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Ende dit wil ons dese geste leren: The portrayal of rulership in the Middle Dutch incunable *Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romēn of 1481*

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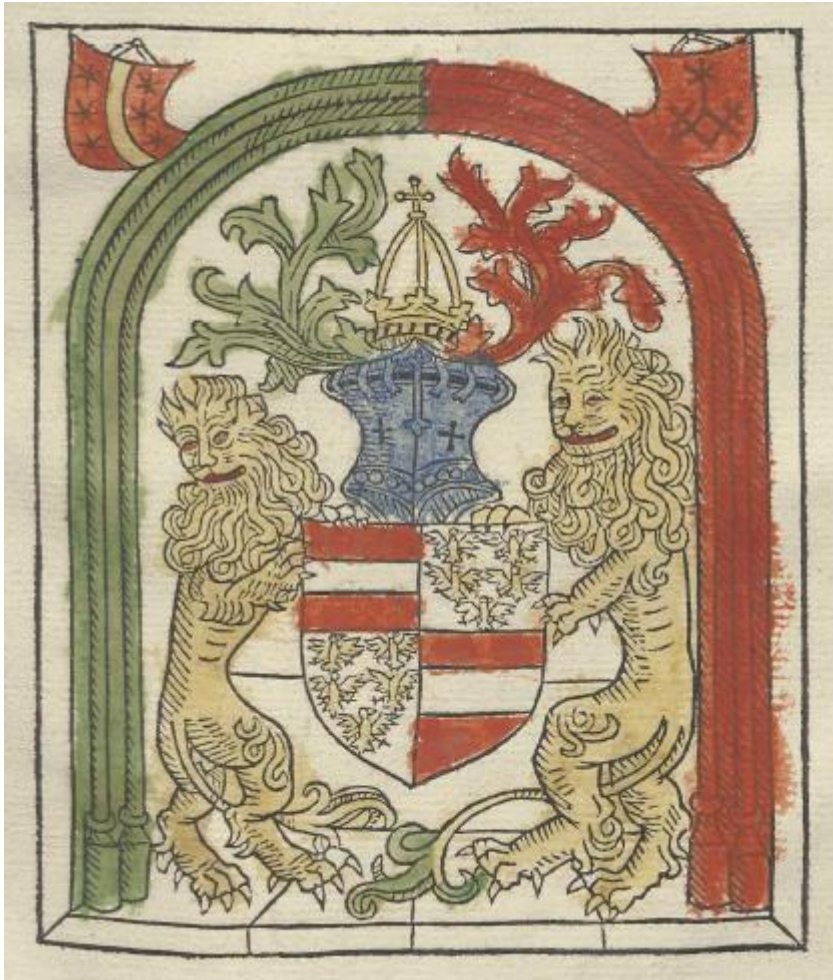
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Ende dit wil ons dese geste leren.

*The portrayal of rulership in the Middle Dutch
incunable Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romen of
1481.*



Master Thesis Europe, 1000-1800
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Dr. Robert Stein
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Cover illustration: Gheraert Leeu's printer's seal.

Historien ghetoghen wten gesten ofte croniken der Romeynen, tracterende en̄ roerēde van die doechden ende sonden, ende die ghemoraliseert ende ghetoghen tot en̄ gheesteliken sinne. Leiden University Libraries. 1497 B 11, 242r.

I dedicate this thesis to all who have endured my ramblings on the *Gesta*, my Latin quotes and my endless procrastination. In particular my family, who helped me go through this with their constant worrying and unconditional love. As well as Robert Stein, who provided great feedback and always let me explore the possibilities of my research.

Introduction

0.1 Introduction of the subject

The emperor Pompey, rich and powerful, had a beautiful daughter which he wanted to protect from the world. In front of her door, he put a burning candle and a small dog. He also ordered five guards to guard her. But the girl desired to see the world and she fell in love with an evil duke. She killed the dog, blew out the candle and fled her room in the night. A noble knight in the emperor's court went to fight the duke. He decapitated the duke and brought the princess back to her father. A mediator was fetched and peace between father and daughter was established. The daughter married and lived in peace.¹

This excerpt of the first story in the book *Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romen*, printed in 1481 by the Dutch book printer Gheraert Leeu of Gouda, is quite an interesting narration in itself but is only half of the whole story. The second part is the moralizing explanation 'for our spiritual learning': the emperor is God (this is the case in most stories), the daughter is man's soul, the knights are the five senses, the dog is the consciousness and the candle is free will. Man desires to see the world and carnal pleasures; he follows the Devil in the night of sin. The knight is God as well; he fights the Devil and brings the soul back to the heavenly palace. Christ plays the roles of brother of the princess, mediator and groom. In some stories, the *moralizatio* is concluded by a maxim in rhyme.²

This is the first story of 181 stories in the Middle Dutch version of the *Gesta Romanorum: Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romen* (The deeds or history of Rome). The *Gesta Romanorum* (*Deeds of the Romans*) is a "collection of fables, legendary narratives, novellas, and fairy tales"³, ranging from ca. 150 to more than 200 stories and was quite popular in the middle ages. The structure of each story, which can range from half a page to more than 20 pages, is a story followed by a moralizing explanation.⁴ The origin of the stories is drawn from many different traditions and sources, from Persian myths to the history of Christian saints and from Pliny the Elder to the Book of Job.⁵ Hermann Oesterley, the German scholar who made an inventory of the surviving *Gesta* manuscripts and provided a Latin edition, described the *Gesta* as:

"Die unter dem Titel Gesta Romanorum bekannte Sammlung von moralisirten Parabeln, Fabeln und Erzählungen bildet eins der wichtigsten, aber auch der dunkelsten und verwickeltesten Capitel in der Geschichte der Weltliteratur."⁶

So many themes, periods and lands are explored that there is something interesting in every genre: love, infidelity, murder, greed, Romans, Greeks, medieval German kings. Weiske, who made a study about the reception, called the *Gesta* "ein wahrer Bestseller des Mittelalters".⁷

The title itself is somewhat misleading because there is not a lot of actual and factual Roman history, although a great deal is situated during the reign of certain emperors or other rulers from Antiquity.

¹ A concise recapitulation of the first story in the Middle Dutch *Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romen*, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden 1497 B 11, 1r-3r.

² See footnote 41.

³ Ruth Breindel, 'The Gesta Romanorum: Stories for all seasons, all levels', *New England Classical Journal* 42:2 (2015) 261-267, 262. Albrecht Classen, 'The Gesta Romanorum: A Sammelbecken of Ancient Wisdom and Didactic Literature and a Medieval 'Bestseller' Revisited', *Literature & Aesthetics* 27:1 (2017) 73-98, there 74.

⁴ In some stories, the *moralizatio* ('geestelijck' in Middle Dutch) or moralizing explanation is included in the main story. Like Chapter LXXX's chapter heading: "met die expositie ende verclaringhe daer in begrepen".

⁵ Idem.

⁶ H. Oesterley, *Gesta Romanorum* (Berlin 1872) 1.

⁷ B. Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum. Erster Band. Untersuchungen zu Konzeption und Überlieferung* (Tübingen 1992) V.

Many kings or rulers are introduced in the first sentence of the stories to set the stage for the fable. This king, emperor, prince or king-judge could be some semi-legendary king from Antiquity or European history or Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Fredrick II. These rulers could be portrayed as a benign, wise and kind or as a malevolent tyrant; it is also possible to find the same king in different roles in different stories. The difficulty does arise that, when the same ruler is portrayed in different lights, a consensus of his rulership is impossible to be distilled.

When reading through the stories, a certain profile can be drawn for good and bad rulers. In this thesis, these profiles will be explained and their role in the stories will be researched. The different aspects of ruling will be categorized and explained in the context of the story and their significance for the intended public of these stories. The main question will therefore be: "how is good and bad rulership portrayed in the Middle Dutch translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* of 1481". The first chapter will be focussed on the historical context of the time of publishing, the second chapter will give a description and analysis of the lawful ruler, the third chapter is focussed on the description of the ruler who listens to advice and the fourth chapter shows minor roles or minor qualities of rulership. Because that are not that many instances of a bad ruler and therefore even less possible categorisations, the bad rulers will be placed in the chapters about their fairer counterparts to be a mirror of some sort. The bad rulers will be explained and analysed after their benevolent counterparts whenever the distinction can be made clear enough: a tyrant who does not listen to counsel can be seen as a mirror for the ruler who does listen. The benevolent ruler is much more often featured in *Die Geesten* and therefore this will be more important for the overall picture. Of the 181 stories in *Die Geesten*, eighty-six feature an active ruler. Of the total number, fifty-one of the stories can be categorized in concrete categories. The rest will be presented in chapter four.

0.2 Theoretical basis

Examples of both good and bad people are given to illustrate the different reasons why this is good or bad behaviour. The reasons are even thoroughly analysed in the moralization. These stories are food for thought and could very well be related to the 'meditation-aspect' that Weiske had proposed. Weiske proposed the theory that the intended use was probably not *Erbauungslektüre*⁸ for learned mystics or scholars, instead for converts, lay brothers, novices, prospective preachers and actual preachers but above all for personal meditation.⁹ This is because the structure is not thematic nor systematic, and therefore the use for preaching would be awkward.¹⁰ Although an argument in favour of preaching is made: the salutation *carissimi* (most beloved) could be an indication of a preacher's repertoire or in to be heard during a church service although Weiske sees this only as an indication that is could be used as preaching material but not exclusively.¹¹ The separation of moral lesson and narrative is an indication of the versatility of the text; a reader could ignore the moralization completely and just read the story.¹² Although the *Gesta* were probably not primarily written as mirror literature, the stories contain an educational aspect. The genre of 'mirror literature' has a long tradition, going back to Antiquity and with its crescendo in the Renaissance with the most well-known *speculum*: Machiavelli's *Il Principe*. This thesis will partly rely on the historiography about the use of the *Fürstenspiegel* or 'mirror for princes' literature genre and the debate about rulership in the middle

⁸ Literature intended for personal meditation such as *De imitatione Christi* written by Thomas a Kempis.

⁹ Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum*, 198. Harris, although having used Weiske's material extensively, still alludes to the usage by preachers. N. Harris and C. Stace, *Gesta Romanorum: A New Translation* (Manchester 2016) 1. N. Louis listed the *Gesta*'s intended public as 'monks', a concise recapitulation of Weiske's possible public. N. Louis, *L'exemplum en pratiques: production, diffusion et usages des recueils d'exempla latins aux XIIIe-XVe siècles* (Doctoral thesis, Art et Archéologie (Académie Louvain) and Histoire et civilisations (EHESS) (Namur/Louvain 2013) 259.

