

Mere Sotte and the Printing Press
Editorial Strategies, Readers and Readings in Pierre Gringore's *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*¹

Introductory remarks:

The place of Pierre Gringore's *Jeu du Prince des Sotz et de Mere Sotte* in the current scholarship. New approaches.

Designed by Pierre Gringore (c.1475-c.1539), courtier of Charles VIII and Louis XII, poet, actor, publisher, as a satire meant to justify in the eyes of a catholic audience² the bellicose enterprises of Louis XII against Pope Julius II, *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* was staged during the Parisian Carnival of 1512. Shortly after this event it entered the editorial circuit of the Parisian booksellers and printers. Both the “intellectual” and “popular”³ book-sellers/printers such as Pierre Le Dru and, respectively, the Trepperel widow introduced *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* in their editorial repertoire according to their own editorial strategies.

In terms of scholarship the theatre historians have approached it in reference to other *sotties* which were composed in France at the end of fifteenth century and the beginning of

¹ I am deeply grateful to Professor Roger Chartier (EHESS), Professor Jean Hebrard (EHESS), Dr Marco Mostert (Utrecht University) and Professor Elena Russo (The Johns Hopkins University) for their insightful suggestions and comments.

² C. J. Brown, *The Shaping of History and Poetry in Late Medieval France: Propaganda and Artistic Expression in the Works of the Rhétoriciens* (Birmingham, Alabama, 1985); É. Picot, (ed), *Recueil général des sotties*, 3 vol. (Paris, 1902-1912); vol. 2, pp. 105-108.

³ I am using the thorny notion of “popular” printing in the sense in which cultural historians such as R. Chartier have used it. In this perspective “popular” book-sellers/ printers would be the cultural agents involved in the production and diffusion of a network of texts which are no longer employed in the milieu out of which they initially emerged. Hence by means of “popular” editorial practices (the abundant use of illustrations, the alteration of the plot, etc) they are adapted to respond to other intellectual needs belonging to other readers who possess a rather different symbolical capital than the initial readers of this network of texts.

the sixteenth century. Referential studies such as those belonging to J.-Cl. Aubailly⁴ tangentially mentioned Gringore's *sottie* when discussing a possible typology of the French *sottie*. Other literary historians such as H. Arden⁵ and C. J. Brown⁶ have tackled the nature of social satire in the *sottie* of *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz*. In another survey dedicated to the late medieval French poets, the *Rhétoriciens*, and to their propagandistic works, C. J. Brown, continuing the scholarly enterprise initiated by M.S. Sherman,⁷ has analysed *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* as a purely political piece of writing. Finally, to mention one of the latest studies carried out by literary historians in the field of profane medieval theatre, M. Rus' *La sottie: une divina commedia*⁸ has addressed *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* when investigating the nature of carnivalesque laughter in the series of Parisian *sotties*. In parallel, the historians of the book (Cynthia J. Brown,⁹ Elizabeth Armstrong¹⁰) have dealt with *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* tangentially when exploring the auctorial and editorial strategies which the Parisian printers, book-sellers and authors adopted in the larger context of the prolific printing activity carried at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Yet none of these studies have addressed an interesting point in connection to Gringore's *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* exhaustively, that is, the nature of the audience who witnessed the representation and then read the text. Almost all the above-mentioned surveys

⁴ J.-Cl. Aubailly, *Le monologue, le dialogue et la sottie: Essai sur quelques genres dramatiques de la fin du moyen âge et du début du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1976); J.-Cl. Aubailly, *Le théâtre médiéval profane et comique* (Paris, 1975).

⁵ H. Arden, *Fools' plays: A Study of Satire in the Sottie* (London, 1980).

⁶ C. J. Brown *Fifteenth Century Studies*

⁷ M. S. Sherman, 'Political Propaganda and Renaissance Culture', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 8 (1977), pp. 99-128.

⁸ M. Rus, 'La sottie: une *divina commedia*', *Poétique* 140 (2004), pp. 429-441.

⁹ C. J. Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995).

¹⁰ E. Armstrong, *Before Copying: The French Book-privilege system 1498-1526* (Cambridge, 1990: *Cambridge Studies in Publishing and Printing History*).

refer to the “propagandistic” character of *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*.¹¹ Nevertheless, one might wonder whether the initial auctorial propagandistic¹² intentions, namely to justify a royal political decision by means of a dramatic text initially staged and then printed, were perceived in the same way by the audience of the poem whether they be readers, Carnival’s spectators or printers. In other words could one talk about a cultural homogeneity of the audience who witnessed the representation of *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* at Les Halles on the Mardi Gras of 1512? Or about a homogeneous cultural competence of the readers who purchased the printed versions of Gringore’s play? Highly unlikely. Bakhtin’s¹³ theory on Carnival augmented by the refined demonstration of Le Roy Ladurie¹⁴ underlined that Carnival is an acculturated and acculturating event where social groups (elite or lower classes) may be visualised in their complexity. Moreover, studies carried out by cultural historians such as N. Z. Davis¹⁵ have pointed out that the “people” (spectators or readers) are not a diffuse mass, but are composed of “cohesive social groups some of whose members were literate.”¹⁶ Additionally, historians of the book and of sociology of reading such as R. Chartier¹⁷ and D. F. McKenzie¹⁸ have

¹¹ I was not able to find J. Koopmans, ‘How Paris Discover Propaganda. Theatre, print and subcultures’ in: *Normative Zentrierung: Normative Centering*, ed. R. Suntrup and J. R. Veenstra (Frankfurt am Main, 2002: *Medieval to Early Modern Culture/ Kultureller Wandel vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit*, 2), pp. 287-301.

