Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Gordon Kipling, 'Brussels, Joanna of Castile, and the Art of Theatrical Illustration (1496)', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 32 (2001), 229-53

Permanent URL:
https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123762&silo_library=GEN01

Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse

Brussels, Joanna of Castile, and the Art of Theatrical Illustration (1496)

Gordon Kipling

On the ninth of December 1496, the city of Brussels welcomed its new Archduchess, Joanna of Castile, who had come to Flanders to marry the Archduke Philip. The political moment was a particularly portentous one; this dynastic marriage between a daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and a son of the Emperor Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy was soon to bring Spain into Hapsburg control. Their son, the Emperor Charles V, would extend the Hapsburg dominion over most of Europe and across the seas into the New World. At the time, of course, no one could have guessed that Joanna would bring quite such an impressive political dowry to her marriage with the Archduke Philip. For them, the Archduke's marriage held out the more immediate promise of enlisting the Spanish as their allies against the French.[1] That was more than reason enough to stage one of the largest and most complex civic triumphs that Flanders had yet seen.

According to the fashion of Flemish entries, the show, which took place at night, was lit by torches mounted atop booth-shaped pageant stages. As was their custom, the Chambers of Rhetoric devised and performed the pageants, and the scale of the show, as measured by the number and variety of pageant stages, was designed to rival the famous civic triumphs of the Burgundian past. The Chambers of Bruges had staged a twenty-seven pageant show for Philip the Good in 1440, and the Ghent Rhetoricians' famous triumph of 1458 consisted of about twenty such pageants. The twenty-nine pageants staged by the Brussels guilds on this occasion bested those celebrated shows and staked the city's claim of pre-eminence among its rivals. They also tested the ingenuity of the guilds, for each of the brilliantly-lit booth stages would have to present a scene drawn from biblical history or classical myth appropriate to Joanna's marriage to the Archduke Philip the Fair and her inauguration as Archduchess of Austria.

As a memorial of this important occasion, an extraordinary manuscript containing some 62 illustrations of the event was prepared, almost certainly for presentation to the Archduchess.[2] For historians of the medieval theatre, these illustrations are extremely precious, for they constitute the earliest attempt we have to produce something like pictorial records of an actual theatrical performance.[3] They purport to be, as no earlier illustrations can, illustrations of what actually happened in a particular theatrical performance at a verifiable time and place. Potentially, at least, they have the power to embody our ideas of the medieval theatre with solid substance, to give them a local habitation and a name. They are unusual in yet another sense. There are no other detailed records of the event to document this important occasion. Neither civic records nor guild records exist, and there remain few and very undetailed narrative reports.[4] The armies of Louis XIV have been very hard on such documents as once may have existed, and we are left with this visual report alone.[5]

For these reasons, Meg Twycross and I are planning an edition of the manuscript with commentary. What I propose to do here is very much a preliminary report limited to one main point. I'd like to examine the manuscript's claim to documentary authority. To what extent can such a manuscript as this, in the absence of more traditional records, constitute a reliable record of dramatic and cultural performance? In what senses can the artist claim to be producing something like an accurate visual record of the dramatic spectacle? Consider, to begin with, the practical difficulties of producing such a record. How does the artist manage to compose some 58 illustrations *ad vivum*? Is such a feat of artistic prowess even possible? Does he run from place to place madly making sketches as he goes? Were there dress rehearsals that he might have attended? Did the actors pose for him before or after the event?

Let us begin with the construction of the manuscript. There were originally at least 66 folios containing 62 illustrations, but in its present form, it contains only 63 folios and 60 illustrations because two of the original illustrations have been excised and have disappeared.[6] The illustrations conventionally appear on the recto folios opposite brief explanatory texts on the preceding verso folios. These texts rarely do more than identify the subject of the opposing illustration: 'This scene represents how Solomon, the wisest of kings, married the daughter of the King of Egypt. Thus with great joy Lord Philip took to wife the admirable Joanna of Castille in Brabant'. Four of the original illustrations lie outside the major programme of theatrical illustrations; they consist of a frontispiece showing Archangel Michael slaying a dragon (1v), a tailpiece illustration of the Brussels Town Hall (this latter illustration, alas, is one of the missing-in-action casualties of the manuscript), and two folios of heraldic coats-of-arms relating to the married couple (60r, 61r). The 58 remaining illustrations (including in this count one missing illustration) are equally divided between 29 illustrations of the Archduchess' procession (on the rectos of fols 3-31) and 29 of the booth stages which the Archduchess encountered in the streets that December evening (on the rectos of fols 32-59).

The frontispiece and tailpiece illustrations, which bracket the entire collection of images, provide an essential interpretative context. Both emphasize civic rather than archducal power. By beginning with an image of St. Michael, the manuscript makes clear that what follows must be understood as a reflection of Brussels' civic authority. St Michael, as well as being the patron of the town's cathedral, also served as the city's patron saint and in this role appeared on the civic seal. He was to Brussels what the Agnus Dei symbol was to Rouen – an expression of both religious and civic identity. By 1455, when Martin van Rode's gilded, bronze statue of St Michael was hoisted to the top of the massive, central tower of the Brussels Town Hall, it had become the most visible and dominant symbol of Brussels' civic authority.[7] The artist then reinforced this civic point of view by concluding the decorative programme of the manuscript with an illustration of the Brussels Town Hall over which the emblem of St Michael presides. In so doing, he pointedly encapsulates his book of images within two potent icons of civic power and authority. Since he has enclosed even the manuscript's emblems of archducal power – two folios of heraldic achievements relative to Philip and Joanna – between these civic symbols, the artist seems to be making a point about the relationship of civic to princely authority. As we shall see, he makes this point consistently throughout the manuscript, and in surprising ways.

At first glance, the original division of the processional and theatrical images into two groups of 29 illustrations each strikes one as curious. This number seems too remarkable to be mere coincidence. If we look at the nature of the illustrations, however, I think we can see that the artist has made a conscious decision to make up the number of processional illustrations to match the number of stage illustrations. In other words, what has happened here I think is that the Archduchess probably did encounter precisely 29 booth stages in the streets of Brussels that evening (we will examine this point in detail below). The artist has allocated one folio to the illustration of each of these structures, and then decided to provide a matching number of processional illustrations in order to suggest that the procession and stages were equally important and thus equally deserving of preservation in the visual record he was creating. Indeed, as we shall see, he seems to have regarded both parts of his visual record as equally theatrical.

The processional half of his task, of course, was in some ways not as easy to record as was the half depicting the booth stages. First of all, the procession doesn't divide itself up into convenient pre-packaged pictorial units as easily as the stages do.

For the artist, each stage, however simple or complex, constituted a pictorial unit, but what exactly constitutes a pictorial unit of the procession? Secondly, once you begin to think in folio-sized pictorial units, you find you have to make choices about the procession that you don't have to make about the stage illustrations. If you've got quite a large procession, and that procession included (as this one evidently did) more than 29 people or even 29 groups of people, whom do you include and whom do you exclude from your pictorial record? What is it that you are recording, after all?