¹⁰ Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum*, 196.

¹¹ "Daß die *Gesta Romanorum* auch als Predigtrepertorium benutzt wurden, läßt sich beweisen, daß sie von allem Anfang dafür intendiert waren, dagegen nicht." Idem, 195. Welter, J.T., *L'Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Age* (Paris/Toulouse 1927, reprint Geneva 1973) 372.

¹² Classen, 'The *Gesta Romanorum*: A Sammelbecken', 79.

ages.¹³ Although the *Gesta's* intended public is not only or primarily any kind of ruler, the stories feature many rulers and the moralizing explanations give advice for certain situations and they judge them according to Christian doctrine. The *Gesta* presents a unique set of qualities to the rulers that are assumed to be good or just. The evil rulers are also ascribed certain qualities and of course their presumptive punishment. Mirror literature is not strictly connected to princes or rulers: magistrates and secretaries had their own branch of texts, as illustrated by some recent studies.¹⁴ Saint Augustine wrote an illuminating example or ideal for the Christian ruler in his *De Civitate Dei*, book 5, chapter 24:

"We call those Christian emperors happy who govern with justice, who are not puffed up by the tongues of flatterers or the services of sycophants, but remember that they are men. We call them happy when they think of sovereignty as a ministry of God and use it for the spread of true religion; when they fear and love and worship God; when they are in love with the Kingdom in which they need fear no fellow sharers; when they are slow to punish, quick to forgive; when they punish, not out of private revenge, but only when forced by the order and security of the republic, and when they pardon, not to encourage impunity, but with the hope of reform; when they temper with mercy and generosity the inevitable harsh-ness of their decrees. We call those happy who are all the more disciplined in their lusts just because they are freer to indulge them; who prefer to curb the waywardness of their own passions rather than to rule the peoples of the world, and who do this not out of vain glory but out of love for everlasting bliss; men, finally, who, for their sins, do not fail to offer to the true God the sacrifice of humility, repentance, and prayer. We say of such Christian emperors that they are, in this life, happy in their hope, but destined to be happy in reality when that day shall come for which we live in hope."¹⁵

Augustine mentions some interesting facets of just kings: they are not deceived, they are God-fearing, they punish only to protect the realm, they do not indulge, and they shall be judged favourably themselves in the Final Judgement. These aspects are major themes in the *Gesta*. Kings are often portrayed as judges and the moral explanation often compares them to God or Christ when they judge mankind in the Final Judgement. This ties into the 'christomimetic kingship' as suggested by Miller in his dissertation about early medieval kings and how commentators made an *Idealtyp* of the ruler after Christ's example:

"These writers read biblical narrative about kings not only as stories about biblical kings that provided models for contemporary political rulers, but, more importantly, they read these stories spiritually as a greater story about Christ the King."¹⁶

Christ as judge occurs so frequently in the fables, any narrative where a judge rules, will be taken into the vast corpus of just or unjust *exempla* of rulership. Christ the King could be seen as the highest

¹³ Some recently published works on this terrain are: R. Forster and N. Yavari eds., *Global medieval: Mirrors for princes reconsidered* (Cambridge 2015); J. Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia 2016); Jeremy Kleidosty, 'Māwardī and Machiavelli: Reflections on Power in their Mirrors for Princes', *Philosophy east & west* 68:3 (2018) 721-736; G. Roskam and S. Schorn eds., *Concepts of ideal rulership from antiquity to the Renaissance* (Turnhout 2018); Stuart Lasine, 'Samuel-Kings as a Mirror for Princes: Parental Education and Judean Royal Families', *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 34:1 (2020) 74-88.

¹⁴ See: A. Grace, 'Mirrors for secretaries: the tradition of advice literature and the presence of classical political theory in Italian secretarial treatises', *Laboratoire italien* 23 (2019). H. Archer and A. Hadfield eds., *A mirror for magistrates in context. Literature, history and politics in early modern England* (New York/ Cambridge 2016).

¹⁵ G.G. Walsh and D.B. Zema, *The Fathers of the Church: A new translation Vo. 8. Saint Augustine: The City of God. Books I-VII* (Washington D.C. 1950) 296-297.

¹⁶ E.P. Miller, *The Politics of Imitating Christ: Christ the King and Christomimetic Rulership in Early Medieval Biblical Commentaries* (Doctoral thesis, Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia 2001) Abstract.

source of authority but this ideal was not only fit for the ruler because Christ was the just example for the entirety of Christendom. In some stories, the ruler takes on both roles and they sometimes overlap.

The other genre in which they fit is the 'exemplum-genre': a certain situation occurs, the actors play their part, good or bad and then an explanation follows in which the situation is again explained from a Christian viewpoint.

0.3 Method of analysis

Of the total number of stories, a selection has been made to present the stories in which an active ruler plays the role of either a good or bad ruler. All the selected stories per chapter will be presented to show their most representative attributes of the different categories. The most representative attributes are the aspects which most clearly show mercy, the ability to listen or their negative counterpart as presented by the tyrants. This includes the story in itself and the moralising explanation. Although the story itself can be seen separately from the *moralizatio*, it does shed an interesting view on the Christian interpretation of supposed 'historical examples from Ancient times'. After this, a bad ruler will be used as some sort of mirror to illustrate the differences between the two. The good ruler in the *Geesten of geschiedenis van Romen* can clearly be categorised in several distinct categories as will be demonstrated in chapter 2 and 3. The selection of the bad ruler consists of fourteen stories, in which the ruler does something bad or where he demonstrates bad rulership.¹⁷ Certain stories where the ruler is shown as 'bad', he goes against some of the good qualities which were featured in the last two chapters. But there are still some qualities in which there are completely new or different aspects of rulership. There are three stories in which the tyrant takes away money or land unlawfully and two where the ruler kills an artist. Other stories describe tyrants who maim or kill people, some where the ruler does not listen to advice or omens, a story where the ruler deceives his wife and other stories where the ruler in question is just called *tyrant*. We should again look at the explanations as well when analysing the different aspects of bad rulership.

0.4 Recapitulation of the introduction

To recapitulate concisely: this thesis will be centred on the question "how is good and bad government portrayed in the Middle Dutch translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* of 1481?". This will include an analysis of the selected stories and how rulers (and judges) are portrayed, what their just or unjust qualities are and how this is explained in a religious perspective. The genres of 'mirror literature' and 'exemplum literature' are to be used as a basis for interpretation and theoretical fundament. This will give an interesting glance into the medieval mind and how they would judge a ruler through the lens of a medieval bestseller. The importance of this thesis is to shed a light on how a much older *Sammelbekken* of stories, fables and saga's was still relevant in the eyes of the medieval public. This relevance was not only amusement but the public could draw certain lessons from them and they could learn from these and this was certainly needed in the uncertain times of the late 1400's in the Low Countries.

¹⁷ Chapters VI, VIII, XX, XXV, XLIII, XLVIII, LIII, LXXII, XCVII, CXXVI, CXXXVI, CXXIX and CLXXII.

Chapter 1 The historical context

1.1 Manuscript origins

The exact origin of the Latin manuscript is still unknown but it has been traced to England or Southern Germany in the late thirteenth or the first half of the fourteenth century in the tradition of Franciscan and Benedictine preachers, who used to preach to the common folk in the vernacular, with lively examples to live a good, Christian life.¹⁸ Although the history of the text as a whole, for it is a compilation of stories, remains a mystery, the earliest extant manuscripts are all traceable to the Continent. The first of which is the 'J' manuscript from 1342 in the Innsbruck Library.¹⁹ This codex also gave a first clue for the Franciscan hypothesis, for the colophon states: 'gesta imperatorum moralizata a quodam fratre de ordine minorum' (moralized deeds of the emperors by a certain brother of the minor order).²⁰ Oesterley grouped the texts in three categories: Latin, German and English manuscripts.²¹ From this, two main types can be derived: the Continental Latin and Anglo-Latin or Insular tradition.²²

One noticeable point that can be derived from the aforementioned classifications, is the fact that there is no Romance language-option. A French translation was made as late as 1521 according to Wawrzyniak but the reception in other vernaculars is much more noticeable, especially German.²³ This may even be an interesting point for the origin of the text; if it had an English origin, a French translation might not be out of the picture because one would expect a great deal of literary contact between France and England but in the absence hereof, a German origin might be plausible. This means that when printed versions already existed for the Dutch language (1481) and German language (1489), there was no French translation yet, as far as we know. Although the *Gesta* was very popular, it eventually disappeared to the background. Classen mentions that this work is well-known but paradoxically not frequently used by academics.²⁴ An English translation by Christopher Stace, translated from the Latin edition by Oesterley, may present a great opportunity for new research.²⁵ A reason was given by Erasmus himself for the declining popularity of this genre:

"Here they bring me some unlearned fable from the *Speculum Historiale* I think, or from the *Gesta Romanorum*, which are interpreted allegorically, tropologically or anagogically."²⁶

This critique was uttered in chapter 54 of his *Moriae Encomium* where Erasmus criticized the hypocrisy of the clergy, especially in their preaching where they say so much but also so little. Erasmus was familiar with Seneca's work, which he edited on several instances. His critique is similar to one of Seneca's moralising letters where he tells his friend Lucilius in letter 52 that rhetoric should not replace the position of what is actually meant:

¹⁸Stilyana Batalova, 'M I L E S P L A C I D U S N O M I N E – A case study on Latin *Gesta Romanorum*', *TERMINUS* (a periodical on classical tradition and contemporary culture), Jagiellonian University, Faculty of Polish Studies 1 (2008) 15-38, 16. G. Hope, *Tales of Literacy and Authority in the Violier (1521): the French Gesta*, *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 59:2 (1997) 353-363. Udo Wawrzyniak, 'Gesta Romanorum', in: *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich, vol. 5 (Berlin and New York 1987) 1201-1212.

¹⁹ Innsbruck, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol, Cod. lat. 310.

²⁰ Idem, 138r. Harris, *A New Translation*, 3.

²¹ Oesterley, *Gesta Romanorum*, 1.

²² Other classifications were made as well: Herbert, Röhl, etc. Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum*, 12-18. Bennet, Alastair, 'Gesta Romanorum' in: Siân Echard and Robert Rouse eds., *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* (Hoboken 2017) 859-861, 859.

²³ Wawrzyniak, 'Gesta Romanorum', 1201-1212. An earlier print in French is known from 1520: <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/editions/94449>.