¹² How “propaganda,” a rather modern concept used as a political adjuvant by political bodies that are delimited from another historical/ social/ political order than that of the *Ancien Régime*, is to be understood would deserve further investigation.

¹³ M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington, 1984).

¹⁴ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Le Carnaval de Romans: De Chandeleur au mercredi des Cendres 1579-1580* (Paris, 1978) « Une sorte de description globale et poétique de la société, des quartiers, des professions. (...) Il est bien plutôt un instrument de connaissance satirique, lyrique, épique pour les groupes dans leur complexité. » The quotation comes from page 349.

¹⁵ N. Z. Davis, ‘Printing and the People’ in: *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London, 1979), pp. 189-226.

¹⁶ Davis, ‘Printing and the People’, p. 193.

¹⁷ R. Chartier, ‘Lectures et lecteurs « populaires » de la Renaissance à l’âge classique’ in : *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*, ed. G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (Paris, 1997), pp. 337-354 ; R. Chartier, *Culture écrite et société: l’ordre des livres (XIV^e –XVIII^e siècle)* (Paris, 1996); R. Chartier, *Lectures et lecteurs dans la France d’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1987).

¹⁸ D.F.McKenzie, *La Bibliographie et la sociologie des textes* (Paris, 1991) [tr. of: *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London, 1986)].

underlined that any book by its form and its text becomes the bearer of a cultural identity. In this light the process and the manner of reading are not constant and homogeneous but change both synchronically and diachronically. And that not in the sense of a phenomenology of reading in which interpretation is understood as an individual and yet universal act. Conversely, any textual interpretation is to be commenced from the materiality of the text and not simply from the text itself regarded as a mere decontextualised abstraction which is to be deciphered and actualised by the hermeneutical approach of a “competent reader” in U. Eco’s terms. Hence the material format of a text (the title-page, the non-verbal elements scattered in the pages of the original editions and of the further editions of the same text) acquires semiotic values which enable the researcher to visualise how various communities of readers used and abused, appropriated or, later, dismissed that particular text or a corpus of texts related by means of their internal and/or external coherence. In other words, one may notice the formation of a hermeneutical circle: the interpretation of any given text starts from the analysis of its usages and the analysis of its usages begins from the investigation of the text understood, as already suggested, as a symbolical form which generates meaning. Or, to put it in McKenzie’s terms : “de nouveaux lecteurs créent des textes nouveaux dont les nouvelles significations dépendent directement de leurs nouvelles formes.”¹⁹

Therefore, the aim of the essay is to trace back the history of the material formats which the *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* registered in the moment in which its printed format exceeded its initial oral diffusion under the form of a dramatic play. The analysis of the editorial and rhetorical strategies employed by Pierre Gringore and by the printers/book sellers to appropriate the already existing communities and to create others will certainly shed light on the social usages (readers and techniques of reading) which such a carnivalesque

¹⁹ McKenzie, *La Bibliographie*, p. 53.

piece of writing²⁰ might have had at the different moments of its editorial trajectory. A detailed analysis carried out in this light might provide insightful details about the circulation of “popular” printed books offering to their readers relevant “popular” genres in an epoch in which, by facilitating their spread, the printing press actually created new strategies of reading and new readers.

The chronological span of events will be the guide in assessing all that. Thus the first part of the paper, following the introductory remarks, will be dedicated to the bibliographical analysis of the first edition of *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*, edition published shortly after its representation, that is, in 1512. Hence, starting from the analysis of the colophon I will investigate the editorial context in which *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* was printed and, thus, the nature of readers who could have been interested in purchasing Gringore’s play. Further on, I will examine how the text itself (understood both as content and material format) responded both to the cultural and social level of its potential readers. In the second part of the essay I will carry out the same type of analysis for the second edition of *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz*, printed in 1513, the circulation of which seem to still have been *en vogue* even ten years after the play was published. Finally, a third part will conclude whether the differences between the two editions are so significant as to have targeted a rather different type of audience. My initial hypothesis is that *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* was a popular work in the sense that Peter Burke²¹ assigns to this syntagm, that is, a work equally appealing to various social segments (whether they be elite or lower classes). Each of these social groups had its own tactics of reading which the material format augments or dismisses.

²⁰ In the sense that it was staged during the Carnival time.

