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GUY DE FONTENAY (c. 1486-1570?), *Traité des quatre vertus principales dites cardinales precedé d'un discours sur la vertu*

**In French and Latin, illustrated manuscript on paper
France, Centre [Berry or Nivernais], c. 1550**

103 ff., complete (collation: i¹⁰, ii¹⁴, iii¹⁰, iv¹⁶, v¹⁶, vi¹⁴, vii¹⁰, viii¹⁰ [12-2, last two folios blank or cancelled]), paper leaves sometimes interfoliated with protective tissue-paper, on paper (although no perfect match, watermarks closest to (1) "Couronne", Briquet no. 4828, Tours c. 1566; see also no. 4827, Limoges, 1556 and no. 4829, Limoges, 1597; (2) "Huchet", Briquet no. 7818, Grenoble, 1563 or no. 7820, Sion, 1568 [the latter both geographically quite remote from most likely region of copy in Central France]; we have found no satisfactory match in Piccard, "Kronen," 1961 and "Horn," 1979), written in brown ink in a cursive hand on up to 23 long lines between two horizontals and two verticals ruled in brown ink (justification 216 x 141mm.), running titles, side headings, capitals touched red, paragraph marks in red, 2 full-page coats of arms, 14 full-page ink drawings colored in wash and pastel (a bit of spreading of red, some wear to miniatures). Bound in later vellum over pasteboard, reused parchment document with remains of wax seal (Binding spotted, but in general sound condition). Dimensions 328 x 236 mm.

This manuscript contains a previously unknown and entirely unpublished work by the humanist author and poet Guy de Fontenay. Our copy is the only known manuscript of his work on the Four Cardinal Virtues and was likely the presentation copy made for the Duchess of Nevers perhaps in part intended for the instruction of her children. The work merits further study in comparison with other works produced under the reign of Henri II, often less known in comparison to those of the preceding reign of Francis I.

PROVENANCE

1. Guy de Fontenay, archdeacon and canon of Nevers Cathedral, completed the present work at his family's château of the Tour de Vesvre, near Sancerre, 15 October 1550 (ff. 2, 6). If not the original volume given to the dedicatee, Marguerite de Bourbon-Vendôme, duchesse de Nevers (1516-1589), this copy seems at the least to have been owned by a member of the Bourbon affinity. The deliberate damage to the figure of the jurist, Jean du Tillet (f. 84), is presumably the result of his prominent support of the Guise against the Bourbon: indeed, he voted for the death penalty for Louis I de Condé in 1560. It is not clear when the four poems praising de Fontenay were written in a different script at the end of the volume, but they appear to be contemporary and included in the composition of the manuscript (ff. 101-102); a verso and recto remain blank before the concluding colored

drawing on f. 103v. The authors of the poems come from his immediate circle: the poem of Guillaume Rapine, governor of the Nivernais since 1535, was prompted by this work; one of the two poems by his nephew, Jean de Marrafin, seigneur de Guerchy, the son of his sister Esmée and Jean de Marrafin, seigneur de Viel-Moulin, was written to accompany a copy of the work sent to his cousin, Madame de Rezay (see Thaumassière, 1868, p. 175; see also Villenaut, 1900, p. 565).

TEXT

The treatise entitled *Traité des quatre vertus principales* is divided into five parts, as below.

f. 1, Coat-of-arms, House of Fontenay, heading, *Armes de la maison de Fontenay. Porté palé d'argent et d'azur de six pièces au chevron de gueules, brochant sur le tout*; below the coat-of-arms, the following motto in Latin: "Haec sunt a toto notissima tempore signa strenua quae nayi fontis origo gerit";

f. 2, Title-page: "Traité des quatre vertus principales dites cardinales, précédé d'un discours sur la vertu dédié 1° à Mademoiselle Margueritte de Bourbon, duchesse de Nevers, comtesse d'Eu, d'Auxerre, de Dreux, de Rethel et de Beaufort; 2° à Monseigneur de Bourbon, duc de Vendosme; 3° à Monseigneur François de Clèves, duc de Nevers; 4° à Monseigneur Anne de Montmorency, connestable de France; 5° au Parlement de Paris. Par Guy de Fontenay, archidiacre et chanoine de Nevers, de la Tour de Vesvre, près Sancerre, le 15 octobre 1550."