²⁴ Classen, 'The Gesta Romanorum: A Sammelbecken', 73.

²⁵ Harris, *A New Translation*.

²⁶ "Hic mihi stultam aliquam & indoctam fabulam, ex Speculo, opinor, historiali, aut gestis Romanorum in medium adferunt, & eandem interpretantur allegorice, tropologicè, & anagogice." Desiderius Erasmus, *Encomium Moriae sive In Laudem Stultitiae* (Leiden 1624) 99-100. Louis, *L'exemplum en pratiques*, 50.

"But let them be roused to the matter, and not to the style; otherwise, eloquence does them harm, making them enamoured of itself and not of the subject."²⁷

So the disappearance of the *Gesta* might be because of the sometimes difficult explanations, the allegories and other inconsistencies in the stories. This and the critique in Erasmus' magnum opus might suggest that the *Gesta* were most often utilized in a more learned environment and that the *Gesta* were not too popular with a broader public. Another explanation might be that Erasmus did not judge this book, meant for the broader public, worthy to be used by preachers. The *Gesta* did not disappear entirely but remained present in the works of Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Hans Sachs and Thomas Mann but according to Classen, a comprehensive discussion is still missing.²⁸

1.2 The Latin *Gesta* in print

The first Latin *Gesta Romanorum* was probably printed by Johann Veldener in Cologne around 1472.²⁹ This first print was rapidly followed by Ulrich Zell, also in Cologne, circa 1473 and John of Westphalia in Aalst around the same time.³⁰ Zell played an important role in establishing Cologne as the centre for theological printing.³¹ Cologne's leading place in trade on the Lower Rhine might have contributed to the circulation of the *Gesta*.³² The book was reprinted on several occasions following these first versions.³³

After comparing the Latin *incipit* printed by Veldener, Zell, Ketelaer/De Leempt and Leeu (see Appendix I), it can be concluded that Leeu used Zell's version for his own publication. This conclusion can be reached on the basis of three aspects: they both begin with 'ex gestis romanorum', they both include the chapter heading 'de dilectione' and the word *pulcram* (pretty). Zell (and later Leeu) included this word in their version instead of *pulcherrimam* (prettiest) which was used by the other printers in their Latin version. This is not a complete comparison of all Latin versions but the conclusion seems plausible from the first page. Leeu must have enjoyed considerable success, for he used five new woodblocks to illustrate specific stories. The woodblocks often cover an entire page and show different stages in the stories. For the opening of both the Latin and the Middle Dutch version, the same floral pattern woodblock was used to decorate the first page (see figure 1 and 2).³⁴ The number of the stories is 181 in total: this is the same in both versions. The titles of the Middle Dutch version are translations, with some minor artistic liberties taken. The stories themselves seem to be translations of the Latin version as well.³⁵ The Middle Dutch chapters are mostly a few columns longer but there are some major differences with several stories. The most noticeable of these is story CLIII

²⁷ "Ad rem commoveantur, non ad verba composita; alioquin nocet illis eloquentia, si non rerum cupiditatem facit, sed sui." Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, transl. R.M. Gummere (London/Cambridge 1917) Vol. 1 of 3, 350.

²⁸ Classen, 'The *Gesta Romanorum*: A Sammelbecken', 76. Harris, *A New Translation*, 1. Also see Harris's footnote 3 for surveys about the *Gesta*'s reception in literature.

²⁹ The printer is tentatively identified as Johann Veldener by S. Corsten, in *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 11 (1976/77) pp. 1-18, but as Schilling by Needham (*Corsten Festschrift*) p. 121 ff. Polain(B) 1647 dates: about 1475.

³⁰ Veldener and John of Westphalia probably have known each other because they were both active in Louvain in the early 70's of the fifteenth century. See: Elly Cockx-Indestege, 'Bij de vijfhonderdste verjaring van de boekdrukkunst in de Nederlanden', *Ons Erfdeel* 16:5 (1973) 59-72, there 67.

³¹ A. Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven/London 2010) 32-33.

³² *Idem*.

³³ See figure 4.

³⁴ Leeu probably started using this floral illustration in Saint Jerome's *Van den leven der heiligen vaderen* (*Of the life of the holy fathers*) which he printed in December 1480.

³⁵ The possible source of translation will be explored in paragraph 1.3.

Early version:	Year:	Language:
Ms. Innsbruck, cod. lat. 310	1342	Latin
Dutch transl.	1481	Middle Dutch
German transl.	1489	German
English transl.	1510-15	English
French transl.	1521	French

Figure 3 Several notable older versions and vernacular translations.

Printer:	Year:	Location:
Johann Veldener	1472	Cologne
Ulrich Zell	1473	Cologne
Johann of Westphalia	1473	Aalst (Belgium)
Gheraert Leeu	1480	Gouda

Figure 4 Earliest printers of the (Latin) *Gesta*.

Printer:	Year:	Location:
Gheraert Leeu	1481	Gouda
Jacob Jacobsz. Van der Meer	1483	Delft
Peter van Os	1484	Zwolle
Hendrick Eckert van Homberch	1512	Antwerpen

Figure 5 Earliest printers of the (Middle Dutch) *Gesta*

1.3 The Middle Dutch *Gesta* and Leeu's market

"Hier beghinnen ter eren Goods ende totter menschen leringhe ende salicheyt seer notabile historien ghetoghen uutten gesten ofte croniken der Romeynen tracterende ende roerende van die doechden ende sonden, ende die ghemoralizeert ende ghetoghen tot enen gheesteliken sinne"³⁸

The *Gesta* was also printed in the vernacular: Dutch (1481), German (1489), French (ca. 1520) and English (between 1510-1515).³⁹ The first printed version of the work in Dutch was printed by Gheraert Leeu in Gouda in 1481. In the colophon, he called this book *Die gesten of gheschienenisse van romen* (*The deeds or history of Rome*). This same Leeu had printed a Latin version in 1480. This new Middle Dutch translation was possibly a way to broaden his customer base to the *illitterati*⁴⁰. After this first Middle Dutch print, the book was reprinted several times up to 1512 (see figure 5). An interesting aspect of the Middle Dutch *Gesta* is the short moralising rhyme at the end of certain chapters. These rhymes are often only two or three lines but they could be used to find out more about the origin of the Middle Dutch text. Weiske mentions these *Schlussreime* only once; to distinguish between different German translations.⁴¹ If these Middle Dutch closing rhymes were inspired by a German version, it could bring us closer to the source of the Middle Dutch version.

In 1993, during the 500th anniversary of Gheraert Leeu's death, a volume was published to celebrate Leeu's accomplishments and value to the history of the printed book.⁴² The main point of reflection was that Leeu, although enjoying some fame, deserved more attention for his achievements and originality for his role as printing entrepreneur. Some major aspects which are derived from the insights of several authors are: the fact that Leeu's main printing language was Middle Dutch instead of Latin, his use of woodcut illustrations, and his international business approach. Another volume was published in 2015, after a lecture in 2013 for the 520th anniversary and these major topics were again approached, with an extra emphasis on Leeu's collaboration with other printers.⁴³ In these

³⁸ *Die Geesten*, 1r.

³⁹ See figure 3.

⁴⁰ *Litteratus* as being proficient in the (Latin) *bonae litterae*.

⁴¹ Weiske, *Gesta Romanorum*, 108. See Appendix II for the chapters with end rhymes.

⁴² Goudriaan, K. et al., *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda, 1477-1484* (Delft 1993).

⁴³ Klein, J.W., *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda* (Gouda 2015).

volumes, there are even several remarks about the alleged political preference of Leeu; more about this will be explored in a following paragraph. Maybe the most notable aspects of Leeu's printed oeuvre is his exploration of works in vernacular prose and his focus on the vernacular public.⁴⁴ Klein noticed the fact that Leeu did not only print devotional works but especially new, fresh and exciting works, unknown to the broader public.⁴⁵ His two 'scoops' are the first printed prose novel (*History van Alexander*, 1477) and the first printed historical work of the Northern Netherlands (*Gouds kroniekje*, 1478).⁴⁶ Two of the mentioned aspects are: vernacular publishing and woodcuts can be seen as extra incentive for a wide public to purchase Leeu's wares. This goes hand in hand with the relatively high literacy in the Low Countries, for both men and women.⁴⁷ Another major client could still be found in the many religious orders of the Low Countries. Then we return to the question of the original composers and users of the Latin *Gesta*. They probably were composed by a religious order for meditation but they could very well be used to prepare a sermon.⁴⁸ This does not mean that they were not interesting for the broader public, especially in combination with the vernacular and full-page woodcuts. Another point could be made for the fact that the stories do not have to be read as a whole, including moralizing explanation; it could just be used for pleasure reading and to learn from. The incipit does say 'totter menschen leringhe'.

Leeu probably saw a market in the printed version of the *Gesta* in the vernacular after his earlier publication of the prose work about *Alexander*. This publication had a somewhat similar premise as the *Gesta*, at least from the outside. They both give ancient exempla of rulers, in the one case Alexander and in the other a great host of different rulers including Alexander himself. The *Geesten* still portrayed Alexander as a Christian *avant la lettre*. This means that the ancients remained important and popular subjects of literature and examples of ideal rulers.

Around the year 1480, this volume of stories became a popular printed work. It was firstly published in Utrecht, and shortly hereafter in Germany and Louvain. Then Gerard Leeu published it in Latin and after a year in Middle Dutch. The Middle Dutch version was quickly adopted by other Dutch printers such as Christiaan Snellaert and Peter van Os.

Therefore it can be concluded that there was a public for these semi-historic moralized stories. This public would be a broad public who read the vernacular and who had the means to purchase a woodcut-illustrated book. The Latin *Gesta* must have enjoyed some popularity because a year later it was translated and illustrated with seven full-page woodcuts. The woodcuts of the Dutch *Dialogus Creaturarum dat is Twispraec der creaturen* by Leeu in 1481, were used by several other Dutch printers, who printed the Dutch *Gesta* as well (see figure 5).⁴⁹

⁴⁴ L. Hellinga-Querido, 'De betekenis van Gheraert Leeu' in: Koen Goudriaan ed., *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda, 1477-1484* (Delft 1993) 12-30, there 15. H. Pleij, *Komt een vrouwtje bij de drukker. Over gezichtsveranderingen van de literatuur uit de late Middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam 2008) 123. Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 25.

⁴⁵ Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 26.

⁴⁶ K. Goudriaan and G.A.M. Willems, *Gheraert Leeu, meesterprinter ter Goude, 1477-1484* (Gouda 1992) 8.