²¹ P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1984).

The BnF edition of *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*: a “literate” edition?

Already with the first printed editions the title page played an important role in the relation between the reader and the text, on the one hand, and, on the other, between the author and the book producer. The paratextual information²² scattered on the title page provided details about the author and the publisher of the concerned book and, thus, enabled the reader to establish a preliminary key of interpretation in connection to the text to be read. Additionally, the title page, as a publicitary space, became the object of various cultural and editorial manipulations on the part of the printers. In other words the title page embodied “the most socialised dimension of the literary practice.”²³ Therefore, in my analysis aiming at establishing the editorial and cultural trajectory which *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz* had in the Parisian editorial milieu of the sixteenth century I will investigate the title-pages of the two editions of Gringore’s play.

²² I am using paratext in the sense that C. Brown employed in *Poets, Patrons and Printers*: “(...) <paratext > to refer to book-related material physically surrounding the literary text.” The quotation comes from page 61.

²³ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, p. 61.



Fig. 1 The title page of Pierre Le Dru's edition, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Rés. Ye 1317

The first one - BnF Rés. Ye 1317 - (see fig. 1) appears to be a licensed edition the printing of which had been supervised thoroughly by Gringore both in terms of its layout and editorial circulation. As C. Brown²⁴ has demonstrated, P. Gringore was one of the early sixteenth-century French authors who obtained privileges and, therefore, sought to control the printed versions of his works. Given the fact that the title page was more likely to become the

²⁴ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, pp.

object of unlicensed appropriations by the printer who hardly ever mentioned the author or assigned other authors regarded as more popular, Gringore designed a variety of manners, such as the acrostic for example, to implement his auctorial signature within the text.²⁵ In the case of the first edition of *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*, his name is overtly mentioned on the last page: “Fin du cry, sottie, moralité et farce com//posez par Gringoire dit mere Sotte, et//imprimé pour iceluy.”

Moreover, the title page contains Gringore’s mark the iconography of which anticipates Erasmus’ oxymoronic understanding of folly as wisdom. Naturally, as an actor in the theatre company, *Les Enfants-sans-Souci*, one of the most popular Abbeyes of Misrule, as N. Z. Davis calls them, and as an author in search of popularity Gringore chose both as a mark and as an auctorial signature, the image of the fool, an ubiquitous character in the profane theatre and the public festivities in France in the sixteenth century. The image consists of a fool, allegedly Mère Sotte, and two other fools who hold her hands. The space among the characters is filled with six tufts of weed. Gringore’s mark is bordered by three banners in which Gringore’s motto is displayed “tout par raison/raison par tout/par tout raison.” On the bottom of the page one could read: “Joue aux halles de paris le mardi gras. L’an mil cinq cens et onze.” Furthermore, a closer look at Gringore’s mark shows that the woodcut is a new one and the layout of the title page reflects both the editor and author’s care to disseminate an accurate edition on the book market.

²⁵ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, pp. 183-193.

Pierre Le Dru: a “scholarly” publisher of Gringore’s play

Nothing is mentioned about the publisher. Yet, A. Hindley, the latest editor of *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*, after a thorough analysis of the woodcuts and fonts, has identified Pierre Le Dru as the printer who published Gringore’s play in 1511/1512 (after the new style).²⁶ Such an editorial venture from Le Dru’s part comes as no surprise. Literary historians²⁷ have pointed out that back in 1505 Le Dru had already been involved in publishing Gringore’s *Folles enterprises*. Starting with that period Gringore gradually adopted the mark of Mère Sotte which had originally served as Le Dru’s bookseller mark. Hence in 1512, the year in which *Jeu du Prince des Sotz* was published by Pierre Le Dru, Gringore had already been using Mère Sotte as a “concise form of intellectual advertising,”²⁸ a more personal device “for it embodied not only an image but a motto as well, one that can be understood as an invitation to explore the text behind his own and his book’s exterior”.²⁹ It goes without saying that Le Dru benefited in a very licit way from the auctorial identification of Gringore with Mère Sotte by publishing an accurate edition of the *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*. Moreover, as I will point out below, such an editorial venture was in line with Le Dru’s common editorial practices.

About the life of Pierre Le Dru hardly anything is known. The investigation of the colophons of the books issued from his printing-press revealed that he carried an intensive editorial activity in Paris, in rue St-Jacques and then in rue des Mathurins between 1488 and 1515. At the beginning of his editorial activity Le Dru considered himself *impressor expertissimus* (very qualified printer) as he states at the end of a treatise that he published in

²⁶ Pierre Gringore, *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*, ed. A. Hindley (Paris, 2000), p. 13.

²⁷ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, p. 137.

²⁸ Mortimer, “Portrait”, p. 32. Quoted in Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, p. 145.

²⁹ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, p. 145.