f. 2v, Latin poem on Virtue with French prose translation, heading, *Virtus pro iconio suo symulachro*; followed by, *Interpretation en prose vulgaire du septain precedent*;

f. 5-6, Dedication to Marguerite de Bourbon, duchesse de Nevers (1516-1589), "A clarissime princesse, et quant plus haulte tant plus humble dame, Madame Marguerite de Bourbon, duchesse de Nevers, comtesse d'Heu, d'Auxerre, de Dreux, de Rethel, et de Beaufort, salut entiere gloire accreue par vertuz et immortalité de nom"; incipit, "Le picteur subtil, petit statuair ou sculpteur expert pour laudablement decorer certain tableau pierre de taille, ou aulcune blanche paroy de quelque sumptueux palais investigue sollicitement toutes specieuses et belles ymaiges, pour au vif les transferer, représenter auditz lieux ausquelz il vault asseoir sadite picture, sculpture ou protaicture..."; explicit, "[...] et auquel Madame treshonorée je supplie vous conserver longuement et tous les vostres en honeur, vye prospere et tresdesyree santé. De la Tour de Vesvre prest Sancerre ce quinziesme jour de octobre l'an mil Vc cinquante. [signed] Vostre orateur treshumble et serviteur obsequentissime, Guy de Fontenay archidiacre et chanoine de Nevers";

f. 9-31, Treatise on virtue, with prefatory matter including dedicatory poem to Henry II (1519-1559), pronounced by the "paranympe de Vertu," Bordilon that is Imbert de la Platière, dit Bourdillon, Marshall of France, and grandson of Guy de Fontenay's aunt, Marie de Fontenay, beginning, "Les estandards des vertuz et vices recentemente desployez par messier Guy de Fontenay chevalier en la militia spirituele, soubz lesquelz tous vertueux et vicieux militant en ce monde, selon qu'ilz se retyrent a l'enseigne du bien ou du mal..."; dedication, "A cristianissime et le summe fastige des vertuz Henry de Valoys roy de France..."; incipit, "Les philosophes morals subnomez par les grecs ethiciens ou philaretiens...";

f. 31v, blank;

ff. 32-50v, Prudence, opening with a Latin poem and dedicatory French verse to Antoine de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme (1518-1562), brother of the duchesse de Nevers, presented by Ligny, the "paranympe de Prudence," possibly the author Cesar de Ligny, heading, *De la vertu de Prudence lumiere et directrice des troys aultres vertutz*; dedication, "A tresvertueux et prince de parfaicte et tresdesyree expectation Monseigneur Anthoyne de Borbon duc de Vendosme..."; incipit, "L'estandard de Prudence dedyé a l'eminetissime maison de Vendosme..."; "Cassander Gebanicus entre les dryides gaulois phylosophe de haulte celebrité descript Prudence estre une discretion de ce qui est bon ou mauvais...";

f. 51, blank;

ff. 51v-65v, Fortitude, opening with a Latin poem and dedicatory French verse to François de Clèves, duc de Nevers (1516-1568), married to Marguerite de Bourbon since 1538, spoken by Gyry, the "paranympe de force," heading, *De la vertu de Force primipile et vexillaire des troys vertutz oeuvrieres*; dedication, "A treshault prince vifve ymaige de vertu et de bone conscience envers Dieu et de honeste vye envers les hommes, Monseigneur Francoys de Cleves, duc de Nevers..."; incipit, "L'estandard de force heureusement conserve en l'antiquissime mayson de Nevers...";

François de Clèves, duc de Nevers, married Marguerite de Bourbon in 1538. They had five children, including Marie de Clèves, affectioned by Henri III (see Hoefler, *Nouvelle biographie générale...*, Paris, 1863, tome 37, col. 817-818).

ff. 66-81v, Temperance, opening with a Latin poem and a dedicatory French verse to Anne de Montmorency, constable of France (1493-1567), spoken by the "paranympe de vertu," La Roche Posay, presumably Jean de Chasteignier, seigneur de la Roche Posay (c.1490-1567), one of the chief financial officials of the crown; heading, *De la vertu de Temperance*; dedication, "A temperatissime et en tous subtilz stratagemates erudissime et de tout cumuli de laounges militaires pleinement aourné, Monseigneur Anne de Montmorency premier baron..."; incipit, "L'estandard de temperance destyné a la tresnoble mayson de Montmorency...";

ff. 82-100v, Justice, opening with a Latin poem and a dedicatory French verse to the Parlement de Paris, spoken by the "paranympe de vertu," the jurist Jean du Tillet (d.1587); heading, *De la vertu de Justice*; dedication, "A l'entier et incorruptible Senat du Parlement de l'antiquissime et tricipité Lutesse..."; incipit, "L'estandard de Justice transféré a prudentissimes, strenuissimes, temperatissimes et aequissimes, mes tresredoutez seigneurs tetrarches et laticlaves senateurs du syncere et bien renommé Parlement de Paris..."; explicit, "[...]et finalement venir a l'entiere notice d'ung chascun pour ycelles ymiter et rejeter desormais toutes choses indécores et vicieuses. *In minimis labor est, et laus, labor arduus fervens / Explicat in magnis an voluisse sat est. Sic videar, ut non invidear*";

ff. 101-102, Laudatory poems to Guy de Fontenay by Hector de Villepleine, Jean de Marrafin and Guillaume Rapine; headings, "De Hector de Villepleine lingoinois tretraquaternion, ogdosilabe, au lecteur benevole"; "Jehan de Marrafin abbé de Bellevaulx et seigneur de Guerchy. A l'auteur"; "Ledict seigneur de Guerchi a Madame de Rezay"; "Noble seigneur Guy de Fontenay seigneur de

saint Aulbin grand archidiacre en l'esglise cathedrale de Nevers Guillaume Rapine lieutenant general de Nivernoys."