⁴⁷ Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 10.

⁴⁸ F. De Bree, 'Gheraert Leeu als drukker van Nederlands verhalend proza' in: Koen Goudriaan ed., *Een drukker zoekt publiek. Gheraert Leeu te Gouda, 1477-1484* (Delft 1993) 61-80, there 74-75.

⁴⁹ Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letterkunde,

https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/leeu002diag02_01/colofon.php Hans Rijns, Gheraert Leeu, *Dialogus Creaturarum dat is Twispraec der creaturen*. Consulted on June 30th 2022. Christaen Snellaert was a colleague of Jacob Jacobsz. Van der Meer in Delft.

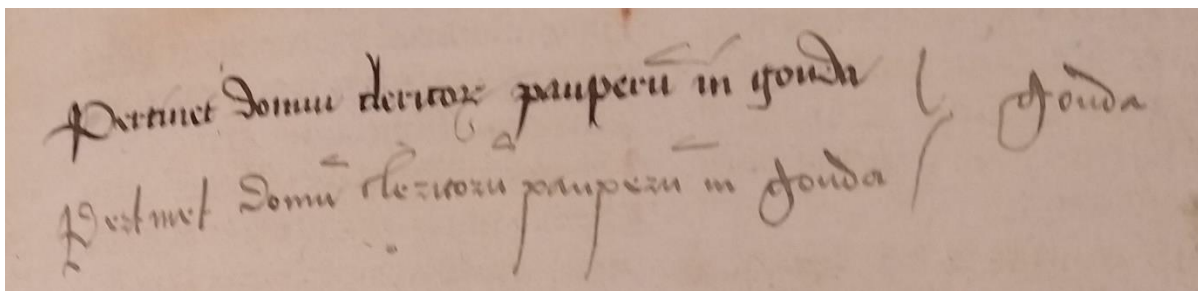


Figure 6 Owner's mark in the colophon of the *Gesta*: *pertinet domui clericorum pauperum in gouda* ((This book) belongs to the house of the poor clergymen in Gouda). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Ink 8.F.30, last folium verso. Thanks to dr. Konstanze Mittendorfer of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Sammlung von Handschriften und alten Drucken in Vienna who kindly provided a picture of this Besitzeintrag.

An interesting question to ask is how Leeu got his texts and who translated the *Gesta* to *Die Geesten*.⁵⁰ One possibility is that the brothers from the monastery Steyn had a role in this process.⁵¹ This would be interesting because this monastery was meant for the tertiaries of the Franciscans and this would strengthen the bond with the minor orders from which the original *Gesta* may have originated. But Gouda was not only home to this monastery. Around 1500, some ten monasteries can be found here.⁵² One of these monasteries has a direct link to Leeu: the Collatiebroeders. Klein thinks that the brothers and their printing business could be seen as a branch of Leeu's printing emporium.⁵³ This monastery was in possession of Leeu's Latin version; could this have been the basis for the Middle Dutch translation?⁵⁴ The possible translation of another book printed by Leeu, *Dialogus Creaturarum dat is Twispraec der creaturen*, could also have been from Gouda or at least in Gouda, accessible to Leeu.⁵⁵ Although the Collatiebroeders themselves started printing after Leeu had left Gouda for Antwerp, the relation might have begun earlier. Rector Hendrik Herp (1410-1477/78) was responsible for turning the community to the *Devotio Moderna* and these were famous for their interest in the printed book and made printing one of their sources of income.⁵⁶ Two of rector Herp's most notable works were sermon collections: *Speculum aureum de praecentis divinae legis* (Mainz 1474) and *Sermones de Tempore, de Sanctis, de tribus partibus poenitentiae, de Adventu* (Speyer 1484). It might be possible that he used the *Gesta* as some kind of inspiration. A comparison might be worth looking into. Another possible source of the Middle Dutch translation could be found in Germany. We have already come across the *Schlußreime* and the origin of the Middle Dutch version could be traced back to a German version with these rhymes.

Another possible source is the home of the *Devotio Moderna* and a direct student of Geert Grote: Johan Schutken (Monastery of Windesheim †1423). According to Johan Acquoy, Leeu's printed versions of *Hyer beghinnen alle die epistelen en ewangelien vanden gheheelen iaere* and *Evangelien vanden gheheelen jaer ende vanden sonnendaghen mitten glosen* were of Schutken's hand.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Goudriaan and Willems, *Gheeraert Leeu*, 12.

⁵¹ Idem. This is the same monastery where Erasmus stayed for a while, see: Diederick Habermehl, 'Stein: het verdwenen klooster van Erasmus', *Tidings van die Goude* 24:4 (2006) 221-227.

⁵² J. Taal, *De Goudse kloosters in de middeleeuwen* (Hilversum 1960) 14.

⁵³ Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 44-45.

⁵⁴ A.G. Weiler, *Volgende de norm van de Vroege Kerk. De geschiedenis van de huizen van de broeders van het Gemene leven in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1997) 144.

⁵⁵ Rijns, Gheraert Leeu, *Dialogus Creaturarum*. Consulted on June 30th 2022.

⁵⁶ P.H.A.M. Abels et al., *Duizend jaar Gouda. Een stadsgeschiedenis* (Hilversum 2002) 222. J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia 2009) 191-193.

⁵⁷ J.G.R. Acquoy, *Het Klooster te Windesheim en zijn invloed. Eerste deel* (Utrecht 1875) 287.

1.4 The political context

The major works about Leeu and his book emporium almost always stress the difficult political times during the late 70's and early 80's of the 15th century. In this time, the dawn of the Early Modern Period, or the autumn of the medieval era, the Low Countries changed dynasties. Charles the Bold had died in 1477 during the Battle of Nancy and was succeeded by his daughter, Mary of Burgundy. She married into the Habsburg House which dominated the European political playing field for the coming centuries. During the beginning period of the print business under Leeu in Gouda, the political situation in the Low Countries was difficult. During this period, the Hook and Cod Wars were active again. This time, the conflicts were centred around Utrecht.⁵⁸ If one thing was not wished for in the Low Countries in the 80's of the fifteenth century, it would be more political discord. This discord, more or less an accumulation of foreign and domestic war, came to an end after the last Flemish Revolt against Maximilian of Austria and the Peace of Cadzand (1492).⁵⁹ These affairs were fought domestically since the Utrecht War of 1481-1483, which was influenced by the ongoing Cod Wars that ended in 1490 after Frans van Brederode's death. The question whether a ruler was just or unjust was a permanent question during this period. Although the *Gesta* are not a political work, nor centred around politics or even contemporarily written, it could still shed a light on how contemporaries saw rulership around the time of publishing. An aspect in the *Geesten* is that there is not a single female ruler with any active role. There is sometimes a mention about a far-away queen or a princess but not one as a central figure.

It is even possible to make several remarks about the possible political leaning of Leeu during his lifetime. Klein began with comparing several pieces of Burgundian court literature with the printed oeuvre of the Collatiebroeders.⁶⁰ The intended public was more interested in Latin and vernacular instead of French so therefore the court culture might have spread but the court language did not.⁶¹ One work that conveys Burgundian court propaganda is the *Historien van Troyen* (Gouda 1479), which portrays the Burgundian tradition of tracing their lineage back to Troy.⁶² Klein sees this as a sign that Leeu's oeuvre shifted to the Cod side in the revolt.⁶³ He sees no better time to start with pro-Burgundian prints than 1481, when Gouda shifted to the Cods.⁶⁴ The Collatiebroeders had an interesting relationship with the ruling dynasty as well because the Burgundians, starting with Philip the Good, all the way to Margaret of York, were diligent promoters of the observance.⁶⁵ They saw advantages in a strong culture of preaching and pastoral care in the urban community.⁶⁶ It might be farfetched to connect this to the vernacular *Geesten* because its nature is not political of origin. The success of this work could very well be influenced by Leeu's political stance as pro-Cod/pro-Burgundian in combination with the promotion of the observance by the ruling dynasty. This might be more of a pragmatic display because one would be wise to be accommodating to the new ruling dynasty. A printer does not print his own interests but he prints what he thinks might sell for a profit. But printing and politics can of course not be seen as disjointed entities.

How a ruler should rule has been subject to debate as long as these power structures have existed. This debate was perpetually present in the medieval world; a fantastic vehicle for this debate was the written word. Elizabeth Eisenstein has already pointed out how a ruler could potentially use the

⁵⁸Goudriaan and Willems, *Gheeraert Leeu*, 8. W. Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee. De geschiedenis van Nederland, 1100-1560* (Amsterdam 2012) 525.

⁵⁹Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee*, 528.

⁶⁰Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 49.

⁶¹Idem, 49-50.

⁶²Idem, 50. For the Trojan tradition see: W. Keesman, *De eindeloze stad. Troje en Trojaanse oorsprongsmitythen in de (laat)middeleeuwse en vroegmoderne Nederlanden* (Hilversum 2017).

⁶³Klein, *De vroege boekdrukkunst in Gouda*, 50.

⁶⁴Idem.

⁶⁵A. Dlabacová, *Literatuur en Observantie. De Spieghel der volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de dynamiek van laatmiddeleeuwse tekstverspreiding* (Hilversum 2014) 38.

⁶⁶Idem.

written (printed) word to amass an entourage or personal presence.⁶⁷ An interesting point could also be made for the reverse: because the intended public for these moralized stories was not primarily the ruler himself but the broader (literate) populace, the stories might be intended to express a certain type of ideal portrayal of the perfect ruler from the perspective of his subjects. Certain qualities like being a good judge or listening to wise counsel are perfect illustrations of qualities which are expected from bottom-up instead of the top-down interpretation which is often stressed in traditional view of the mirror literature. These mirrors were often written by people from a comparable milieu as the rulers themselves (high clergy, nobility, personal educators). The perceived emphasis on a more bottom-up perspective can be explained by the source of the texts. They were probably gathered and written down by a brother of one of the lesser orders, who stood much closer to the regular people than the formerly mentioned authors of the *specula* and they would therefore prefer this bottom-up point of view.

It can be concluded that *Die Geesten* was published in uncertain times where people needed meditation, amusement and a feeling of security. The first two necessities were easily found in the amusing story book, originally published 'totter menschen leringhe'. The twofold nature of the stories (story and explanation) made it possible to read them separately and this combined with the woodcuts made *Die Geesten* an interesting prose novel in itself. Although the portrayal of the ruler was not the main message of this compilation of stories, over eighty stories feature an active ruler, either benevolent or malevolent. When the stories are seen as a unity instead of 181 stories from far-ranging sources, an interesting portrayal can be derived from the many rulers. The qualities which these rulers convey were still quite relevant in the time of printing, even though the 'original' composition was already dated. Qualities like being a fair judge or listening to counsel were as relevant in the 13th/14th century in England or France as in the last decades of the 15th century in the Low Countries.