1495, *Oppositiones Magistri Joannis Juvenis*.³⁰ In the following years, he improved his status and qualified himself *artium liberalium et artis impressorie diligentissimi magistri* (master of liberal arts and very diligent/qualified master in the art of printing). In other words, Le Dru regarded himself as a *maistre* both in the academic and practical sense. As an individual educated in the scholastic tradition of liberal arts he possessed an intellectual capital which enabled him to achieve a material capital by means of printing.

Such a label was not simply self-flattery. Judging from the nature of the books he published,³¹ one may point out that Le Dru was more interested in rather scholarly publications. A rapid comparison between the texts in Latin and those in vernacular clearly shows that Le Dru was specialised in publishing and selling rather classical and scholastic works. Suffice it mention a few of the titles and authors which he published in the years previous to the publication of Gringore's play. In 1494 he printed Bonaventura, Guido de Monte Rocherii, in 1501 Antoninus Florentinus' *Confessionales*, in 1502 Isidorus Hispalensis, *De summo bono*, in 1509 Jean Buridan, *Subtilissime questiones Super octo*

³⁰ A. Claudin, *Histoire de l'imprimerie en France au XVe et au XVI siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1900), p. 61.

³¹ There is no published catalogue or inventory of Le Dru's publications. To retrace the repertoire of his editions, I have consulted: Ph. Renouard, *Imprimeurs et libraries parisiens du XVIe siècle, Catalogue of a Collection of Early French Books in the Library of C. Fairfax Murray*, ed. H. WM. Davies (London, 1961), H. HARRISSE, *Excerpta Colombiana: Bibliographie de quatre cents pièces gothiques françaises, italiennes et latines* (Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1971), p. lxvi, Claudin, *Histoire de l'imprimerie en France au XVe et au XVI siècle; Short-title catalogue of Books Printed in France and of French books Printed in other countries from 1470 to 1600 now in the British Library* (Oxford, 1924) [reprinted 1966]; *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du XVI e siècle, d'après les mss de Ph. Renouard* vol. II 1511-1520 par Brigitte Moreau (Paris, 1977); *Index Aureliensis. Catalogus librorum sedecimo saeculo impressorum. Prima pars, tome I-III. Aureliae Aquensis*, 1965/68.

Physicorum Libros Aristotelis, in 1510 Werner Rolewinck's *De valore missarum* and the list goes on with classical authors, medieval scholastic philosophers and theological treatises. Dramatic titles, albeit less numerous than the "serious" titles, are also to be included in his repertoire. In 1508, four years before the printing of Gringore's play, Le Dru published *Mystère de l'ancien Testament par personnages ioue à Paris*.

In the light of these considerations, it would not be too far-fetched to assume that Pierre Le Dru was one of the printers who aimed at being considered the type of the humanist "serious" printer. Nevertheless, Le Dru cannot really be ranked among the top humanist printers such as Henri Estienne, for example. Yet, one can easily acknowledge that the audience who purchased his editions must have been rather literate, if not purely academic. Furthermore, the fact that he chose to print dramatic literature can hardly be regarded as a purely haphazard. Nor can the financial reason be easily admitted. Late medieval drama (whether it be religious or popular) was in fact a civic event which acculturated a wide variety of social groups, from marginal figures to royal characters. Moreover, as Jelle Koopmans has underlined in his study³² the profane theatre was a rhetorical instrument meant to expurgate the "inner demons" of the Late Medieval Europe. Theatre publicly conveyed the collective fears of the "good Christians" which explains the presence in the various dramatic forms (mock sermons, *sotties*, carnival plays) of the rituals of exclusion: *charivari*, heresy, witchcraft. Printing, which functioned in parallel with speech and manuscript use,³³ must have enabled the readers of profane dramatic productions to think more analytically of all these thorny issues. Hence, by introducing Gringore's satirical play in his rather solid and serious editorial repertoire, Le Dru actually aimed at offering his literate clients the possibility

³² J. Koopmans, *Le Théâtre des exclus au Moyen Age: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Paris, 1997).

³³ F. D. McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print' in: *Making Meaning: 'Printers of the Mind' and Other Essays*, ed. P. D. McDonald and M. F. Suarez (Amherst, 2000), pp. 237-258. The quotation comes from p. 238.

to understand and judge the royal political programme more clearly. In other words, Le Dru's initiative was rather a civic one. In doing so, he offered his readers an accurate and licensed edition which bore the author's name and mark. One might also explain Le Dru's editorial enterprise as an editorial tactic by means of which he aimed at emancipating himself from the academic censorship still dependant on the Pope's decisions. In this light one should not exclude the hypothesis according to which Le Dru as a scholarly printer publishing mainly texts that were part of the academic curriculum was seeking a royal privilege meant, as already suggested, not to be dependant on the university's censorship. Thus the publication of Gringore's text would have been a fruitful occasion to support Louis XII's anti-papal politics.