These laudatory poems are copied in a different hand at the end the manuscript, but on similarly ruled paper, and they were most likely planned very early on, in praise of the author Guy de Fontenay.

ff. 102v-103, blank.

This manuscript contains a hitherto unrecorded and unpublished French vernacular prose work on the Four Cardinal Virtues by Guy de Fontenay, poet and translator from the Berry region in France. It is evidently the only known copy and likely the author's presentation copy to the dedicatee, Marguerite de Bourbon, duchesse de Nevers, aunt of Henri de Bourbon, future King Henri IV. The present treatise, as indicated in the title, contains a vernacular treatise on the Four Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance and Justice, in keeping with the very rich and abundant tradition of such treatises in Latin and the vernacular that flourished throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, beginning with Martin of Braga's *Formula vitae honestae*, the first treatise on the Cardinal Virtues from Latin Christendom, commonly misattributed to Seneca. The Cardinal Virtues were understood as comprising the whole range of human morality, the other moral virtues being derived or at least associated with these four primary concepts. Towards the end of his treatise, the author announces a forthcoming treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins that seems either never to have been written or has not survived: "[...] Je promects remectre incontinent la main a la plume, pour cy après, et suyvamment adjouxter une aultre ample description des sept turpitudes generales..." (f. 100v). His treatise on the Four Cardinal Virtues is written in very learned and erudite French, denoting an excellent grasp of the language. His references to classical and Biblical culture equally reflect his erudition.

Guy de Fontenay (born c. 1486, died c. 1570 (?) according to Villenaut, 1900, p. 565) was born in the Berry region of France, in a small hamlet called Fontenay (near Tendron, canton de Nérondes, département du Cher; see Frémont, p. 502-503), the eighteenth child of Guillaume de Fontenay (gentilhomme du duc d'Orléans) and Philiberte de Digoine. The Fontenay family was a prominent family of the Berry region of France. He was canon of Nevers, professor at the University of Bourges and perhaps director of a "gymnase littéraire." He published between 1507 and 1555 a number of works, for the most part listed in Roman d'Amat [DBF] (1979), col. 346, all written in Latin, all of which are quite rare and scarce. Guy de Fontenay's father was a younger son of Guy, baron de Fontenay, who received the Tour de Vesvres as his share of the family lands. The author Guy's title of seigneur de St-Aubin came from his mother Philiberte de Digoine. Like others of his family Guy relied on the church, and particularly the Cathedral of Nevers, for his income: his uncle Pierre de Fontenay was Bishop of Nevers from 1461 to 1499. Here, in the dedication to Marguerite de Bourbon, it is his most famous literary relation who is invoked: the poet Octavien de Saint-Gelais, bishop of Angoulême 1494-1502, the son of his aunt Philiberte de Fontenay and Pierre de Saint-Gelais, seigneur de Montlieu.

Very little has been written on Guy de Fontenay, the only study being an outdated article by A. Pérémé (1862). We have not found any mention of the present work or any mention of this

manuscript, which appears to be the only copy of a work that was never printed. Although his more substantial published works were prose compilations from authors of antiquity, Guy de Fontenay was also a poet. Hector de Villepleine's verse in the present volume says the following: "Tous genres de vers pratique / Les mesurant par art certain." Guy de Fontenay clearly prided himself on his technical skill, explaining before each dedicatory poem, the meter and mode in which it is written. His classicizing pretensions required him to defend himself for composing in French, which he justified by the example of his cousin (Octavien de Saint-Gelais), by the need to counteract the immoral literature available in the vernacular, and by his desire to instruct the Nevers children: "Estant donc demeuré en ces infimes doctrines trites et vulgaires, quatre motifz m'ont induict entreprendre ce present opusculé en vulgaire francoys..." (f. 5v).

The present manuscript was copied in a clearly Catholic environment, at a time when many of the leading French families were to convert to Reformist ideas and abjure Catholicism. Marguerite de Bourbon-Vendôme was the sister of Antoine de Bourbon, and hence the sister-in-law of Jeanne d'Albret. A number of the children of Marguerite de Bourbon and Francois de Clèves converted to Protestantism (including François II de Clèves, Marie de Clèves, see Haag, *La France protestante*, Paris, 1852, tome III, p. 503). The present treatise was thus written during the crucial years that preceded the bloody Wars of Religion in France after the death of King Henri II in 1559.