We can see the dimensions of his problem when we compare one illustration (Figure 1), in which the artist devotes an entire folio essentially to a single individual, with a second illustration (Figure 2), in which he means to illustrate an entire group. What we notice first of all are the extraordinary differences between these two illustrations. In the first, an individual described on the facing text page as a *histrio* dominates both a landscape and a small group of five children. In the second, by contrast, the most important person in the entire procession, the Archduchess Joanna herself, rides sidesaddle on a horse in the centre of the picture, but she is almost entirely lost inside a group of torch-carrying military guildsmen. The group clearly dominates the individual – remarkably so, when one considers that the Archduchess herself is being submerged in the group – whereas the individual clearly dominates in the preceding illustration.

If we view these illustrations as part of a coherent representational strategy, however, we can see that they really are not so different after all. In deciding what to represent, the artist clearly means to record the city's contributions to the day's spectacle, not the court's contributions. Consider, for instance, how much of the procession is 'missing' from these illustrations. What one would normally expect to find, I think, are illustrations of the Archduchess' retinue. Where are the heralds? Where are the henchmen? Where are the noble ladies accompanying the Archduchess? Where are the great noblemen of the realm? Where are the great officers of the Archduchess' household? Conventional illustrations of royal processions seek to document the participation of the great ones of the realm in this important event. What makes these Brussels processional illustrations different from almost all other essays in this genre – and especially valuable to historians of the theatre – is that the artist has chosen to ignore the great ones of the realm and document instead as fully as possible the civic groups which marched in the procession. These are arranged in hierarchal order: first, six groups representing the town's religious establishment: Scholars, Carmelites, Franciscans, Preachers, Canons, and the Chapter of the Cathedral of Sainte Gedule (rectos of fols 3-8). Then follow the various constituents of the Town's municipal organization: the 'Centenarii' (council representatives), the

Representatives of the Town's *Métiers* (Craft Guilds), the Patricians, the 'Clients', the Peacekeepers, the Justices, the Secretaries, the Councillors, the Receivers, the Échevins, and, lastly, the Burgomaster and his advisors (rectos of fols 9-10, 17-26). Finally, the procession concludes with illustrations of the Town's five military guilds or *Serments en armes*, beginning with the most junior and ending with the oldest and most prestigious, the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* (rectos of fols 27-31).[8] Together, these illustrations anatomize Brussels' civic establishment, grouped into its three divisions: religious, municipal, and military. Each of these divisions is further organized hierarchally, leaving the most powerful and important representative to conclude each division: the Cathedral Chapter, the Burgomaster, the *Grand-Serment.*

The artist's representational strategy appears most clearly, perhaps, when he finally does manage to include a painting of the Archduchess herself. What we expect, of course, is a conventional illustration in which the royal personage (Figure 3) appears as the centre of attention, riding triumphantly and serenely beneath a canopy of estate. But what we get is the astonishing illustration which actually seeks to displace her from the centre of attention (Figure 2). True, we see her riding sidesaddle on a palfrey right where we might expect her to, in the position of most honour, at the end of the procession. But instead of singling her out for special attention, the artist has chosen to depict her surrounded by – indeed nearly obscured by – a group of torch-bearing military guildsmen. He easily could have made her especially prominent merely by emphasizing the distinctions inherent in her equestrian appearance as opposed to the citizens of lesser rank who are walking rather than riding in the procession. In fact, however, the artist is more interested in the guildsmen's special distinction than he is in hers. As the text points out on the facing page, this picture represents the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers*, the military guild of most antiquity and greatest respect in Brussels. The illustration is, in short, a tiny essay in the same genre as Rembrant's *Nachtwacht.* Because of their distinguished status among the guilds, the crossbowmen claimed the right to escort the Archduchess. Moreover, the *Arbalétriers* had their own annual procession and traditionally organized processions such as this one.[9] Perhaps, indeed, they appear in the position of most honour at the end of the procession because they were responsible for organizing this procession as well. Perhaps, in short, the procession was their show. The Princess thus appears in the picture primarily to document their honourable status as reflected in their right to escort members of royalty. She serves the illustration as a kind of emblematic appendage to the crossbowmen's company, who embody and represent the city in the same way, perhaps, as the small image of the Town Hall of Brussels in the background also does.

To judge from these processional pictures, the artist is understandably more interested in depicting groups rather than individuals. The manuscript was, after all, probably meant as a gift to the Archduchess, a kind of memory book into which the Archduchess could look and recall the city's achievements that day. The clerics, the military guildsmen, the civic officers are documented, but he does not attempt portraits. No individual member of any of the guilds or religious orders depicted here is likely to be able to put finger to page and say, 'There I am, third from the left in the back row'. He documents the corporate bodies that constitute the city of Brussels, not the particular individuals who upon this date occupied these offices. He takes so little interest in the individuals who form these groups, in fact, that he deliberately leaves many groups 'unfinished', presenting them as only portions of a larger group lost behind the margins of the picture. He thus not only represents the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* as marching into the picture area, but he also cuts off several members of the group at the margin, thus suggesting that many other individual members of the group must remain unrepresented, lost beyond the picture frame. There would be little point, after all, in presenting the Archduchess with careful portrait likenesses of (to her) obscure individuals. Rather, it was important to impress upon her what the city of Brussels corporately achieved in her honour that day.

But this approach necessarily presented the painter with some important problems. If you count all these groups, you end up with 23. He documents each of these civic groups in a single folio. For a number of reasons, he can't really allow more than one folio for each organization. For one thing, in deciding to illustrate, say, the order of friars minors on two folios instead of one, he would necessarily find himself moving in the direction of portraiture. By crowding individuals together on a single folio, you emphasize a group identity. By spreading the group over two or more folios, you inevitably emphasize the individuals in the group. For another thing, if you begin to give some groups more prominence than others by awarding them extra folios, so to speak, you're no longer documenting the civic body of Brussels, you're inevitably favouring one group over another and questions of the relative importance of the various groups to the civic body suddenly claim one's attention. By limiting each group to a single folio, one avoids such problems and recognizes each group's contribution to the show equally.

This still leaves the artist with a representational problem: he has only 23 groups, but 29 folio illustrations to fill. He chose to solve his problem in a way that wonderfully serves our purposes as theatre historians. He chose not only to document the civic groups that marched in the procession, but also the performers that accompanied the procession and whose duty was primarily to entertain the crowd of bystanders. He inserts six folios of performers' illustrations into his manuscript so that it interrupts the sequence of civic officers (rectos of fols 11-16). We've already seen the *histrio*, who seems to have been something of a clown who distinguished himself by a kind of entertaining lunacy, according to the brief facing-page description,[10] but he also records a fool (Figure 4), who brandishes his bauble and sits upon a stool instead of a saddle to ride his horse in the procession. (Incidentally, he is not smoking a pipe in the year 1496; a seventeenth-century doodler has added that detail). Because they focus upon individuals rather than groups, these paintings tend to be more individuated. Perhaps, in other words, the actors who played the *histrio* and the fool *might* recognize themselves from these depictions. Whether or not they are intended as true portraits, they certainly are, at the very least, *representations* of specific individuals. They are meant to recall specific individuals to the Archduchess' memory as she turns the pages of this book in much the same way that the other pictures are intended to recall specific groups.