1.5 Recapitulation of the historical context

The *Gesta Romanorum* have existed as a story compilation since the late 13th or early 14th century. The origins are not certain but the *Gesta's* impact has been immense. The question remains whether the *Gesta* were a preacher's handbook, filled with interesting examples and explanations or a book for personal meditation. It could be used for both, it has interesting stories with Christian moralizations but the stories could be read without the separate explanation. The *Gesta* were introduced to print in the seventies of the fifteenth century. Leeu printed his Latin version in 1480, probably after Zell's 1473 publication. In the foreword, it is said that the book was 'totter menschen leringhe', and not specifically for a ruler as mirror literature. Then, in 1481, he published a Middle Dutch translation. Two possible sources for this translation can be found in Gouda: the Collatiebroeders and the Tertiaries from Steyn.

⁶⁷ E. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (2nd edition, Cambridge 2005) 107-109.

Chapter 2 The importance of fair laws and judgement

"Het is ghevallen dat een rechter wert met ghiften becoert ende daer toe ghebracht dat hi een valsch vonnis oft oerdel oft sentenci ghegheven heeft. Die coninc heeft dat vernomen ende gheboet sinen knechten dat men den valschen rechter villen soude, alsoe daden si, ende hi liet sijn vel spikeren ende vastmaken anden stoel of setel daer die rechter op sat, ende ander rechters op sitten souden, om te beteykenen ende een spieghel te setten allen anderen rechteren dat si voertmeer gheen valsche vonnissen of sentencien en gaven."⁶⁸

This story of Cambyses and Sisamnes illustrates the sentence that the corrupt judge could expect when his crimes came to light. This chapter will be centred on the question which aspects are ascribed to the lawful ruler as portrayed in *Die Geesten*.

2.1 Terminology and process

The king as judge was an important symbol in medieval society, for the Last Judgement was the final and greatest event in the life of a Christian. In *Die geesten of geschiedenis van Romēn*, we read twenty-one stories where the ruler is called benevolent or wise because he gives fair sentences, where he is a wise judge or because he proclaims fair laws.⁶⁹ This must be seen from the context of three levels of law: low, middle and high. This structure came to be around the 12th century where different levels of authority meant different levels of punishment. Only the one in possession of high justice: the king, was allowed to sentence someone to death or severe torture. Because of the possible German origin of the *Gesta*, we might also call this form of justice *Blutgerichtsbarkeit*, *Hochgerichtsbarkeit* or *Hohe Gerichtsbarkeit*. But this compilation of stories is neither a political work nor a legal book and the readers were probably not all juridically educated and actual details on law were not too important. So in these instances where a ruler (may that be a king, prince, emperor or other feudal lord) presides over a case, we must see this as someone with the right to sentence someone to capital punishment (*jus gladii*, law of the sword).

This means that from the eighty-six stories in which the ruler plays an important role, just about a quarter is centred around the quality of being a fair judge. Although this is less than ten percent of the total number of stories, it is still a major part of our selection. Fair laws and judgement are prime examples of the qualities which are expected from bottom-up. This chapter will contain both a description of the selected stories and an analysis of the specific assets and qualities which are tied into the character of the fair and just ruler/judge. Some stories are somewhat vague about the specific roles of ruler or judge. This balance is fragile but they are often the same person or they work together closely. A judge is someone who judges whether an action is in accordance to the law or not. A 'ruler' is someone with executive powers but this classification does not add up in the case in a medieval context where there was no such concept as Montesquieu's *trias politica*. The case is also true that the ruler has a higher position in the hierarchy and can therefore overrule the judge in certain stories.

Due to the nature of the 'double narrative' of story and explanation, the stories must always be observed from this perspective and the explanations often make some vague narratives more clear. Although some aspects from just rule can still be seen separately from their explanation. For a modern reader, some qualities of rulers as fair judges might seem quite unfair but modern views of justice must not be projected on this 13th/14th-century storybook. There are three major aspects which are related to the position of the ruler as judge or *rex-judex*. These are: the ability to show mercy, being thankful and being law-abiding. The last category is quite broad because this includes several factors which can all be grouped in 'being law-abiding'. The several aspects of this last category are: leading by example and the fragile balance of being both lawmaker (above the law) and still being accountable to the law. These sub-categories will be presented with the stories which apply to these categories.

⁶⁸ *Die Geesten*, Cap. XXIX (*Vanden quaden rechteren een merkelic stuck*), 42v-43r, there 42v.

⁶⁹ Chapters: II, IV, XIII, XXIX, XXXIX, L, LV, LVII, LVIII, LXVII, LXXXVII, CV, CXIX, CXXXIII, CXL, CXLVI, CLXI, CLXX, CLXXVIII, CLXXX and CLXXXI.

2.2 Mercy

Although a ruler should abide by the law, he can be lenient when the accused 'deserves' mercy. A royal pardon would be the most well-known example of this 'mercy'. This goes against the 'lawful' quality if the law is seen as *ius strictum*⁷⁰ but these are important to observe separately in each different case. The royal pardon in England has a great body of literature and the secondary literature contains many different reasons why a ruler could grant a pardon.⁷¹ McSweeney proposes that a (medieval English) king could show both his power and position above the law by pardoning criminals:

"It gave the king an opportunity to show how powerful royal mercy actually was. To a certain extent that depended on the king being able to demonstrate that he was not bound by the law. The less meritorious the killer pardoned, the more the king could drive that point home."⁷²

The stories where a ruler shows mercy are IIII (*Van die iusticie der rechteren*), LVII (*Vanden drye coninghen*) and CXLVI (*Hoe datmen den princen ende ander groten heren stoutelic sal berispen van horen quaden werken*). In some cases, the ruler does not show mercy; this happens in stories LXVII (*Van goeden raet te horen*), CXXXIII (*Vanden onnoselen door ons liefs heren ihesu cristi*) and CXL (*Van die rechtvaerdicheyt ende middelicheyt goods, die niet en wert geneycht met enighen wint an die een side of an die ander, in dit tegenwoerdighe leven, dat wi vinden ende bekennen sullen in dat ander leven*). This is somewhat ambiguous because it is difficult to judge whether a ruler gives mercy or not, even if mercy seems to be deserved. Then again, these stories are not actual historical tales and in combination with the explanations, but the given sentences are normative.

In story IV (*Van die iusticie der rechteren*)⁷³, 'emperor' Caesar made the law that a rapist should be judged by his victim: the options were death or marriage. In this case, there were two victims and two sentences. One sentence was merciful (she wanted to marry her attacker) and the other demanded the death penalty. The merciful judgement was chosen. Mercy, as one of the major themes in Christianity, reminds us of the christomimetic theme in the person of the ideal ruler. This story is also similar to the story of Salomon, in the case where he judged two women who were competing for one baby.

The next story in which the ruler shows mercy (cap. LVII, *Van volmaectheyt des levens*)⁷⁴, contains an interesting medieval myth. Emperor Titus decreed that one was not allowed to work on the day of birth of their firstborn son. This would suggest that the law in general was subject to Titus' wish. He ordered the 'great poet and black magician'⁷⁵ Virgil, seen as a virtuous pagan, to make a statue which could tell the sins of the people every day.⁷⁶ This 'security measure' would suggest that this law was quite important to Titus. Focus the blacksmith had to work every day and visited the statue to threaten it to not tell that he worked on the forbidden day. Titus sent messengers to ask the daily sins but the statue told them about the one who threatened him and Focus was eventually brought before the emperor. Focus explained that he had to work every day to earn eight pennies to pay his father, his son, his wife and for Focus himself. The emperor ordered him to go free and continue his work and Focus was crowned as the new emperor after Titus' death. Mercy is given to Focus after he explains why he must work to earn his daily salary. The explanation gives even more reason to let Focus go free: the day to not work is Sunday because most people only honour God during Mass on Sunday. Focus is a good Christian and he honours God daily (the pennies which he gives). The reinforcement

⁷⁰ A law interpreted literally with no modification. A.X. Fellmeth and M. Horwitz eds., *Guide to Latin in International Law* (Oxford 2009).

⁷¹ Thomas McSweeney, 'The King's Courts and the King's Soul: Pardoning as Almsgiving in Medieval England', *Reading Medieval Studies* 40 (2014) 159-175.

⁷² Idem, 171.

⁷³ *Die Geesten*, 4r-4v.

⁷⁴ Idem, 64v-66v

⁷⁵ 'Virgilium den groten poeet ende swarte konstenaer'. Idem, 64v.

⁷⁶ See: J.M. Ziolkowski and C.J. Putnam eds., *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven/ London 2008) for Vergil's reception and his role in the *Gesta* (p. 862-867).

that laws can be broken when a good reason is given, shows us that mercy is a major aspect of fair judgement. Laws are laws but the human factor is important in each case.

Story CXLVI (*Hoe dat men den princen ende ander groten heren stoutelic sal berispen van horen quaden werken*), is about a pirate called Dyonides, described in Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, who was caught by Alexander the Great's men. Alexander asked Dyonides why he kept ravaging the sea. Dyonides asked Alexander how they were any different: he himself ravaged the seas with his galleys and Alexander ravaged the lands with his army. Alexander would forgive Dyonides if he did not ascribe his capture to fate but to his own actions (niet die aventuer, mer u verdienten⁷⁷). Dyonides consented, became a rich prince and a lover of justice. Alexander showed mercy to the pirate because he showed Alexander that he was not that different from the pirate. Alexander did the same on land as Dyonides did on the sea. The title states as well that rulers should be reprimanded and that they were not that different from common criminals such as pirates. The overarching lesson is that even a ruler like Alexander the Great can be reprimanded by a common pirate because bad deeds are still bad deeds even if a mighty ruler commits them.

These three are examples of how mercy was shown to people although they might have committed some heinous crime. The only actual case where a modern reader might show mercy would be the story of blacksmith Focus, for he had a very good reason to break the law: he needs the money he makes daily. The rapist and pirate are shown to be actual criminals who only go free because of external judgements. The rapist is granted mercy because of the law and the merciful woman and the pirate because he teaches Alexander a wise lesson.⁷⁸

The last three stories strengthen the point that a *rex-judex* should be merciful but the following three stories contradict this quality. It is not easy to predict when a ruler does or does not have mercy. It depends on the ruler, possible judges, the case, victim and perpetrator.