ILLUSTRATION

The subjects of the illustrations are as follows:

f. 1, Arms, House of Fontenay;

f. 3, Three-faced Virtue trampling on a skeletal figure of Death, with her attributes explained in the accompanying poem;

f. 4, Arms of Marguerite de Bourbon set in a mannerist ornamental frame of strapwork ("cuirs"), elongated nude figures and clusters of fruits;

f. 7, Army of Virtues, led by Henry II, Antoine de Bourbon, Francois de Clèves and Anne de Montmorency (identified by their arms), defeats grey figures of the Vices;

f. 8, Bourdillon declaims before King Henry II surrounded by personifications of Temperance, Prudence, Justice and Fortitude;

f. 33, King Henry II seizes Occasion by the forelock, while Charles V imprudently lets her escape, preceded by a Latin distich, "Quando capillata se offert occasio fronte / Hanc rape, nam verso calva est, fugitinaque vultu";

f. 34, Ligny addresses Prudence (holding spectacles) and Antoine de Bourbon (enthroned);

f. 51v, Anaxararchus tormented by order of Nicocreon, preceded by Latin verses: "Fortis Anaxarchus pthysane contuses in alveo...";

f. 52, François de Clèves between Fortitude with her column and Gyry;

f. 66, The Muses and the Three Graces, preceded by a Latin distich, "Non minuas Charitum numerum, numerus neque crescat / Musarum, et mensae numero laetabere justo";

f. 67, De Chasteignier addresses Anne de Montmorency and Temperance with her clock;

f. 68, Sophrosyne and Thyas tempering wine with water, preceded by a Latin distich, "Vina, cibos, linguam, nostrosque attemperat actus / Sophrosyne, huic semper Thyas malesuada repugnat";

f. 82, Roman Charity breast-feeding a prisoner, with prison guard peeping through an open door, preceded by three Latin verses: "Maximus hic nature instinctus, filia patrem / Ubere furtive lactate ne internecet illum / Dura fames olido ac tetro sub carcere clausum";

f. 82v, Sisamnes's flayed body laid out before his judge's seat over which his skin is fastened, preceded by four Latin verses: "Privari vivum Cambises pelle Sisamnem / Precepit quoniam censuras ferret iniquas / Fixa fori selle pellis terrore replevit / Pretores ut demum ex aequo jura referent"; below the drawing, "Sisamnes juge en Perse";

According to Herodotos, Sisamnes was a corrupt judge under Cambyses II of Persia. He accepted a bribe and delivered an unjust verdict. As a result, the king had him arrested and flayed alive. His skin was then used to cover the seat in which his son would sit in judgement.

f. 84, A notional view of the Paris Parliament with Justice and the damaged figure of Du Tillet;

The deliberate damage to the figure of the jurist, Jean du Tillet, is presumably the result of his prominent support of the Guise against the Bourbon: indeed, he voted for the death penalty for Louis I de Condé in 1560.

f. 103v, Herald pointing to a tree in which are hung empty shields, preceded by a Latin distich: "Illustri manasse domo atque insignia ferre / Virtutis nichil est nisi vitam insignibus aptes".

The present treatise is illustrated with 14 full-page pen drawings, highlighted in colored wash and pastel. Most of the drawings are either the opening illustration for each section of the treatise (ff. 8, 34, 52, 67, 84), or drawings combined with Latin verses very much in the spirit of emblem books (ff. 33, 51v, 66, 68, 82, 82v), a type of illustrated book combining visual images, mottoes and short epigrammatic moral explanations. The literary genre of the emblem book was initiated in 1531 with the publication of the *Emblematum liber* by Andrea Alciati (1492-1550). It is interesting to note that Guy de Fontenay was a professor at the University of Bourges, where Alciati had also lectured in the 1530s.

Some of the colored drawings are on unruled leaves and some are on inserted leaves. The work was, however, clearly intended to be illustrated from the beginning, since the opening poem on Virtue specifically explains the accompanying illustration. For each individual virtue there is a picture of its "paranymphe" declaiming before the dedicatee and a personification of the virtue, as well as one or

possibly two examples, mostly drawn from antiquity, of the virtue in action. The miniatures are boldly delineated color-washed drawings, where the long established and popular theme of the personified virtues is given a contemporary relevance by the dedicatees and "paranymphes," although all appear in classicizing costume. The Italianate style of the First School of Fontainebleau had rapidly spread, partly through prints, a possible source of the strapwork framing with nudes around the arms of Marguerite de Bourbon-Vendôme.

The style of the present drawings remains clearly regional, probably produced locally in the Berry region, in the author's immediate circle. Further research into the author's oeuvre might yield more information on the illustrative programs elaborated for his works.

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