He also includes a sled-load of masked musicians, a group of club-swinging wildmen, a group of wildwomen escorting an exotic lady blackamoor, and another group of musicians dressed as fools. All of these performers played their part in the civic procession that day, and the artist has selected the most memorable of them to be documented in his pictorial record. More importantly, had the artist conceived of his role in the usual way, we would have perhaps some additional depictions of the worthies of the Habsburg court in solemn procession, but we would have had none of these visual records of theatrical entertainers plying their craft in the streets of a late medieval city. In short these 58 illustrations add up to something less than a Foucaultian representation of power, whether Archducal or civic. What interests the artist in many of these pictures is what interests modern theatre historians: the actors that made the event not only pompous but entertaining. He is interested in six individuals and groups of performers precisely because they are performers, not because they are representative of civic or archducal institutions. Moreover, he expects his ultimate audience, the Archduchess, to share his interest in these pictures as well.

For most viewers, however, the theatrical structures filled with actors will claim the lion's share of attention. Traditionally, just as the procession was organized by the *Serments en armes*, so the civic triumph pageants were organized by the *Métiers*. 'It was the duty of every important guild in the city to help with the street-shows', according to Geroge Kernodle, 'and from the Rederykers, whose special concern was with drama and poetry, more was expected than from the rest'.[11] Without further documentary information, we cannot be sure which of Brussels' many guilds paid for, designed, and staged these pageants. That the Brussels' St Luke's Guild (the

Painters' Guild) probably took a leading role in the production is suggested by the final pageant in the series (fol. 59r).[12] At the conclusion of her civic triumph, the Archduchess thus saw a staged representation of St Luke painting a portrait of the Virgin (Figure 5). The pageant is not very clearly related to Joanna or to the occasion, except in the general sense that, as a royal consort, she was expected to play a Virgin-like role. The explanatory text opposite this image is not of much help; it merely suggests that the scene is relevant because Joanna's parents had sent painted images of her from Spain to Brabant.[13] The presence of this scene thus makes best sense as a kind of trademark affixed to the show. The St Luke's Guild virtually stages its own trade emblem and places it in the position of most honour at the conclusion of the show.

But even if the St Luke's Guild may have been responsible in a general way for organizing these spectacles, other *Métiers* played their part as well. The subject matter of the 29 stages and their arrangement certainly suggests miscellaneous composition rather than the unfolding of a centrally-organized thematic structure. In some sequences of stages, to be sure, particular Guilds might cooperate in constructing a series of closely connected scenes. Thus the middle third of the show is dominated by a series of nine separate booth stages, each devoted to one of the Nine Female Worthies (Figure 6). The entire sequence is carefully coordinated in style. Each stage opens to reveal a carefully posed triad: the central Worthy is flanked by two attendants, one of whom holds a pennant, the other a military helmet (rectos of fols 42-51). As Joanna progresses from stage to stage, the Nine greet her in the fashion of a chivalric *ordo prophetarum*.[14] These nine stages, in turn, are perhaps connected to another, which immediately precedes them. It shows Joanna's mother, Queen Isabella of Castile, accepting the surrender of Granada's last Moorish king (Figure 7). If these were the only pageants in the series, we might be tempted to see them as proof of a highly-organized civic triumph, one which – extremely unusually – seeks to depict Joanna's entry into Brussels in terms of the Advent of the Valiant Woman.

The trouble is, other pageants in the series find very different meanings for the Archduchess's advent. A few others, it is true, attempt further essays on the theme of the Valiant Woman: early on in the show, Joanna thus contemplates a pageant of Judith killing Holofernes (fol. 33r), then three pageants later she finds herself imaged in the Woman of Thebez who slew Abimelech (fol. 36r). Later, she sees a coordinated pair of pageants depicting the story of how two valiant women led the Israelites to defeat the Caananites: one depicting Deborah and Barak (fol. 54r) and one of Jael and Sisera (fol. 55r). Elsewhere, however, other stages encourage her to see herself as a type of royal mediatrix, as Hester is to Ahasuerus (fol. 40r; Figure 14), as the

Daughter of the Pharaoh is to Solomon (fol. 37r), and as Michal who sought to make peace between Abner and David (fol. 38r). Or she is a type of the Desired One, as in the Judgment of Paris (Figure 8; fol. 57r) or the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca (Figure 9; fol. 39r). In some, she is a type of the Queen of Heaven, who receives her crown from heaven (Figure 9; fol. 39r; Figure 15; fol. 56r). One pageant distinguishes itself as a prophetic, allegorical vision of the 'Domus Delicie et Jocunditatis' that will result from the marriage of Philip and Joanna (fol. 58r). And it is certainly possible that other *Métiers* than the St Luke's Guild sought to place their trademark on the show. Do we regard the first pageant in the series, which stages the invention of music by Tubal-Cain, to be representation of the political harmony that the Archduchess' advent will bring about? Or have the Blacksmith's Guild carefully chosen the topic of their contribution so as to advertise the dignity of their Craft (Figure 10; fol. 32r)?

Given the varied subject matter of these pageants, it would be unwise to attempt to find too intricate an organization for this show.[15] Rather, the pageants as the artist records them seem to value variety as much as coherence in subject matter. All of them, to be sure, are appropriate to the occasion, and most of them derive obviously enough from the iconography common to the receptions of queens in fifteenth-century triumphs.[16] But within these limits, the diversity of subject matter suggests that the various craft guilds were operating relatively independently of one another. Some obviously co-operated extensively with one another, but others seem to have pursued independent – and even idiosyncratic – choices. To some extent, there must have been competition. The guild (or guilds) that produced the massive and impressive two-tiered and four-booth stage devoted to the story of Isaac and Rebecca (Figure 9) were obviously trying to impress more than those guilds who were content with less ambitious *tableaux*. For our purposes, however, what is most important is that the artist seems to have recorded this diversity – and consequent rivalry – with some care. He thus lavishes much more attention in recording complicated scenes, like the Judgment of Paris (Figure 8) with its revolving stage machinery, than he does in recording simpler stages.

The stages erected in the streets of Brussels were all of a type familiar to the practices of the Chambers of Rhetoric and the Painters' Guilds in the Low Countries from the mid-fifteenth through the early seventeenth centuries.[17] The majority of them – as in the sixteenth-century example illustrated in Figure 11 – consist of a single, curtained booth set atop a raised platform.[18] As the Archduchess appears before the stage, the curtain is first drawn back to reveal the tableau inside, and then it is immediately closed at the conclusion of the brief performance. Because this mode of performance seemed so peculiar to him, the English herald, Thomas Whiting, took pains to explain how such booth stages operated in a similar performance he witnessed at Bruges in 1468:

> There was a stage made of timbar work, under this forme as ensuythe. The staige devidid in thre pageauntes Richely coveride w^t tappettes, and before subtelly corteynyd with oute those cortaynez A man gevnyg Attendance att soche tyme as any lady passid by and drew the cortayne of the last pageaunte of the iij pageauntes Afore rehersid and than secretely closed it agayne and shewde as lytil sight as myght be sheuid and so sodenly from pageaunt to pageaunt. The first pageant cast the curtaynez subtyly, that the people hadde therof a sufficiant sight; the pageauntes were soo obscure that y fere me to wryte or speke of them because all was countenaunce and noo wordes. In my understondyng the ffurst pageaunt [was Medea] thorough wom Jason wane the fflees of golde, the ij^{de} was quene Astor, that was Last wyfe vnto Assuerus the king. And the iij^{de} pageaunte was Vestie that was furst wife vnto the Kynge Assureus.[19]

The performance, such as it is, takes place entirely within the confines of the curtained booth and is managed by 'A man gevyng Attendance'. Not improbably the *histrio* depicted by the artist fulfilled this function for the Archduchess Juana in 1496. The staff he carries seems to suggest that he may have played an expository role of some sort in the procession.

