed *Gloria Mundi*: an elderly woman, looking like an anchoress, comes to meet him from the door of a straw hut. She is very thin and dressed in rags. Her name is Theude and she is accompanied by six young servant girls: Parthenia, Edosia, Hypocolinia, Pinotidia, Tapinosa and Ptochina. The hut stands at the beginning of a difficult pathway, made impassable by thorny bushes. The path leads through a grim and inhospitable land, darkened by mists and a lowering sky – it is the path of unrequited love¹⁸.

John is the son of the earl of Beverley. To his father's chagrin he does not want to be the next earl, but wishes to live as a hermit. When compared to the food- and drink-providing hermits mentioned earlier, John is rather unusual, because instead of giving food and drink to passers by, he is given it by his sister, Colette, for there is not much that is edible to be found in the woods around Beverley where John lives. One day he is visited by the devil in the shape of an angel who commands him to commit a sin, for he who has never sinned cannot repent, and who does not know what it is to repent cannot become a saint. The devil allows John to choose between three sins: drunkenness, rape or murder; John chooses the first. The next time his sister visits him he asks her to bring him a bottle of wine, which she does. John empties the bottle, gets drunk and – for good measure, three sins surely being better than one – rapes her and kills her. In order to have a happy end the story line needs a complete about-turn. To start with John is the wrong kind of hermit, he is not self-sufficient but dependent on others and things are bound to go wrong. Later on in the story, however, he does live in the forest like an animal, surviving on what nature has to offer, doing penance for his sins. After many years of deprivation everything turns out all right for him: his sister rises from the grave and John becomes a true saint¹⁹.

The literary tradition of allegorical eating and drinking

Eating and drinking play an important role in Christian thinking²⁰; the New Testament has various examples of miraculous happenings during meals. Christ changes water to wine during the marriage at Cana²¹, and feeds the five thousand with loaves and the fishes²². The most important meal is the Last Supper, when Christ sits down to eat with his disciples for the last time. He takes the bread and says it is His Body, he takes the wine and says it is His Blood²³. These words

18 F. COLONNA, *De droom van Poliphilus – Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. I. CIALONA, Amsterdam, 2006, pp. 135-136.

19 *Jan van Beverley*, ed. and trans. B. JONGENELEN, Tilburg, 2006.

20 J. LE GOFF & N. TRUONG, *De geschiedenis van het lichaam in de Middeleeuwen*, Amsterdam, 2004, pp. 164-165.

21 John 2:1-11.

22 Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 6:30-44, Mark 8:1-10, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-13.

23 Mark 26:26-29, Mark 14:26-31, Luke 22:14-20.

are not to be taken literally, but have to be seen in the light of the teaching of the transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is a concept taught by the Roman Catholic Church, explaining the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It teaches that by the Consecration the offerings of bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, but the outward appearance of the bread and wine do not alter. Thus the sacred Host *looks* like bread – and will turn out to be when examined – but *is* the Body of Christ. We are faced with a spiritual and religious truth, one that cannot be proved, but has to be believed. In short, the bread and wine have a strong symbolic and allegorical function.

In *Le chevalier délibéré*, in stanza 26, *Acteur* arrives at the hermit's cell. He takes off his armour and shares the hermit's repast: bacon, peas (stanza 30, line 6) and other food (line 7). So far there is no allegorical meaning, but in stanza 34 the hermit, who has introduced himself as *Entendement*, explains:

Mon pain est molu de Sobresse,
Mon vin trempé de Bonne Vie;
Mon repas se fait en Liesse;

'My bread is baked with Soberness, my wine is full of Good Life, my meal was made with Joy'. By mentioning bread and wine Olivier de la Marche explicitly refers to the Eucharist. *Entendement* lives with Christ.

The second narrative life of St Francis of Assisi has two episodes about food: in chapter XV there is a kind of miraculous multiplication of food: St Francis and his companions have only a little bread and wine, when a woman knocks on the door, carrying a large basket full of foodstuffs. In chapter XXXI St Francis finds the Easter table richly laden. The symbolism of these episodes refers to the fact that Franciscan Friars should eat like the poor, not like well-to-do citizens. In the same way Christ himself never took a large meal, but was happy to have some bread and wine, and sometimes a little fish²⁴.

The same lesson is taught in the fifth episode of *Het heilig verbond van de Zalige Franciscus met Vrouwe Armoede* (The Sacred Covenant between St Francis and Lady Poverty). At Lady Poverty's house Francis and his companions take water from half a jug (they do not have a whole one) to dip their bread in. No man needs more: bread and water, which in pleasant company will taste like a proper meal. Who lives like that will regard his poverty as a symbol, not a reality²⁵.

24 T. VAN CELANO, *Franciscus van Assisi – Tweede levensbeschrijving*, trans. A.A.C. SIER, Haarlem, 1976.

25 *Het heilig verbond van de Zalige Franciscus met Vrouwe Armoede*, trans. A.A.C. SIER, Haarlem, 1980, pp. 101-102.

In *Livre du Cueur d'Amours espris* of René van Anjou (mentioned earlier) the travellers arrive at the dwelling of Melancholy. Cueur asks for some food very courteously, Melancholy throws him a crust of the bread that has never done anyone any good, baked as it is with the grain of Dire Necessity and water from the Stream of Tears. Both men eat it, however, and wash it down with muddy water. Here, too, the bread of Christ is explicitly referred to, but the reference is inverted: this is not the Host, but bad bread, made from bad grain. This results in bread that gives no pleasure and no comfort and does not reveal the Good News. Melancholy is evil, for whoever is melancholic does not allow the Body (and the Word) of Christ to enter his soul²⁶.