Readers and their tactics

It comes as no surprise that the text itself also reflected this editorial initiative which, at the same time, aimed at conveying the auctorial initial intentions, that is, to justify Louis XII's "Gallican crisis"³⁴ in the eyes of his subjects, that is, the *peuple francoys*. Such an enterprise was new neither for Gringore nor for Le Dru. In 1509, Le Dru published for Gringore a small poem, *L'Union des princes*, in which the dramatist describes the political objectives of the Ligue of Cambrai (December 1508). Louis XII together with other royal figures (the king of Spain, of Hungary, the Roman-German emperor) is a central figure of the poem. Like *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*, *L'Union des princes* is also a licensed edition as the privilege on the title-page reveals.

Thus judging after both the editorial format and the content of the text, full of allusions to political and historical events, it will not be too far-fetched to assume that the audience of such a poem must have been mainly a literate one (whether it be courtly or scholarly or both

³⁴ F. J. Baumgartner, 'Louis XII's Gallican Crisis of 1510-1513' in: *Politics, Ideology and the Law in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of J. H. M. Salmon*, ed. A. E. Bakos (Rochester, New York, 1994), pp. 60 - ???.

at the same time). Furthermore, one may infer that the same type of audience, already familiar with the royal politics and the rhetorical exercises centred on its support and justification³⁵ belonging to court poets such as Jean Molinet, Jean Lemaire, André de La Vigne and Gringore must also have purchased Le Dru's "literate" edition of *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*. It remains to establish how the text itself answered to their cultural expectations.

In this sense, a closer look at *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* reveals that the dramatic discourse functions as a medium which conveys a cluster of information regarding the socio-political context in France at that period:

*Il ne me fault point resveiller,
Je fais le guet de toutes pars
Sur Espaignolz et sur Lombars
Qui ont mys leurs timbres folletz. (vv. 66-69)
Garde me donne des Allemans;
Je voy ce que font des Flamens
Et les Anglois dedans Calletz. (vv. 71-73).*

Allusions to the royal political enterprises are also part of the *récit* (story):

*Ou est l'abbé de Courtille
Qu'il vienne sur peine d'amende !
Je cuyde qu'il est au concile. (vv. 226-228) (my emphasis).*

Thus what might seem rather obscure for the modern reader might have been something rather very familiar for the sixteenth-century reader. From a footnote provided by Hindley, one finds out that the *concile* is in fact the council of Pise convoked by Louis XII in 1512. But for a courtier, for example, such a piece of information must have been of latest interest.

In the *moralité*, the dramatic discourse also allows the readers to find out the latest news of the period:

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the propagandistic literary enterprises of the Rhétoriqueurs see C. J. Brown, *The Shaping of History and Poetry in Late Medieval France*; C. J. Brown (ed.), P. Gringore, *Oeuvres polémiques rédigées sous le règne du Louis XII* (Geneva, 2003).

(Peuple ytalique)
J'ay gens d'armes qui sont en garnison
En mon hostel ; j'ai n'en suis pas le maistre.
Souvent n'y a ne ryme ne raison.
Il court pour moi si mauvaise saison
Que ne me sçay ou heberger et mettre. (vv. 48-52)

Hence the representation of *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz* functioned not only as an encomiastic discourse centred on the person of Louis XII, as most literary historians have pointed out so far but also as an effective means of transmitting information during a public feast in a public space. The shift from the oral representation to the printed form must have enabled the auditors/ readers to appropriate these series of information on the latest civic events in their society in more analytical way. Studies such as those carried out by J. Goody³⁶ and W. Ong³⁷ have underlined that “writing tends to promote new developments of proof, logic, relevance or inference, verbal forms reduced to the written take on not only a visual aspect but a stationary character that enables people readily to distinguish differences and to assert similarities – or rather, to do so with new level of accuracy because of the use of an additional instrument of measuring those differences and similarities by comparing linguistic statements visually as well as orally.”³⁸ Supposedly, the same analytical mechanism might have functioned when Gringore’s play came to enter the editorial circuit of Pierre Le Dru. As already suggested, Le Dru’s readers appropriated, by means of printing, the oral reading of *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* according to their own analytical criteria of evaluation and selection of information. One might assume that for the readers accustomed to Le Dru’s editorial strategies the visual interpretation of Gringore’s play was augmented by its reading. In other words, for this type of readers the two different media by means of which *Le Jeu du Prince*

³⁶ J. Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987); J. Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, 2000), pp. 52-59.

³⁷ W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York, 1982).

³⁸ Goody, *The Power*, p. 56.

des Sotz was disseminated, that is, by stage performance and by printing functioned in parallel and not in opposition. The written form enabled the literate readers to better analyse what they saw on the stage.

The *Méj.* edition: a forged “popular” edition?

Published a year after Le Dru’s edition, that is, 1513 the second printed copy of the *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz*, that is, *Méj Rés. D 493 (=Méj.)* does not present the same layout as the first one. Although the text is not essentially altered, the title page displays some differences which indicate that the edition of 1513 had a rather different editorial circulation than Le Dru’s edition of the previous year.