In depicting such a performance, the artist chooses to illustrate the tableau 'straight on', from a notional position directly in front of the stage, and he fills in the entire picture width with the tableau so that one never sees the sides of the booth, either from the inside or the outside. Because the artist adopts this 'straight-on' pictorial convention, however, we can't be entirely sure whether we're seeing entire stages or merely portions of stages. The manuscript includes a few examples of double- and triple-booth stages. But we cannot be sure that he means each separate illustration to represent a separate stage structure. In the majority of his illustrations, he presents us with a straight-on view of but a single booth. In these cases, does he mean to focus the viewer's attention on an entire stage structure, so as to replicate, in some measure, the experience of progressing from stage to stage through the city? Or is he instead focusing upon the contents of individual booths, thus isolating for detailed inspection each scene in the performance, regardless of whether the scene represents only a single booth in a multiple-booth stage structure or whether the stage structure in fact contained only a single such scene?

Consider again, for instance, the enormous, multiple-booth stage we have examined previously (Figure 9). Even though he cuts off the painting at the ends of the structure without attempting to show the sides, we can tell with some certainty that he means to illustrate an entire stage structure, not just an individual booth. In this case alone, he includes the torches and mirrors set atop the booth which – together with the torches carried by the marchers – are meant to provide illumination for this night-time show.[20] He's apparently chosen to illustrate an entire scene in this instance because of its unusual, four-booth structure. The upper stage, which illustrates the Coronation of the Virgin, is thus set atop three booths at the bottom, which illustrate the story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca as an analogue to the marriage of the Archduke Philip and the Archduchess Joanna. Similarly, he chooses to illustrate the story of Hester and Ahasuerus (here offered as an analogue to Joanna's role as *virgo mediatrix* on behalf of her people) as a two-booth stage structure (Figure 14. Here, too, he has probably chosen to illustrate an entire stage structure combining two booth-scenes, though we cannot be entirely certain because he has omitted the mirrors and torches which would clearly have defined the top of the stage.

But how do we decide whether this booth, which illustrates an episode in the story of Tobias and Sara (fol. 34r; Figure 12), represents an entire stage structure or whether it was grouped with the booth represented by the very next illustration (fol. 35r; Figure 13) into the same stage structure. The second scene, after all, represents the concluding episode to the story begun in the former episode. Is this two-episode story being told on two separate stage structures or in a single two-booth stage structure? Why did the artist group two Hester and Ahasuerus episodes on a common stage structure (Figure 14) while apparently creating different structures for the story of Tobias and Sara? Did he do so because he was recording the disposition of pageant structures as they actually existed in the streets of Brussels, or merely because he was adjusting the number of scenes he had to record in order to fit the number of folios available to him?

In one case only does the artist depart from his habitual 'straight-on' viewpoint (fol. 56r; Figure 15). He did so, apparently, because he wanted to illustrate the unusually important interaction between the actors and the Archduchess which occurred at this stage structure. Exceptionally, therefore, the artist chose to view the stage and actors from an acute side angle in order to record both the actors on stage and the performance in front of the booth. Here, the three ladies – we don't know who they are because the explanatory verso page has been cut from the manuscript – are lowering a crown, apparently by means of some sort of pulley device, from somewhere above the booth stage. It is meant, I suspect, to drop gently upon the head of the Archduchess; such crowning scenes conventionally appear in civic triumphs of queens and princesses.[21] In any case, the performance, which cannot be entirely static, spills outward from the confines of the booth and – if I'm right about the identity of the head that is the target of this descending crown – explicitly enlists the Archduchess as an actor in the performance. In order to accommodate this unusual feature of the pageant stage, the artist has had to break the convention he has established, adopt an oblique (rather than 'straight-on') view, and allow us for once to see one side of a stage structure. We can thus be confident that the structure ends at the far side of the booth. But once again, he cuts off the top, so that we cannot see the superstructure of the scaffold (if any), and more worryingly, he omits the near side of the booth. To what, if anything, is the near side of this booth attached? To another booth, illustrated in the previous painting? Or has he given us a reasonably complete view of the stage structure?

In the absence of other documentary records which might tell us the number and disposition of pageant structures, we are left with the formal, representational clues that the artist uses to define his subjects. Such evidence as we have, I believe, leads to the conclusion that the artist means to record individual stage structures. If the structure he happens to be illustrating consists of merely a single booth, he will illustrate it as such. If it combines two, three, or four booths in a single, more complex structure, his painting will reflect the complexity of its construction. He makes the structure clear with a conventional sign: notice the curtains that open to disclose each scene. Each structure – whether single, double, or triple – is framed by a single pair of curtains, one on each side of the structure. When the expositor (the *histrio*, perhaps?) reveals the tableaux, he must manage the curtains carefully. For the Hester and Ahasuerus double-booth structure (Figure 14), he probably opens the left-hand curtain first, to reveal the first booth (and first episode in the story); then he opens the right-hand curtain the reveal the concluding episode. Curtain management at the three-both stage illustrated in Figure 9 is more complicated. These three stages tell the story of the marriage of Rebecca and Isaac from Genesis 24, but the sequence of booths are arranged in an order that only makes sense when the opening of curtains is taken into account. The story's first episode thus takes place in the central booth: Abraham sends his servant, 'Elyazar', into Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son, Isaac. As a consequence, the expositor would have to open both right and left curtains far enough to reveal the central stage, but not so far as to reveal the booths to either side. Then the curtain to the viewers left is opened still further to reveal the second episode in the story: Rebecca modestly covers her face with her cloak upon first meeting Isaac. Finally, the curtain to the viewer's right is then opened to reveal the last booth and the final chapter in the story: Rebecca and Isaac marry in fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham. The artist clearly seems to be recording a feature of the staging of the pageants rather than merely adopting a pictorial convention. He defines the sides of the booth stages by the presence of the curtains because the stages themselves are probably structured in this way.

There are no celebrities in our artist's theatrical illustrations any more than there are individuals in most of the processional pictures. Faces, bodies, are merely conventional. In this way, he concentrates on what the actors *represent* more than on who the actors are. But he takes great interest in the theatrical paraphernalia – the scenery, costumes, or even lack of costumes (Figure 8) as the case may be. Whether because he has had some means of recording costumes and stage setting in detail, or because he is merely recreating them as best as he can after the fact, he is extremely interested in what we might call the material culture of the theatre.

Consider the way that the god Mercury appears in the human world in a furred gown, as an expression of his status, while offering the fateful golden apple to the sleeping Paris. As a mere mortal, Paris, even though a prince of Troy, is dressed in a simple costume, merely a doublet and hose. Above all, our artist has a fine eye – or memory – for the unusual, for the departure from the conventional. After painting so many groups huddled together in boxes or gathered about thrones, he delights here in recording the Font of Helicon set atop Mount Parnassus (recognizable by its two peaks, each topped by an olive tree), and he records as well the turning stage which the three goddesses use to emerge from one door, to display their tempting charms to Paris, before disappearing again into the opposite door.

Our artist is, in short, interested in the technical details of the late medieval theatre. If, then, one wants to know what theatrical costuming looks like at the turn of the sixteenth century, or if one wants to see what the technical capabilities of the stage are at the same time – and by that I mean relatively normal stagecraft such as might be accommodated within the confines of a humble curtained booth stage, not the dazzling effects characteristic of a Leonard da Vinci or a Burgundian court *entremet* – one could do worse than to consult this knowledgeable record of an artist clearly sympathetic to, and interested in, the late medieval theatre.