The pilgrim in *Le pèlerinage de vie humaine* by Guillaume de Digulleville watches other people take bread and wine, and notices that those who have not been to confession are hungry, and those who have confessed are not. He is amazed that such a little piece of bread and so little wine can have such a great effect. He cannot imagine that he himself would be satisfied by so little. How can something so small be so great? Grace Dieu explains: the grain for this bread was brought down from heaven by Charity in the person of Jesus Christ; Wisdom kneaded the dough, and thus every morsel is as big as the entire loaf, like you can see all of your face in every fragment of a broken mirror²⁷.

In William Langland's *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, when the hero falls asleep (passus XIII, lines 13021-65), he has a vision. He is led away by Conscience, who invites him to share in a noble feast, seated next to Knowledge. Outside the dining room is Patience, dressed in a pilgrim's garb, begging to be given some food, which is one of the Seven Corporeal Acts of Mercy. Conscience calls him in and asks him to wash his hands – a chair will be ready for him in a moment. Here is no hermit giving food and drink, but a pilgrim receiving it. The meal is explained by an allegory: Patience is the hero's companion during the meal and is given food from St Augustine, St Ambrose and the four evangelists, served by Scripture. There is also a theologian among the company, but he and his friends do not eat any of the food provided by Scripture. They eat meat, their sauce is rancid, and prepared in the mortar of many miseries. Conscience asks Scripture for bread and something to drink. Patience approves and they are served dishes named after Psalms 31:1-2, 50:1, 31:1 en 31:5. This last dish is made with secret confession. 'Give a small portion to Patience', Conscience says, and Patience is given part of Psalm 31:6. The company is comforted by Conscience telling them the story of Psalm 50:19. The hero, in the meantime, is worried about the theologian, who is partaking of

26 RENÉ D'ANJOU, *Livre du Cueur d'Amours espris*, introd. and commentary F. UNTERKIRCHER, Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1975.

27 I. BIESHEUVEL, *Die pelgrimage vander menscheliker creaturen*, Hilversum, 2005, pp. 244-246.

many sumptuous dishes, though only a few days ago he was preaching on the martyrdom of St Paul²⁸.

Conclusion

The main role of hermits in medieval literature is to feed and shelter the protagonists of various stories. In that sense *Le chevalier délibéré* fits firmly into the tradition: the hero, *Acteur*, is on a quest and arrives at a hermit's cell. Like a true Christian, conscious of his Christian duties such as the Acts of Mercy, the hermit gives *Acteur* shelter and offers him food and drink. In many stories the food and drink is very simple, which is only to be expected, for it would be odd if the saintly hermit treated the traveller to sumptuous meals with rich pies and expensive wine. In the stories of St Josse, Perceval, Yvain, Cueur d'Amours esprits, St Francis and Lady Poverty and in *Le pèlerinage de vie humaine* the hermit serves only bread. The symbol of 'bread' was recognised immediately by listeners and readers as the bread of the Eucharist, and authors made play with this ulterior meaning. Remarkable is the 'inversion' of the bread of the Eucharist in the *Livre du Cueur d'Amours esprits* of René d'Anjou, where Melancholy shuts herself off from the Good News and, instead of enjoying the sacred Host, is forced to eat bread made with the grain of Dire Necessity and water from the Stream of Tears. Olivier de la Marche's allegory is less playful: his hermit has proper food, bread made of Frugality and wine full of Good Life. This may sound a little more simple and boring, but *Acteur* is content. Sometimes it is all right to be simple and boring.

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LA GASTRONOMIE DANS LES PAYS-BAS MÉRIDIONAUX SOUS LES DUCS DE BOURGOGNE : LE TÉMOIGNAGE DES LIVRES DE CUISINE

Introduction

Les liens entre le pouvoir et la gastronomie sont connus depuis longtemps et les souverains sont nombreux à avoir mis celle-ci au service de leur politique. En effet, le meilleur moyen, de surcroît, pacifique et agréable pour s'imposer à ses sujets rebelles ou ses voisins concupiscentistes consiste à les honorer par un festin somptueux.

Dès lors, les queux attachés aux cours royales ou impériales ont été priés de consigner par écrit les recettes illustrant les fastes épulaires y ayant été déployés.

Le premier monarque connu à avoir agi de la sorte est le fils de Clovis, Thierry Ier, roi des Francs de Reims et d'Austrasie (511-533). Il demande à son médecin Anthime, originaire de Byzance, de lui rédiger un traité intitulé *De observatione ciborum*¹, le seul réceptaire gallo-franc et, partant, l'initiateur du syncrétisme romano-germanique qui reste en vigueur jusqu'au Moyen Âge central en France (royaume de France, Saint-Empire entre lesquels se partagent les futurs Pays-Bas méridionaux ou Belgique).

Anthime est accrédité auprès du souverain mérovingien par Théodoric, roi des Ostrogoths d'Italie (493-526), qui possède une brigade de cuisine probablement dirigée par un compatriote portant le nom latinisé de Vinidarius. Au début du VI^e siècle, celui-ci élabore un réceptaire, les *Excerpta*², qui décrivent des mets ayant

28 W. LANGLAND, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: a critical edition of the B-text*, ed. by A.V.C. SCHMIDT, London, 1978, pp. 146-153. Thanks to Ben Parsons for pointing me on this passage.

1 Éd. lat. et tr. angl. M. GRANT, *Anthimus On the observance of Foods*, Totnes (Devon, R-U), 1996; C. DEROUX en prépare une nouvelle éd. lat. avec tr. fr., *La « diététique » d'Anthime*, à paraître dans la collection *Latomus*.

2 Éd. lat. et tr. fr. J. ANDRÉ, dans *Apicius. L'art culinaire*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1974, p. 125 et s.