Fig. 2 The title page of the Trepperel's edition, Aix-en-Provence, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Rés. D 493

One may notice that the title page is divided into two equal subparts. The title is outlined in the upper part with bigger fonts than in Le Dru's edition: "Le Jeu du prince //des Sotz et de Me//re Sotte. Joue aux halles de pis le mardy gras, iiij." The bottom of the title page displays nearly the same type of image, a woodcut designing two fools who hold Mere Sotte's hands, allegedly, Gringore's mark, present in Le Dru's edition as well. Yet a closer examination of the image/mark shows some dissimilarities when comparing to the mark present in previous edition. Thus on the superior border one can read: "Raiion partout." Moreover, among the three characters there is only one tuft of weed. The same mark is

repeated on verso as well. On the last page it reads: “Fin du cry, sottie moralité et farce // du Prince des sotz et de Me//re Sotte. Nouvellement imprimé à Paris“. Unlike in Le Dru’s edition, the printer employed a rather overused woodcut. There is no mention of the author’s name. As for the printer, A. Hindley,³⁹ using to a certain extent E. Droz’s⁴⁰ findings, suggests that Jean Trepperel’s widow and her son-in-law and associate, Jean Jehannot, “imprimeur-juré de l’Université,” published the *Méj.* edition.

Yet, a question is to be raised. Why did Gringore, who supervised the editorial layout of his previous publications so carefully, accept to “sign” this second edition of one of his well-known works in such a distorted manner? Literary historians such as Cynthia Brown⁴¹ have pointed out that Gringore might have considered that he could be better known if he adopted as auctorial signature the mark of Mère Sotte which would explain the absence of any reference to his name in *Méj.* edition. Nevertheless, such an explanation deserves further investigation. A. Hindley points out that the *Méj.* edition is copied after Le Dru’s. Moreover, he does not exclude the possibility that the editors of the *Méj.*, that is, the Trepperel widow and Jean Jehannot, might have published Gringore’s text without his permission. A. Hindley is not wrong when he makes this presupposition. A closer look at the *Recueil Trepperel*, which comprises an anonymous collection of *sotties*, *farces*, *sermons joyeux*, *moralitys* all printed by the Trepperel family in the first decades of the sixteenth century, shows that Jean Trepperel or one of his successors used Gringore’s altered mark which the title page of the *Méj.* edition of *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz* contains as well. Thus one may notice that the title page of *La sotie et farce nouvelle de estourdi et coquillart a iii personnages* (number 2 in the Droz edition), *Sotie nouvelle a cinq personnages des sotz escornez tresbonne* (number 15 in the Droz edition), *Sotie nouvelle des sotz qui corrigent le magnificat a cinq personnages*

³⁹ Hindley (ed.), *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*, (Paris, 2000), p. 14.

⁴⁰ E. Droz (ed.), *Le Recueill Trepperel : Les Sotties*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1935), p. xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁴¹ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, pp. 133-150.

(number 9 in Droz edition), *Sottie nouvelle a quatre parsonnaiges des rapporteurs* (number 4 in Droz edition) displays Gringore's altered mark.

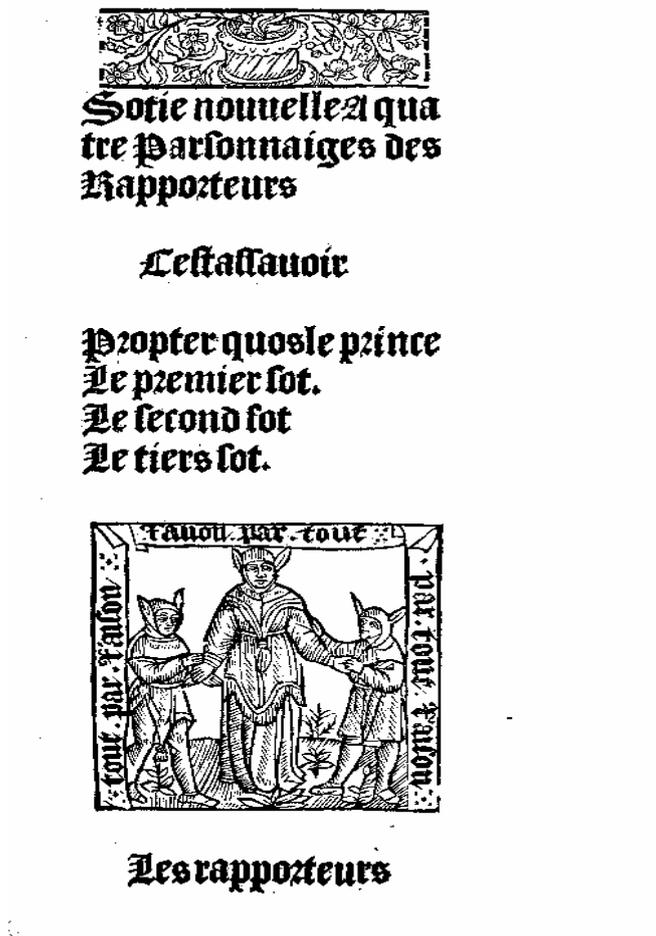


Fig. 3 Title page of *Sottie des rapporteurs* (number 4 in *Recueil Trepperel*, ed. E. Droz)

Cest la sotie et farce
ce nouvelle de estourdi
et coquillart
a .iii. personages
Cest assanoir.
Estourdi
Coquillart.
Et desgoute
Coquillart.