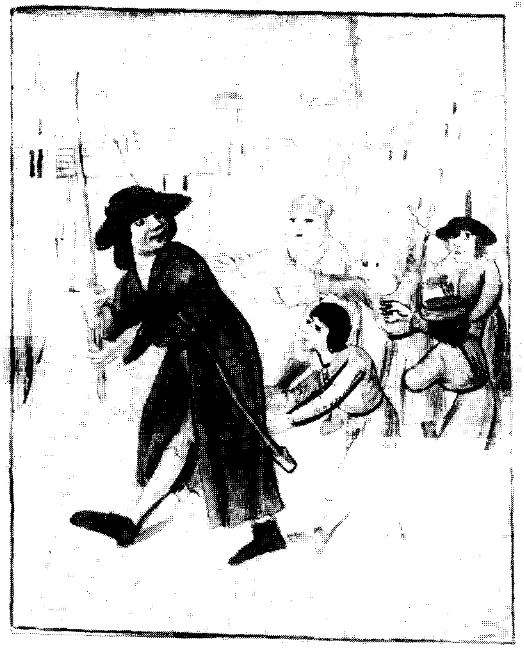

Fig. 1. 'Histrio', a street performer (fol. 12r).

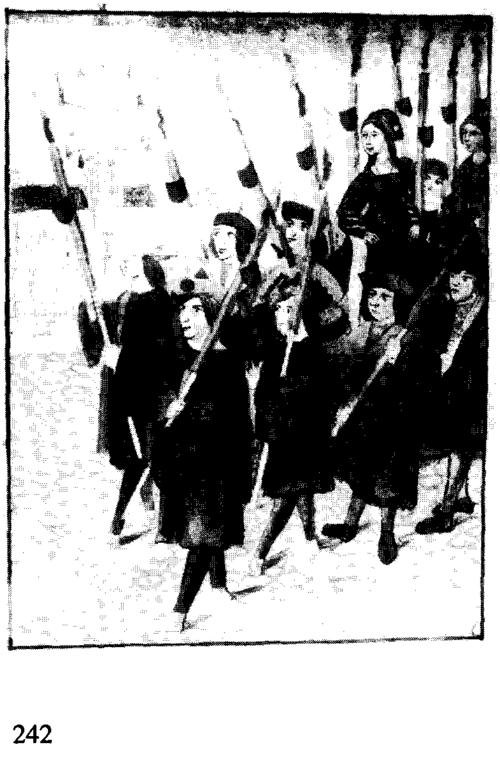

Fig. 2. The Archduchess Joanna escorted by the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétriers* (fol. 31r).

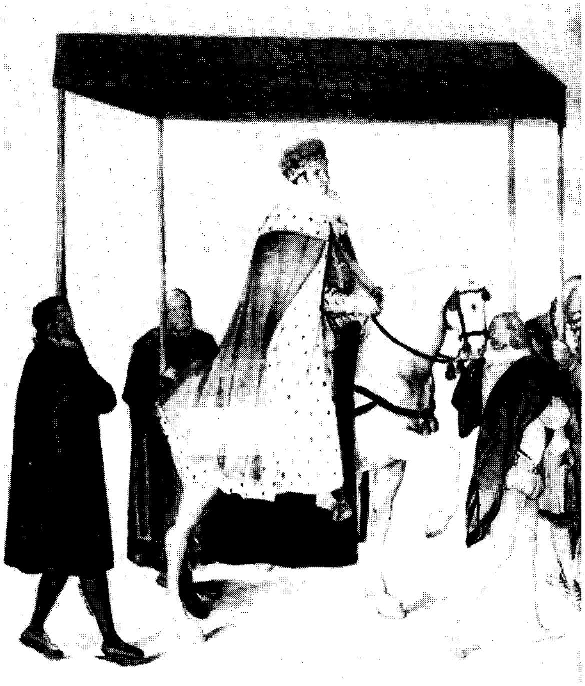

Fig. 3. Lucas de Heere, Francis of Anjou entering Ghent, August 1582'. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 6, fol. 25r.

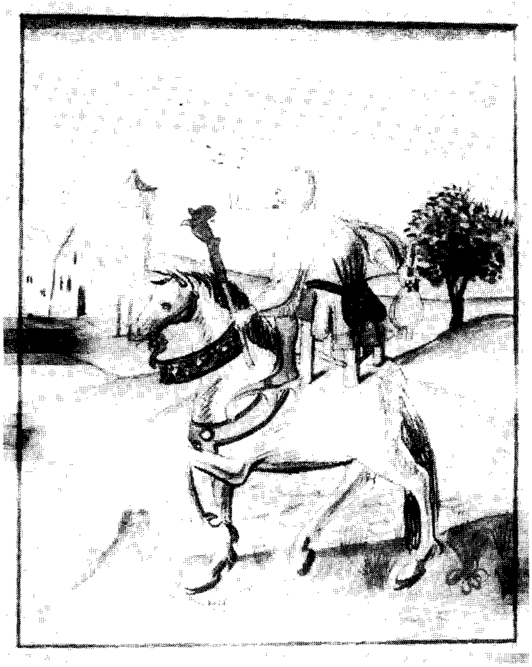

Fig. 4. Fool on horseback (fol. 14r).

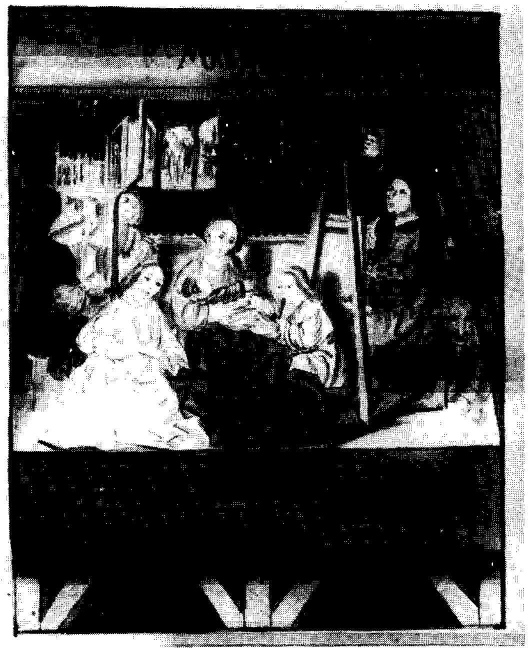

Fig. 5. St Luke Painting the Virgin (fol. 59r).

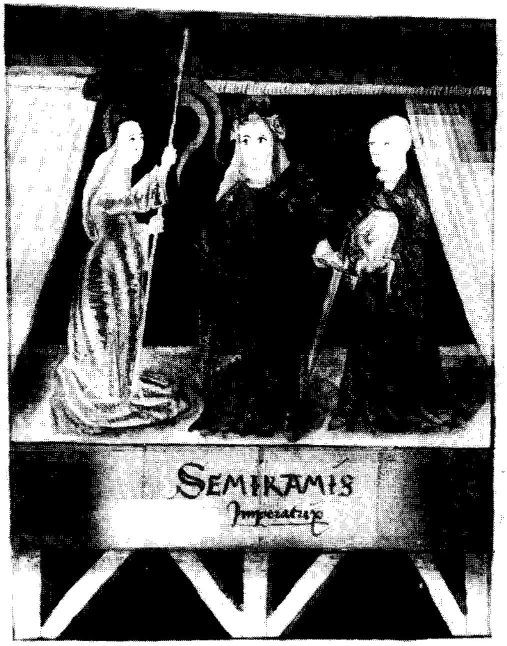
SEMIRAMIS
Imperatrix

Fig. 6. Semiramis, one of the Nine Female Worthies (fol. 47r).