In the next story, LXVII (*Van dat men int uterste gheen onscult en sal hebben moghen maken*⁷⁹), there were two knights, one wise and the other unwise, who made a blood pact. In this empire, ruled over by emperor Maximianus, two cities were founded: one on a mountain top and the other in the plains. A legend was known to the knights that one would live happily and fruitfully in the mountain city and that one would be imprisoned and hanged in the plain's city. The road which led to the top was arduous, narrow and guarded by bloodthirsty knights and the road to the plain's city was wide and pleasant. The unwise knight did not want to take the difficult path and chose the easy road to the plains. The wise knight did not want this but followed his blood brother because of their pact. Eventually they were thrown in prison, and they were led before the emperor. He listened to their plea, but he still sentenced them to the gallows because the unwise should have listened to the wise and the wise should not have been persuaded by the unwise. This story is similar to the Stoic lesson, derived from Hercules, which was illustrated by the letter Y, often with one narrow and one thick 'arm'.⁸⁰ This represented the arduous but, in the end, profitable road of hardships and long-term happiness and on the other 'arm' the easy and comfortable short-term happiness. The moralization explains this story as the road to Heaven and Hell. Soul and body are joined in baptism and are judged together in the end by the highest judge: Christ. The road of penitence is not often taken by people and they will be judged. One would expect to see some kind of mercy in this case but combined with the moralization, a hard judgement is given.

On the other side of having mercy is not having mercy and employing the law and its punishments to the fullest. The law should always be observed and sometimes even mercy is not to be given (more alike to the explanation of the *ius strictum*). Even in the case which we observe in story CXXXIII (*Vanden onnoselen doot Ons Liefs Heren Ihesu Cristi*⁸¹), where we might expect mercy or a pardon. A city was once besieged by a tyrant and the city asked a knight to assist them. He wanted to aid them

⁷⁷ *Die Geesten*, 177v.

⁷⁸ The wise lessons that could be given to the ruler are further explored in chapter 3.

⁷⁹ *Die Geesten*, 80r-82v.

⁸⁰ G. Boter and R. Brouwer, *Epictetus. Vrij en onkwetsbaar. Verzameld werk* (Amsterdam 2020) 23.

⁸¹ *Die Geesten*, 165r-166v.

but he did not have his arms or armour. Fortunately another knight had recently died and was interred with his armour. The knight borrowed the dead man's gear and helped the city and afterwards reinterred them with the deceased knight. The crux of this story is that there was an ancient law which stated that anyone who would rob a grave would be put to death. While the citizens thanked the noble knight, someone told a judge about the 'crime' and the knight was put before a trial. The judge did not show mercy, even though the knight did it for the greater good. The explanation tells that the noble knight was Christ and the besieging tyrant was the Devil. Christ took Adam's human nature when he was born from Mary but he was eventually betrayed by the Jews when he tried to save the world. This is certainly not the only instance when Jews were given the blame in the *Die Geesten*.

Story CXL (*Van die rechtvaerdicheyt ende middelicheyt Goods, die niet en wert geneycht met enighen wint an die een side of an die ander, in dit tegenwoerdighe leven, dat wi vinden ende bekennen sullen in dat ander leven*⁸²) is about king Eraclius, who presided over a case which involved two knights. One knight was accused of murdering the other because they rode away together. Then one of the knights did not show up again and the other knight was accused of his murder. The knight was still sentenced to death even though the 'missing' knight presented himself after the sentence. The knight who had just presented himself, who was thought to be dead, was sentenced to death as well because he was the cause of the first knight's sentence. A third knight, who was the executioner, was sentenced to death as well because he had not executed the first knight immediately. This case might seem like a case where the ruler should show mercy because the first knight was certainly innocent. The text does mention that Eraclius was an extremely just ruler: 'Erasclius reigned, who, next to other virtues, was very just; neither with begging, nor with gifts, nor because the will of friends, nor because the will of enemies was he swayed. In every place and every time, he was just and lawful'⁸³. This description does sound like a very just and strict ruler but the punishments seem quite excessive. This is similar to the story where the knight was still sentenced to death even after defending the city and putting back the arms and armour in the grave. This again illustrates the balance between justice and mercy. In this case mercy is not shown because the sentence was already final: 'I command that they execute you because I already sentenced you'⁸⁴. Why the other two were to die as well, is another point. The second had to die because of his responsibility to the other knight and the third because he did not execute the first knight when the ruler had ordered him.

2.3 Thankfulness

When a subject does a good deed for the ruler or he informs the ruler about a certain case, the ruler is expected to show some kind of gratitude. This is the case in story CV, CXIX, CXLVI and CLXXVIII.

In chapter CV (*Van der wederom looninghe een yghelyc goets ende sonderlinghe der rechteren die rechtvaerdelick oordelen*⁸⁵) we come across one of the cases where the ruler or judge are somewhat confused: the story begins with the blind ruler Theodosius, a 'judge' plays in the middle part and Theodosius comes back in the end. The story goes like this: the emperor made a law that anyone who wanted to present their case in court, had to ring a bell which was present in the court room. A serpent made its nest under the bell rope but a toad usurped the nest. The serpent rung the bell and a judge came to the court room where he saw the serpent and called for Theodosius. Theodosius himself judged the case and the serpent thanked him by dropping a healing stone on the king's eyes by which he regained sight. It is difficult to predict which character plays which part in the moralizing explanation. One might think the king or the judge is Christ or God and the serpent who is often the Devil in other stories. But this time, the king is man and the serpent is the confessor. The thanks does

⁸² Idem, 169r-169v.

⁸³ 'Eraclius heeft gheregneert die onder anderen doechden die hi had was zeer rechtvaerdich, noch met smeken noch met ghiften, noch om vrienden noch om vyanden wil wert hi ghebuucht, in allen plaetsen ende tot allen tiden dede hi iustici ende recht.' Idem, 169r.

⁸⁴ 'Ick ghebiede datmen u doden sal want ic u eens veroerdelt heb.' Idem.

⁸⁵ Idem, 124r-125v.

not really come from the ruler himself but we can see the other side of thankfulness. The one who is helped, in this case the snake, is thankful to the one who judged fairly.

The next story in which we see a thankful ruler is story CXIX (*Hoe dat van den gaven Goods nyemant van alden creaturen ondancberre en is dan alleen die mensche*⁸⁶), it is about a king's steward who does not keep his promises. This steward was made very powerful by the king and thought himself to be unaccountable. He once went to a forest where he fell into a hunting pit. A lion, a female monkey and a serpent fell into the same pit on that day. The unfortunate steward called out for help and a man called Gwido came to his aid. The beasts climbed the rope and the steward came out after them. Gwido was thanked and they both went home. The next day, Gwido came to the steward for his reward but the steward said he did not know Gwido. Gwido came back twice and was beaten half to death. Sometime later, Gwido went to the forest and was rewarded by the animals which he saved from the pit. He received a caravan of ten loaded donkeys, many sticks for firewood and a stone with three colours. This stone made Gwido a lucky man and he became a knight. The king asked Gwido if he would sell the stone, which he was willing to do but he warned the king that the stone would come back to him if the king did not offer enough money. The king asked Gwido to tell his story, which he did. The king was not pleased with his steward's actions: he punished the steward by transferring the steward's positions and wealth to Gwido. In the explanation, the ruler is God, the steward is man and Gwido is Christ. The further lesson of justice which can be derived from this is not as clear as in other stories. The case itself is clear and the sentence is somewhat just but the fair sentence is not really too important for the story. It is more used as some sort of 'happily ever after'. Gwido is portrayed as a helpful man but would that be enough for the position of king's steward? The explanation tells us to be thankful to those who save our lives and this lesson could be helpful to rulers but it could also be an interesting aspect from the populace towards the ruler. The broader public would probably be pleased with seeing that help towards others will not go without some sort of thanks. This related to *do ut des*, which was related to the reciprocity in feudalism and manorialism.

Protagonists are sometimes named and this is the case as well in this story. Gwido, Guido or Gwydo is also the name of the protagonist in story XVII and CLXXIII. Another name which appears multiple times is Ionathas, who we shall meet in another story.

In story LXXXVII (*Hoe Cristus hem selven voer ons hevet gheset ende ghegheven ter doot*⁸⁷), a knight asks the emperor to judge his case wherein he lost his inheritance unfairly. The emperor did not have time for this and he told the knight he would put another judge on the case. This knight however, once put himself in danger while trying to protect the emperor himself. The emperor, after being reminded of this heroic feat, judged the case for the knight. Here we see that the emperor is seen as a higher judge than the regular judges. A modern reader might remember this as the plot of Joseph Roth's *Radetzky* but the medieval reader could find a clear explanation in the *gheestelijck*. The knight is Christ who jumps between man and the Devil. One should give thanks to Christ for his sacrifice rather than to thank another. The lesson which could be derived from this is that a ruler should judge a personal case himself. This would seem rather hypocritical because personal bias would be a part of the trial. But in medieval society, unbiased judges might seem almost impossible. This is especially true for the king, who is accountable only to himself and God. The question of accountability is an interesting aspect as well, as the ancient adage goes: 'who guards the guard'.

Story CLXXVIII (*Van die vervolghinghe ende persequuci*⁸⁸) is a concise retelling of the Book of Esther. King Assuerus (Ahasuerus) banishes his wife and raises Aman (Haman) above all princes. Mardocheus (Mordecai), Hester's uncle, would not bow for Aman and then he began to persecute all Jews in the land after using the king's seal. Two other men wanted to kill the king and told Mardocheus, who informed the king. He honoured Mardocheus greatly and Hester told the king about Aman's plan to kill the Jews. The king sentenced Aman to the gallows which Aman himself had made for Mardocheus. This just sentencing is similar to the case of CXIX, where Guido tells the king about

⁸⁶ Idem, 146r-148r.

⁸⁷ Idem, 109r-109v.

⁸⁸ Idem, 230v-232r.

his steward's abuse of office. Information about abuse of office is precious information to rulers who strive towards just and efficient rulership.

2.4 Lawfulness

The ability to follow the law closely is an essential aspect for a ruler-judge. This aspect might seem contradictory to 'Mercy' and the choice between the two is sometimes difficult to argue and analyse. The stories which feature a law-abiding ruler are: XIII, XXIX, L, LV, LXVII, CXXXIII, CXL, CLXX and CLXXXII. Law abiding might seem like a *conditio sine qua non* for the highest judge but this is essential because the question remains whether he is above or below the law. An aspect for a lawful ruler is that he makes fair laws and if he does not make fair laws, he can regain this quality by being merciful. In story II and XIII, we see that the ruler puts a law in place that a child should take care of his parents. The law-making in these stories is therefore more a stage than the actual process of making a fair law. The children in the stories are law-abiding as well because they are dissuaded to take care of their fathers by a third party (an uncle and a mother). The lesson here is that the populace should be law-abiding even when they are being dissuaded.