Fig. 4 *La sotie et farce nouvelle de estourdi et coquillart a iii personages* (number 2 in *Recueil Trepperel*, ed. E. Droz)

**Sotie nouvelle a cinq
personnages des sotz
escornez tresbonne.**

Cestastauoir.

**Le prince
Le premier
Le second
Le tiers
Baultier.**



Des sotz escornez

Fig. 5 *Sotie nouvelle a cinq personnages des sotz escornez tresbonne* (number 15 in the *Recueil Trepperel*, ed. E. Droz).

**Sotie nouvelle des
sotz qui corrigēt le ma
gnificat a cinq person
nages**

**Cestastauoir.
Tette creuse
Sotin
Rouffignol.
Dando mareschal
Maistre allibozum.**



**Ceux qui corrigent le
magnificat.**

Fig. 6 *Sotie nouvelle des sotz qui corrigent le magnificat a cinq personnages* (number 9 in the *Recueil Trepperel*, ed. E. Droz).

In other words the iconic sign which in Le Dru's edition represented the authorial authority becomes a simple illustration for other *sotties*. The image of the fool used by the Gringore to assert his auctorial authority is used and abused by the printer to convey the topic of the play, that is, a *sottie*: a text with fools and about fools.

The Trepperels: Gringore's "popular" publishers. Gringore's "popular" readers.

In the light of this paratextual information one may suggest that, with the Trepperel edition, Gringore's play entered the circuit of "popular" literature, that is, according to R. Chartier,⁴² the type of literature which was derogated from its initial cultural, editorial, social trajectory

⁴² R. Chartier, *Lecteurs et lectures de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1987)

to be appropriated by other groups of readers that had other cultural needs. Among the owners of this type of books one could mention especially the urban population composed of merchants and professional bourgeois.⁴³ Like the Oudots, the initiators of the *Bibliothèque bleue* in the following century, the Trepperels had the same editorial strategy: to “re-cycle” the titles which, by their initial usage, belonged to other social groups (to the lay courtly audience or to clerical scholarly aristocracy, for example). In other words, they adopted literate publications which they adapted to the cultural profile and tactics of the audience which actually their own editorial strategies created. Thus the Trepperels printed cheap books which could be afforded by a numerous audience.

Moreover, just like the titles in the *Bibliothèque bleue*,⁴⁴ the books issued by the Trepperels presented an internal coherence both in terms of their literary genre and referent. As far as the former is concerned, one could mention courtly novels (*Le preux chevalier Artus de Bretagne*, *Les Prouesses et faits merveilleux du noble Huon de Bordeaux*, *Galien restauré[...] chevalier fils du compte Olivier de Vienne*), Biblical texts (*Cantiques de Salomon*), classical literature (*Le Grand Caton en français*, *Esopé en français*, *Recueil des épîtres d’Ovide*).⁴⁵ As for the latter, a great deal of the titles published by the Trepperels come from the field of devotional literature (*Complainte douloureuse de l’âme damnée*, *Doctrine et instruction nécessaire aux chrétiens et chrétiennes*, *Fleur de dévotion*) or practical literature (*L’art de fauconnerie et des chiens de chasse*, *La Médecine des chevaux et des bêtes*

⁴³ Among the potential readers of *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* one can propose Jacques le Gros, “bourgeois de Paris” during the reign of Francis I. A. Hindley makes reference to his catalogue of the books which Jacques le Gros owned in 1533. Along with courtly novels and dramatic texts he also mentioned “Mère Sotte.” (Hindley (ed.), P. Gringore, *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*, p. 16).

⁴⁴ *Lecteurs et lectures*, p. 255.

⁴⁵ Renouard, *Imprimeurs et libraires parisiens* (Paris, 1964); *Catalogue of a Collection of Early French Books*; HARRISSE, Excerpta Colombiana; CLAUDIN, *Histoire de l’imprimerie en France*; *Short-title catalogue of Books Printed in France*; *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du XVI^e siècle, d’après les mss de Ph. Renouard*; *Index Aureliensis*; S. ÖHLUND-RAMBAUD, *Les Trepperel, imprimeurs-libraires parisiens et le livre à figure* (Mémoire de DEA, Université Paris IV, 1988/89).

chevalines, Manière de planter en jardins : En ce petit livre peut on bien savoir comment l'on doit). In other words, despite the fact that the texts exhibit a great variety of topics, they respond to “une attente partagée, qu’elle soit de l’ordre de la devotion, de l’utilité ou de l’imaginaire.”⁴⁶

Drama (whether it be religious or profane) and other types of literary genres (poems, for example) represented a great deal of the Trepperel’s editorial output. Gringore was not the only contemporary author whose works were adopted and adapted by the Trepperels. As C. J. Brown has pointed out in her study dedicated to the paratextual elements and auctorial representations of the French authors at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Trepperels were among the printers who rarely mentioned the name of the author on the title page. More often than not they appropriated the texts that they introduced in their editorial repertoire in rather illicit manners.