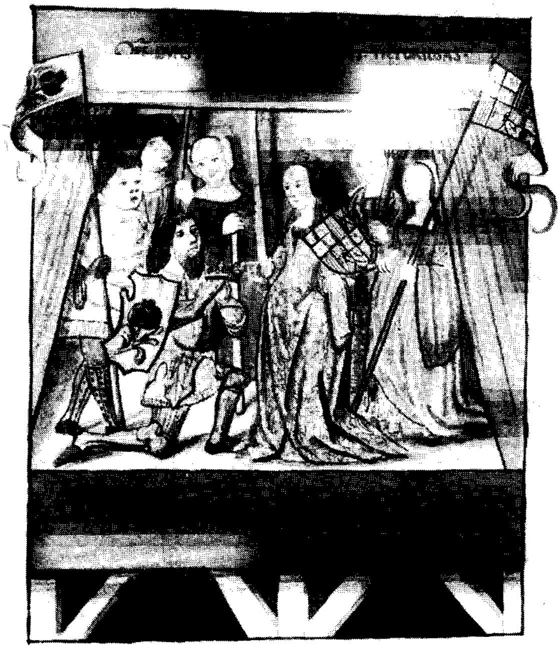

Fig. 7. Granada's last Moorish king surrendering to Queen Isabella of Castile (fol. 42r).

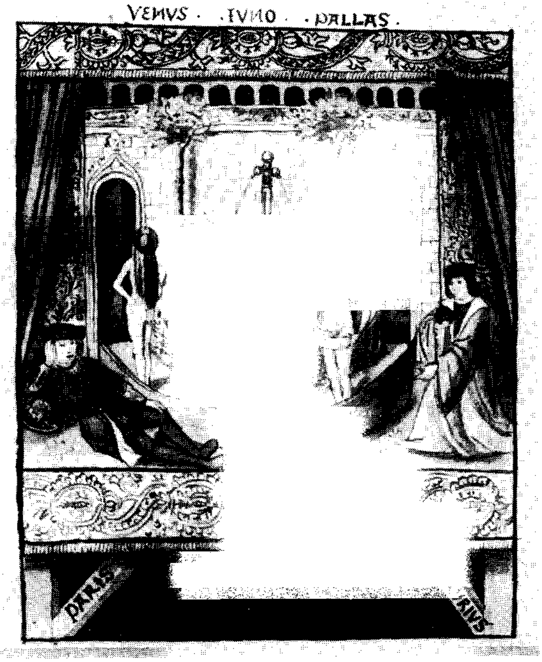

Fig. 8. The Judgment of Paris performed on a revolving stage (fol. 57r).

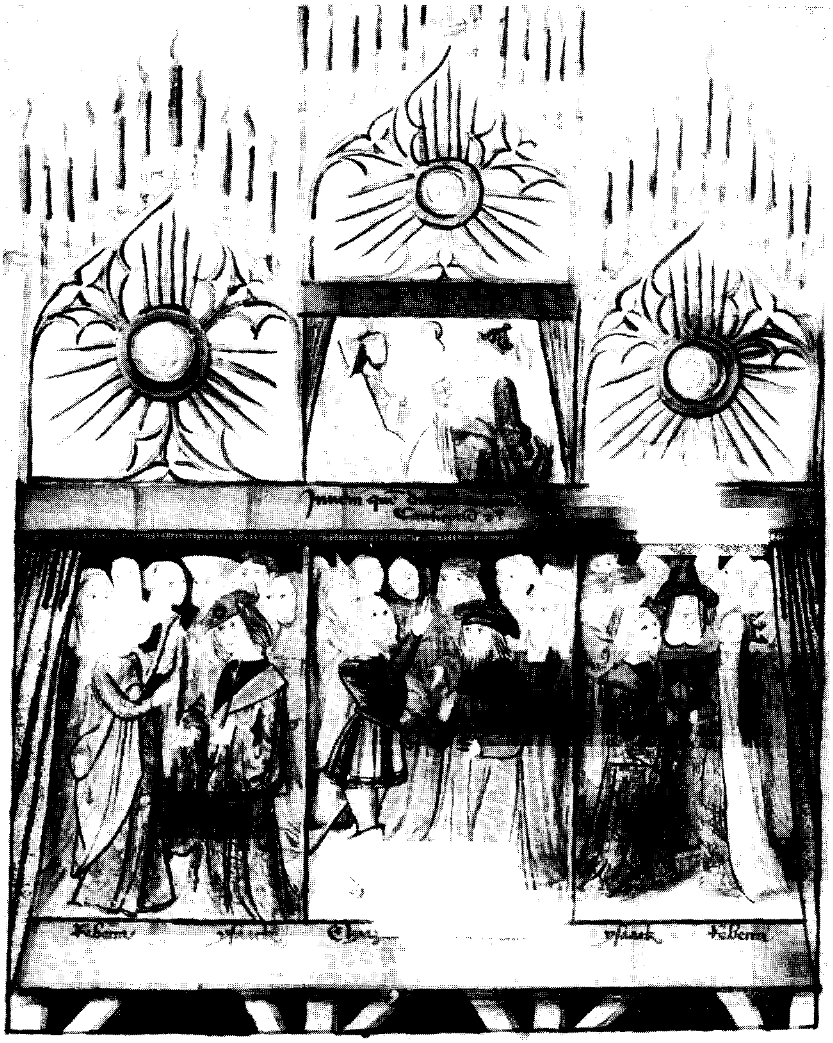

Fig. 9. Multiple booth stage with torches and mirrors; the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca and the Coronation of the Virgin (fol. 39r).

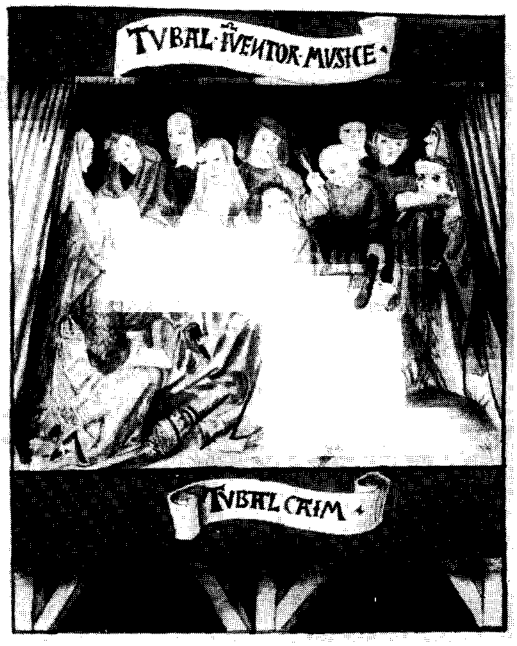
TVBAL·IVENTOR·MVSICE
TVBAL CAIM

Fig. 10. The invention of music by Tubal-Cain (fol. 32r).