Cap. XXIX (*Vanden quaden rechteren een merkelic stuck*) contains an unnamed emperor who made a law that judges should judge fairly on the penalty of great pain. Then a judge made an unjust sentence and was therefore punished by removing his skin. After this punishment, his skin was nailed to the judicial throne, the judge's son was made judge and he had to sit on the chair. His father's skin was a reminder of the emperor's strict law. As said before, judge and king were often the same person but in the case where they are two distinct characters, the ruler's word is law. The explanation for this story is that the judge is man, who should judge himself during his lifetime. The skinning has two explanations: the one is that removing the skin is removing sin by penitence and the other is that the skin is actually Christ's life which he lost during the Passion and which should be a reminder for humankind. The story is a retelling of the legend of the Persian king Cambyses II (reigned 530-522 BC., son and successor of Cyrus the Great) and the corrupt judge Sisamnes. This story strengthens the point that the ruler is often in a higher judicial position than a judge. Piet Leupen describes this in combination with the power of the pope but also worldly leaders. He asks the question whether a ruler could coin a law if he is technically bound to the law (*legibus solutus*).⁸⁹ This story was well-known in the medieval Low Countries and was often featured in paintings in the genre of the *exempla justitiae* (gerechtigheidsstaferelen in Dutch), the most notable of which was the diptych of Gerard David called *Het Oordeel van Cambyses* (1498). This painting was ordered by the aldermen of Bruges to be put in the deputy burgomaster's room in the town hall.⁹⁰ What is a better warning than a gruesome piece of art portraying a horrible punishment of a bad judge?

In his role as highest judge, the ruler could also be seen as a mediator between parties under his jurisdiction. In chapter XXXIX (*Van die reconsiliaci, paysmakinghe*



Figure 7 *Het Oordeel van Cambyses* (*Judgement of Cambyses*). Gerard David (1498).

⁸⁹ K. Pennington, *The prince and the law, 1200-1600: sovereignty and rights in the western legal tradition* (Berkeley 1993) 77-79. P. Leupen, *Keizer in zijn eigen keizerrijk. De geboorte van de nationale staat* (Amsterdam 1998) 38-39.

⁹⁰ Web Gallery of Art, *The Judgement of Cambyses*. <https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/d/david/1/cambyse.html>. Consulted on June 20th 2021.

*tusschen God, ende die mensch*⁹¹) we see the emperor as being compared with God in the moralizing explanation. The *paysmakinghe* (peace-making) is here between two brothers who are Christ and man. The one brother (man) wronged his brother (Christ) gravely by destroying his lands (crucifixion). The wronged brother was prepared to forgive his brother, the emperor, Julius, showed up to mediate and all was returned to tranquillity between the emperor and the two brothers.

The ruler could be a ruler of any level; the ruler in chapter L (*Van prijs ende lof der rechtvaerdighe oerdelaren ende rechteren*⁹²) is called 'wethouder ende raet van Roemen'⁹³ (alderman-councillor and councillor of Rome) or simply *consul* in Leeu's Latin version. Councillor Zelongus put forth the law that any man who deflowered a virgin, should lose his eyes. It once happened that Zelongus' son deflowered the daughter of a widow and with this deed, he broke his father's law. The widow came to complain but Zelongus' advisors tried to dissuade the consul. Zelongus judged that his own law should be respected and therefore took one of his own eyes and one of his son's. This might seem hypocritical because the son did not bear the entire punishment but the explanation makes it clear. Zelongus is Christ and his son is man, who defiles the soul with sin. His advisors (prophets and church fathers) beg him to show mercy but to be just as well. Christ therefore sacrifices himself (in the Passion) to save mankind. Just as story IV, we see the quality of mercy in judgement. This is combined with self-sacrifice as we have seen in the explanation of XXIX where the Passion plays a part as well. This reinforces the quality of mercy combined with self-sacrifice as being important for just rulers. So the ruler does abide to the law but he does not employ the punishment to the fullest extent because he spares one of his son's eyes.

In chapter LV (*Van wederom roepinghe des sondighen siels, die daer gheseynt ende geset wert int eylant des voldoeninghe van penitencien*⁹⁴), we see a combination of a fair ruler and his son, who violates one of his own laws. An unnamed king had a wife, son and four daughters whose names were: Rechtvaardicheyt (Justice), Warachticheyt (Truth), Bermherticheyt (Mercy) and Vrede (Peace). The son was married to a woman but one of his men seduced her and destroyed the son's duchy. The son was willing to forgive her and he sent a messenger to his ex-wife. She knew of a law that a disloyal wife was not allowed to return to her husband but the messenger reminded her that: 'my lord above this law is because he made the law himself'⁹⁵. After some deliberation with the king, the son was allowed to travel to his wife to let them make amends. The oldest daughter was unhappy with this plan and went to the king that she could not be his daughter anymore because the woman's banishment was just and the consolation of prince and wife would be unjust. The adulteress was judged truthfully and her return would be against the truth so the king's second daughter left as well. Daughter Mercy recommended the king to show mercy to the woman for she could not be his daughter anymore if he would not do this. At last, the fourth daughter, Peace, left the kingdom. When the two oldest daughters heard this, they gave their father a sword to bring justice upon the adulteress. Mercy did not want this and wanted their brother to judge the case. The brother judged and asked Mercy if she would still show mercy if the adulteress would be disloyal again. Mercy answered that she would not except if the woman would show remorse. This was decreed and Peace came back to the kingdom. This story combines multiple important qualities which were to be expected from the ruler: he should be worthy of justice, truth, mercy and peace. Christ is the personification of the prince, who sacrificed himself to save the sinful soul with the Passion. Again, mercy is combined with fair judgement. There is an element of hypocrisy in this story too; as can be seen from the quote of the messenger (see footnote 95). The son stood above his own law which shows the ultimate power of the ruler. This hypocrisy is more easily accepted when Christ's mercy is stamped on the wife's discretion.

⁹¹ *Die Geesten*, 50r-50v.

⁹² *Idem*, 57r-57v.

⁹³ *Idem*, 57r.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, 59r-63r.

⁹⁵ 'mijn here is boven die wet in dyen dat hi die wet self ghemaect hevet'. *Idem*, 59v.

Not only kings as judges but lower lords were able to judge as well. In CLXI (*Hoe datmen God altijd dancked ende loven sal van sinen gaven*⁹⁶) we come across an English hill where a beautiful cup-bearer would appear if an exhausted person asked for a drink. The cup would be filled with an unknown but sweet wine and after drinking, the cup was to be returned. A hunter once came to the hill and asked for a drink. He drank the wine but he did not return the cup. His lord heard about this story and gave the cup to king Henry to not seem like an enabler of crime. This story shows justice on another level than the expected king or emperor. Even a 'regular' lord should be just. The explanation does mention the importance of the Last Judgement in this case. The cup of sweet wine is Christ, who cleanses the heart of people who receive him. The case of enabling crime is not an aspect which has appeared before but it is an insightful one. The lord goes to the king to show him his own innocence in the crime of taking the cup. He shows his accountability to his lord to show that he has no part in the crime of stealing the cup.

Cap. CLXX (*Van twalef wetten, ende van die manier te leven*⁹⁷), has its historical roots in the Law of Twelve Tables which were the main Roman laws regarding the rights of citizens in the Roman Republic. The twelve laws in the story however, are not similar to these ancient Roman laws. The knight Ligurius proposed these twelve laws which were profitable, just, stern and received from Apollo.⁹⁸ The laws were as follows:

- I. subjects should be obedient to their prince and he should protect them;
- II. one should be sober in life;
- III. things should not be judged by money or richness but by virtue;
- IV. gold and silver should be seen as the most nefarious goods;
- V. the king should manage war, the wise should manage law, the people should be obedient and the council should choose officers;
- VI. inheritance should be divided equally;
- VII. people should eat communally;
- VIII. young people should wear a tunic;
- IX. children should not be raised in vanity but in labour;
- X. girls should marry without dowry;
- XI. wives should be chosen for the money;
- XII. one should not be honoured in money but in virtue.

Some aspects which are featured in the real Twelve Laws and in the story are: marriage and inheritance. The story tells that Ligurius himself abided by all these laws himself: 'And all the laws which he commanded upon the people, he obeyed them himself to give lead by example'⁹⁹. The laws which are featured in this story are already interesting to analyse but the explanation gives even more laws which are the interpretation of Ligurius' laws. Ligurius is Christ who came to give people in baptism the Ten Commandments.

- I. The first is to be obedient to their prelates;
- II. the second is to forbid simony and to live frugally;
- III. the third is to judge people according to their virtue;
- IV. the fourth is to think of gold as nefarious and to receive the prayers of the poor;
- V. the fifth is to let kings be judge but to let them be just judges;
- VI. the sixth is that God made everything equal in his grace;
- VII. the seventh is to have transparency to not let things be unchaste in secret;
- VIII. the eight is to be clothed in love;
- IX. the ninth is to bring the poor to the church because they will inherit the world;
- X. the tenth is that people marry Christ without worldly love;

⁹⁶ Idem, 204v-205v.

⁹⁷ Idem, 217r-219r.

⁹⁸ Idem, 217r.

⁹⁹ 'Ende alle dese koren die hi den volc gheboot, die heeft hy selve eerst gehouden een exempel gevende.' Idem, 217v.

XI. the eleventh is to be prepared to serve God with a clean soul;

XII. the twelfth is that people receive only what they deserve.

Let princes be the example before they order their subordinates around. The most important from these laws is that the ruler has to set an example of lawfulness. This means that in an optimal situation, a ruler does not stand above the law. We have seen this aspect in story LV where the king's son breaks his own law, which is not appreciated by his sisters. The king might be able to make laws but he does not stand above it. The question then again arises: who is able to judge the highest judge?