Hence, it comes as no surprise that Gringore’s *Le jeu du Prince des Sotz* suffered such a transformation. One might explain it invoking the argument of the highly capitalistic nature of the early sixteenth century printing world where the copyright system was rather in its incipient form despite the existence of a book privilege-system.⁴⁷ At the same time, one might understand the Trepperel widow’s dishonest practice as an “aesthetical” transformation of the publications. The above-mentioned types of books, among which *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* can easily be placed, are meant to be deciphered by other readers with other cultural competences and needs. For them the written/printed word has other connotations. It is licit, pertinent, *written* what they saw on the stage, that is, Gringore wearing the fool’s costume and not Gringore, the *acteur*, that is, both the author and the juridical person who has full control upon his publications.⁴⁸ In this respect, the thorny issue of authorship has no relevance which

⁴⁶ Chartier, « Les Livres bleus », p. 255.

⁴⁷ E. Armstrong, *Before Copyright*.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers*, pp.

explains the fact that Gringore's mark actually becomes an illustration of the book, as I have suggested earlier.

The new readers created by the editorial strategies of printers such as the Trepperel in Paris or Barnabé Chaussard (1460-1527) in Lyon are essentially educated in the spirit of the oral culture. Just like Menocchio, the miller from Friuli, they confront what they read with the spirit of the oral culture⁴⁹ which is more familiar to them. Gringore's play exhibits this "popular" type of reading as well. Thus the Third Estate, represented by *La Sotte Commune*, does not turn out to be a "passive" receptor of what the other *Sots*, allegedly representing the clergy and the aristocracy, tell her but an active interpreter that uses her own cultural competence which is based on orality and visual images:

Regardez moy bien hardiment.
Je parle sans sçavoir comment,
A cella suis acoustumée:
Mais à parler realement,
Ainsy qu'on dit communement,
Jamais ne fut feu sans fumée. (vv. 289-294).

Par mon ame, je n'en sçay rien.
Je voy les plus grans empeschez,
Et les autres se sont cachez.
Dieu vueille que tout vienne à bien :
Chascun n'a pas ce qui est sien ;
D'affaires d'aultruy on se mesle. (vv. 300-305). (emphasis mine)

As R. Chartier has pointed out in his study dedicated to the analysis of the burlesque literature in the way it had been edited by the editors of the *Bibliothèque bleu*,⁵⁰ the "popular" reading is not similar to that practised by the individuals who are familiar with the plot of the book concerned. In fact, the "popular" type of lecture needs other landmarks. Thus, it comes as now surprise that ten years after Pierre Le Dru published the first edition of *Le Jeu du*

⁴⁹ C. Ginzburg, *Le Fromage et les vers : l'univers d'un meunier du XVIe siècle*, trad. M. Aymard (Paris, 1980), p. 20.

⁵⁰ R. Chartier, 'La Littérature de la gueuserie' in : *Lectures et lecteurs*, p. 286. R. Chartier, *Figures de la gueuserie* (Paris, 1982).

Prince des Sotz, the most number of copies were still published by the Trepperels.⁵¹ Pope Julius II had already been dead by that time, Louis XII the same, Gringore had left Paris, but the Trepperels continued to print *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* mentioning under the mark of Mère Sotte: *nouvellement imprime a Paris*. In the reforming universe of the “popular” literature the referential contemporary reality does not matter. What matters more is “autant en avoir ou ouyr la lecture comme veoir la representation (...) particulièrement ou solitairement par manière d’estude, de pasetemps et de bonne doctrine“.⁵²

Conclusions

On the whole it seems that the two sixteenth century editions of *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz* belonged to rather different cultural and social circuits. Thus I have distinguished two kinds of audiences: one that was rather familiar with the group of propagandistic works in favour of Louis XII which were initiated as a result of the king’s bellicose enterprises against Pope Julius II. The other was composed of what has been called “bourgeois,” consumers and, to a certain extent, possessors of various editions of works that were derogated from their initial audience and use, that is, the courtly and, sometimes, erudite. The former allegedly adopted a more scholarly key of reading by means of which they could decipher the rather cryptic political allusions in the *Jeu du Prince de Sotz*. The latter, who like Menocchio were far from being simple passive receptors of the literate/elite cultural products, used another reading strategy which conveyed the elements of the oral culture with which they were familiar.

⁵¹ Hindley (ed.), P. Gringore, *Jeu du Prince des Sotz*, p. 15.

⁵² J. Koopmans (ed.), Nicolas de Chesnaye, *La Condamnation de Banquet* (Geneva, 1999), p. 63.

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