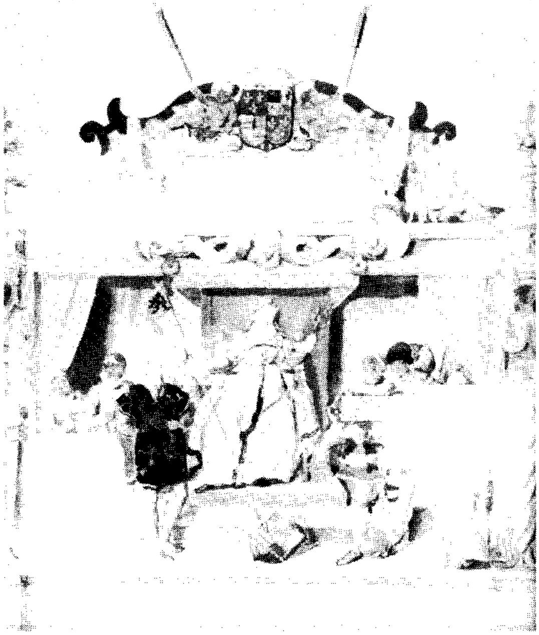

Fig. 11. Lucas de Heere, Pageant stage design for the entry of Francis of Anjou into Ghent, August 1582. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 6, fol. 11r.

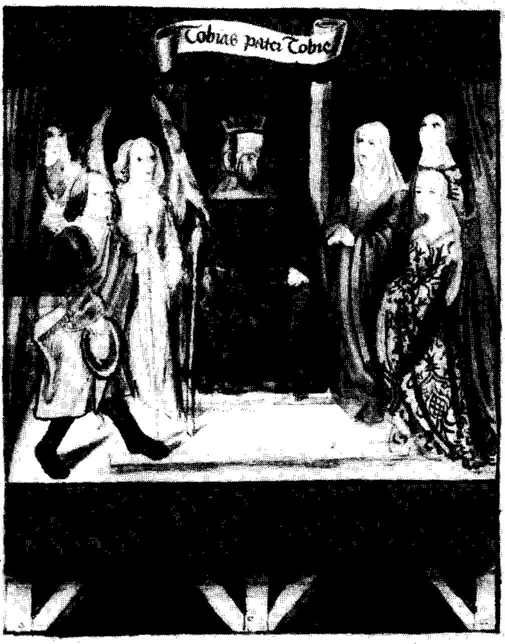
Tobias pater Tobie

Fig. 12. The Story of Tobias and Sara, part 1 (fol. 34r).

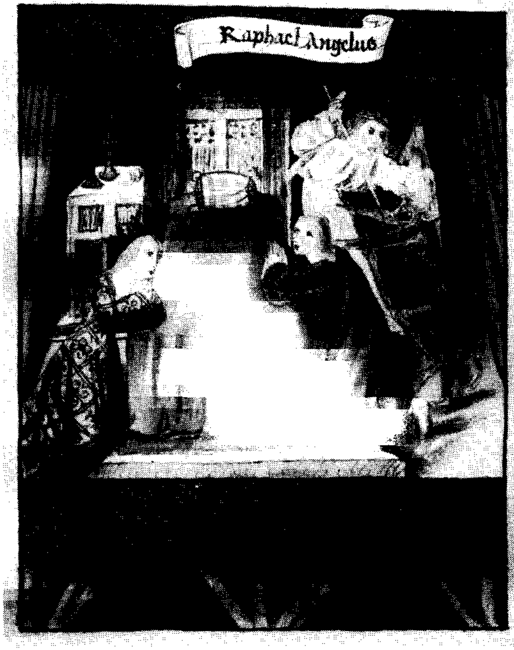
Raphael Angelus

Fig. 13. The Story of Tobias and Sara, part 2 (fol. 35r).

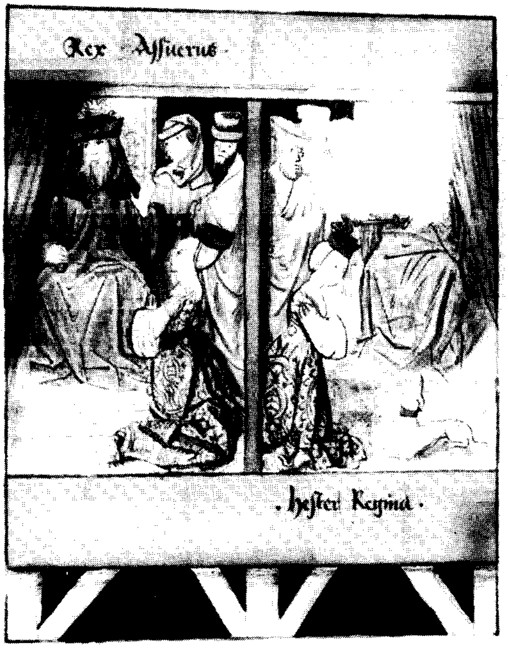
Rex Aſſuerus
heſter Regina

Fig. 14. Double-booth stage structure; the story of Hester and Ahasuerus (fol. 40r).

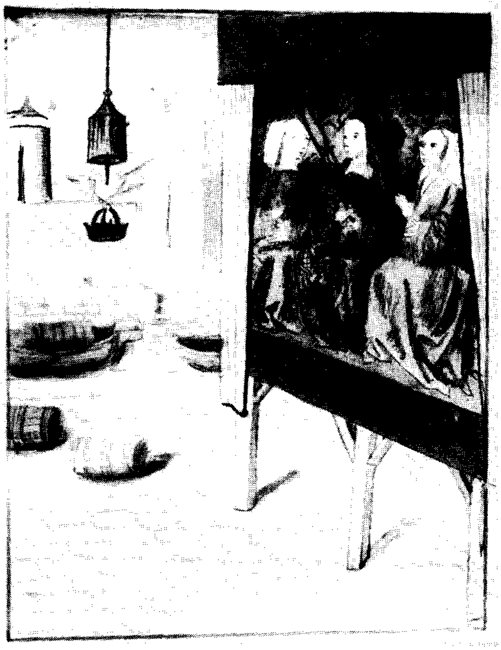

Fig. 15. Tres Virgines' booth stage depicted from oblique angle to show pulley mechanism (fol. 56r).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All illustrations are reproduced by kind permission of the Kupferstichkabinett of the Stattliche Museen zu Berlin. All illustrations *except* figures 3 and 11 derive from Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 5.

NOTES

[1] For the political objects of the marriage between Philip and Joanna, see Victor-L. Tapié, *The Rise and Fall of the Habsburg Monarchy*, trans. by Stephen Hardman (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), pp. 45-46; J.H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 132-33.

[2] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 5. The manuscript has been described in Paul Wescher, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Miniaturen – Handschriften und Einzelblätter – des Kupferstichkabinetts der Staatlichen Museen Berlin* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1931), pp. 179-81; and in Helmut Boese, *Die Lateinischen Handschriften der Sammlung Hamilton zu Berlin* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), pp. 168-69. Max Herrmann made the manuscript familiar to theatre historians by discussing the manuscript, quoting a number of its descriptive passages, and reproducing 17 of the illustrations in his *Forschungen zur Deutschen Theatergeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914).

[3] Jean Fouquet's miniature of *The Martyrdom of St Apollonia* in the *Hours of Etienne Chevalier* is often thought to be such a performance record of a particular medieval play. For reasons why this cannot be so, see Gordon Kipling, 'Theatre as Subject and Object in Fouquet's *Martyrdom of St Apollonia*,' *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 26-80 and 'Fouquet, St Apollonia, and the Motives of the Miniaturist's Art: A Reply to Graham Runnalls, *Medieval English Theatre*, 19 (1997), 101-20.

[4] Jean Molinet mentions this entry in only the most general terms and is only interested in the notable ladies who were there to meet her. *Chroniques de Jean Molinet*, ed. by Georges Doutrepont and Omer Jodogne, vol. 2 (Brussels: Palais des academies, 1935), pp. 429-30. Don Lorenzo de Padilla provides the most circumstantial narrative account of this occasion, but he says almost nothing of the entry itself. Rather he merely enumerates the Flemish noblemen who came to Brussels to 'besar las manos á la Archiduquesa' and describes in some detail the 'justas y torneos' which were staged on the same occasion. *Crónica de Felipe I.º Llamado El Hermoso*, in *Collección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, ed. by D. Miguel Salvá and D. Pedro Sainz de Baranda, vol. 8 (Madrid:

Academia de la Historia, 1846), pp. 42-43. A lone civic record of the event provides little more than the date of Joanna's entry into Brussels: M.L. Galesloot, 'Notes extraites des anciens comptes de la ville de Bruxelles', *Compte rendu des séances de la Commission royale d'Histoire*, ser. 3, vol. 9 (Brussels: Palais de Académics, 1867), p. 493.

[5] The Brussels archives were destroyed during the French bombardment of the city in October 1695. See Hermann, p. 366, and Alexandre Henne and Alphonse Wauters, *Histoire de la Ville de Bruxelles*, 3 vols (Brussels: Editions 'Culture et civilisation', 1968), II, pp. 124-30.

[6] Of the two 'missing' illustrations, the first has clearly been excised, probably by a souvenir hunter. It should have become between fols 55v and 56r as currently foliated. The stub of the missing folio is clearly visible in the binding. The recto page of the missing folio, according to the text on fol. 55v, would have shown a booth stage containing three actors representing the Emperor Henry III giving his daughter Sophie to Godfrey 'the bearded', Duke of Brabant, in 1101: 'Hoc scemate Representatur Quam vti imperator henricus semper augustus Godefrido barbato brabantie duci filiam Sophiam nuptui dedit. Sic hyspanie rex dominus Fernandus Philippo mellifluo austrie burgundie brabancie &c. duci Johannam filiam suam in vxorem misit.' The verso page of the missing folio would have contained appropriate text to explain the puzzling 'Tres Virgines' pageant depicted on fol. 56r (Figure 15).

The second 'missing' illustration may also have been a casualty of vandalism, but it originally appeared on the last folio at the end of the manuscript. The text on fols 63r-v thus refer to a now lost illustration of the Town Hall as 'Hoc scemate *quod sequetur* Representatur Egregia ac incomparabilis domus consilium sine respublice opidi Bruxellensis'. Since the manuscript in its current condition does not have a title page (it merely begins with the blank recto with the St Michael frontispiece on its verso), the lost Town Hall illustration may have formed a cognate pair with a lost title folio. If so, the outer bifolium of the manuscript, containing title and illustration, may simply have become separated from its parent manuscript and lost.

[7] For St Michael on the civic seal, see Henne and Wauters, pp. 33-35; for van Rode's statue, see Marc Vokaer, *La Grand-Place de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles-Liège:Editions Desoer, 1966), p. 71 and plate 31.

[8] For the *Métiers* and the *Serments en armes*, see Henne and Wauters, I, pp. 54-56, 194.

[9] For the activities of the *Grand-Serment des Arbalétiers* in organizing spectacular processions in Brussels, see James Laver, *Isabella's Triumph* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 4; and Luc Duerloo and Werner Thomas, *Albert & Isabelle 1598-1621*, exhibition catalogue (Brussels: Brepols, 1998), pp. 205-06.

[10] Hoc scemate Representatur histrio quidam qui partim lunatico cerebro correptus populo frequetem risum extorquere sueuit hic (quod nec dii dedignantur) suo modulo affectum pium kyrieleyson kyriel. Alta voce ingeminans Illustrissime domine (cui allusere prata virencia queque) prodidit' (fol. llv).

[11] *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), pp. 116-17.

[12] As Kernodle points out, in many cities the Chambers of Rhetoric 'were closely associated with the Guild of St. Luke, the painters' organization, and were quite interested in relating painting, poetry, and drama' (p. 117).

[13] Hoc scemate Representatur Quam Vti congratulantibus angelis sanctus ucas ymaginem beatissime marie depinxit Sic parentibus fatis Rerum conditor Johannam hyspanie amplectandam ymaginem brabantie aduexit (fol. 58v).

[14] For the civic triumph's use of the *ordo prophetarum*, see Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 61-63.

[15] Wim Blockmans has made a very interesting recent attempt to describe a numerological organization to the illustrations (and perhaps as well to the procession and pageants which are represented in the illustrations): 'la procession de la ville sóuvre par six groupes de religieux, douze corps institutionnels et quatre gildes de la ville, vingt-sept tableaux vivants. Toutefois, certains éléments nous apparaissent ici comme très significatifs, sans qu'ils soient mentionnés comme tels dans les textes: le rôle des armoiries, la présence de six 'esbattements'. Constatons d'ores et déjà que les nom res quatre, six, douze, vingt-sept (9x3), et soixante (12x5), tous chargés ede significations religieuses, forment la trame de la procession. Lors de la joyeuse entrée à Bruges en 1515, il y avait également vingt-sespt tableaux vivants. Mais il y a plus: toute l série de dessins est soigneusement ordonnée, ce qui conduit à la conclusion que la procession l'était également.' 'Le Dialogue imaginaire entre princes et sujets: Les Joyeuses Entrées en brabant en 1494 et en 1496,' in *A La Cour de Bourgogne: Le Duc, son entourage, son train*, ed. by Jean-Marie Cauchies (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), p. 162. Unhappily, however, these calculations do not take into account the removal of several illustrations from the manuscript. There would thus be 29, not 27, *tableaux vivants*. And to make thirty 'processional' illustrations, he is forced to press the St Michael frontispiece into service as if it were an illustration of a member of the procession.

[16] For iconographical topics appropriate to the civic triumphs of women in the fifteenth century, see Kipling, pp. 77-85, 188-201, 209-21, 289-356.

[17] Kernodle, pp. 111-29.

[18] Lucas De Heere, Pageant stage design for the entry of Francis of Anjou into Ghent,

August 1582. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 D 6, fol. 11r

[19] British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. IX, fol. 174r-v.

[20] Thomas Whiting, Chester Herald, emphasizes that illumination for such a night-time procession was provided by torches carried by performers and audience members alike: 'And so, my ladye procedinge thorrowe the towne unto hir loginge, the people made fiers in great numbar of waxe torchis, and torchis out of every howse, pynacles subtillie devisid in the towne, and in the castell, w^{t} fiers brenninge in the stret, great numbar; and also every howsholder stonding in the strete, w^{t} over ther dores, every of them, a torche in his hande breninge.' British Library, Cotton MS Nero C. IX, fol. 174r.

[21] For crowning scenes in civic triumphs, see Kipling, pp. 292-318.