The last story in the book (Chapter CLXXXII, *Van den overspel*¹⁰⁰) is actually a retelling of an earlier story (chapter LXXXII, *Van dat oerdel des overspeelres*¹⁰¹), which is the story of a man who has a fountain in which an adulterous animal washes itself to wash off the smell of another mate. When the actual mate comes back, the smell of adultery is not present. The fountain owner closes the fountain and the smell cannot be washed away anymore and the adultery is brought to light. In story CLXXXII, the animals are a lion, a lioness and a leopard. The lion smells the leopard's smell on the lioness and the lioness is killed. The role for the king is that he prevents a crime from happening, which is an obvious task for the highest keeper of the law. The explanation gives the following similarities: the king is God, who prevents the soul from always receiving grace by washing sin away in confession and can therefore not be resurrected in the Final Judgement.

2.5 Unlawful actions

In story VIII (*Van die ydel glori*¹⁰²), we read about an emperor who raises a temple in which he put three statues with inscriptions which implored the reader to take their attributes. The emperor also judged that anyone who took these attributes would be killed. An unnamed tyrant came to the temple, read the inscriptions and interpreted the inscriptions to take away the attributes (ring, golden beard and purple mantle). The emperor was informed and sentenced the tyrant to be killed. The explanation tells that the three statues are three kinds of people: the poor, the rich and the prelates. The tyrant is evil people who do not follow the law and protest those who are put in power. There is no extra information why this certain tyrant is called a tyrant but he is called *tyrannus* as well in the Latin version. The relationship between the emperor and tyrant is not made clear in the story.

The second instance is XXV (*Van die ondanckbaerheyt ende verghetelheyt der godliker gaven*)¹⁰³, where 'a woman suffered and was done injustice and where a tyrant was a nuisance who ruined her lands'¹⁰⁴. Then she invited a noble pilgrim to fight the tyrant which he did but the pilgrim was mortally wounded in the battle. The tyrant is the Devil, who battles Christ for man's soul. Although the tyrant's actions is not the main point of the story, the tyrant is an important aspect of the plot because he is the main antagonist for the pilgrim who is the personification of Christ.

The third instance is story CLXXIII (*Van die volstandicheyt des ghelovighen siels*¹⁰⁵) in which the protagonists, Gwydo and Tyrius went to the Holy Land to fight the heathens. Eventually they split and Tyrius was robbed by a tyrant called Plebeus who was jealous of him and accused Tyrius of trying to dethrone the king. Gwydo and Tyrius came back together and Gwydo was prepared to defeat Plebeus, which he did.

As we can see, the tyrant is more or less portrayed as the main antagonist against whom the protagonist hero has to fight. The role of tyrant is not a standalone role to learn a lesson from but just an adversary for the heroic protagonist to show what is good or just. Of course, the ruler is quite often featured as someone to learn something from but this is from direct actions which the ruler performs and not just that someone is fair or unfair just because this is the case. Instead of learning through the story why this quality is considered something, we are immediately presented with a 'tyrant'.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, 237r.

¹⁰¹ Idem, 104v-105r.

¹⁰² Idem, 8r-9v.

¹⁰³ Idem, 38r-39r.

¹⁰⁴ 'Een edel vrou leet veel onrechte ende overlant van enen tyran die haer lant verderf.' Idem, 38r.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 222r-226r.

2.6 Analysis of the rex-judex

"Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.
Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!"¹⁰⁶

These first lines of the famous *Dies Irae* convey the message that the final judge will examine all things strictly. The legendary king David is brought to stage as well, just as we have seen in the first case of this chapter where two women come to Caesar to judge a criminal. This ties into the practice of comparing medieval kings to kings of the Old Testament, 'le modèle le plus utilisé est celui de David'¹⁰⁷, as mentioned by Le Goff and this strengthens the further christomimetic connotation which we have seen. A somewhat concise overview of the selected stories has been given in the last paragraphs and this paragraph will be centred around the analysis of the twenty-one stories and the qualities which were presented. Some specifics will be selected from the stories and this will be combined with the overarching literature regarding kingship and their qualities in the time in which the stories were originally written and their implications for the time of publication. The time of publication will be of interest because they will present the interest of the public regarding their view on the stories as a whole and the implications that might be distilled from the view of the ideal type of ruler, as judge in this instance. The main focus will be the text itself and further theory will be put on the second place. There is not one particular quality which can be most often found in the stories of the ruler as a fair judge. It is a combination of several aspects such as the ability to show mercy, to be thankful, to follow the law as closely as possible and to lead by example. These several qualities have been categorised in three distinct aspects: the quality to show mercy, to be thankful in judgement and to be law-abiding. This last category is quite broad because it contains all facets of the king who abides to the law as much as possible (such as not having mercy, following by example and mediation).

Mercy, although a noble action, is not always the option in the stories. These are not easy to predict but the moralizing explanations give more insight. In the case of the two knights who choose to go to the city where they certainly would be executed, the given sentence is of course death. The knights knew what the implications would be of their actions and they were therefore fairly judged. The unwise should have listened to the wise and the wise should have known the consequences. The soul and body have made a pact in baptism and choose to follow the road to Hell and are therefore judged by Christ.

The most notable aspects which can be derived from these qualities are that there is much more to say about just judgement than simply observing the case and giving a judgement. Many things must firstly be observed such as how the victim plays a role in the trial as we have seen in the case of the rapist and two victims. The one wants a merciful punishment and the second asks for the capital punishment. Eventually, the most merciful is chosen by the presiding rex-judex. The overarching lesson for the intended reader is that not only the accused party must be heard by the judge but that the affected party or parties must be heard as well.

Another lesson is that the accused could even hold up a mirror to the ruler, to show him his own mistake before giving a sentence. This is closely related to another famous Christian quality (the first

¹⁰⁶ The first six lines of the famous *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) sequence, best known for its use in the Funeral Mass. Probably written during the 13th century by either the Franciscan Thomas of Celano or the Dominican Latino Orsini but an earlier date is possible as well. Note the relationship between minor orders and the focus on the Last Judgement.

¹⁰⁷ J. Le Goff, 'Le Roi dans l'Occident médiéval' in: A.J. Duggan ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London 1993) 1-40, there 4.

being mercy): 'Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat' (John 8:7). Only the one who is faultless should judge (and punish). This ties into the idea that the ruler should lead by example, certainly when following the law. The pirate shows Alexander that they are not that different and the pirate goes free for this wise lesson and the realization that Alexander is no better than the pirate.

Where mercy is not granted either is the case of the suspected murder of a knight who was sentenced to death but shortly after, the knight who was presumed to be dead showed up. The sentence was already given and therefore mercy was not shown, the presumed dead knight was killed because of his part in the innocent death and the executioner was killed because he had not yet executed the first knight.

Law may be one of the most important factors for the medieval ruler, as shown in multiple stories in *Die Geesten*. According to Le Goff, assuring justice and peace for his populace is one of the most important qualities for a medieval ruler to possess and the vehicle for this is law.¹⁰⁸ The debate if the ruler, as highest representation of the law, is above the law to be able to make new ones or if he is bound to the laws, because he should still be held accountable to his own laws. Although *Die Geesten* are in no way a legal text, the book was presented as historical fact and as Pennington noted: 'Nonetheless, they read their texts as models of ancient authority and as a paradigm for contemporary imperial power'¹⁰⁹. After this resurgence of Roman law, the royal right to rule was expected to come from a law. This was further explained by glossators of the *Corpus Juris Civilis* such as Azo of Bologna (1150-1230) and his pupil (1182-1263).¹¹⁰ They proposed that the royal right to rule (*Lex regia*) was the reason they were entitled to this overlordship and that they should respect the law because they derived their rulership from this law.¹¹¹ Azo saw this subservience as a great virtue for the ruler.¹¹² But still, Azo did not think that the ruler actually was bound to the laws but that he had to obey them through his will.¹¹³ Pennington put it in these words, derived from the canonist Laurentius Hispanus (1180-1248): 'they created a doctrine that the prince was loosed from all law but voluntarily "willed" himself to observe the law'¹¹⁴. In the words of Black: 'every king had a supreme moral obligation to obey laws of the land in so far as they applied to himself and to his actions as ruler'¹¹⁵. Then we come across the case that makes the debate more or less obsolete: all laws came from God so even princes had to obey. They therefore made a distinction between this divine law and positive law.¹¹⁶ We can also see the clear shift towards a more rationalised form of the judicial procedure:

"During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the ordeal disappeared in many parts of Western Europe and was replaced with a system of judicial procedure that rested primarily on oral and written evidence."¹¹⁷

So the stories were set in times when the judicial system was still quite arbitrary (although the Romans in the stories would have been familiar with forms of actual judicial procedures) but the procedures in the stories with witnesses, actual judges and written law seem contemporary. The fifteenth-century urban reader would probably be familiar with some simple judicial procedures and could therefore

¹⁰⁸ 'assurer la justice et la paix à son peuple'. Le Goff, 'Le Roi dans l'Occident médiéval', 13.

¹⁰⁹ Pennington, *The prince and the law*, 79-80. Here he writes about Roman law but *Die Geesten* were presented as fact as well.

¹¹⁰ *Idem*, 80.

¹¹¹ *Idem*.

¹¹² *Idem*, 81.

¹¹³ *Idem*, 82.

¹¹⁴ *Idem*.

¹¹⁵ A. Black, *Political thought in Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge 1992) 152.

¹¹⁶ Pennington, *The prince and the law*, 84.

¹¹⁷ *Idem*, 133.

take these stories as fact. Pennington makes excellent points about the status of the prince in the law but this is overall more rationalized from canonists and jurists instead of the actual practices of law.

2.7 Recapitulation of the just ruler

We have seen in this chapter that a great deal of the stories where an active ruler is involved, he is portrayed as a just or lawful person. Twenty-one feature a ruler in this category; this is almost a quarter of the total selection. The rex-judex in the stories are the bearers of high law, with the power of the *ius gladii*. The portrayal of the just or lawful ruler in the *Gesta* can be divided into three categories: the ability to show mercy, being thankful and being law-abiding. Mercy is one of the major Christian values and is often-featured. When or to whom mercy is granted, is not always easily predicted. A rapist might be saved by the choice of one of his victims but a noble knight who defended a city with the weapons of a dead knight, is still given the capital punishment. The moralisation must always be observed to make sense of a sentence that might not seem reasonable. The second theme is thankfulness; when someone does something for the ruler, it is expected that he receives something in return. This may be uncovering a corrupt steward (as happens in two stories) or helping the ruler in a more personal way. The last category is the most difficult because the term law-abiding is extra difficult in the case of a medieval ruler. The question whether the ruler is *legibus solutus* or if he stands above the law because he is able to coin his own laws.

Chapter 3: Wise counsel

"Het was een coninc dye zeer begheerde te weten hoe dat hi hem selven ende dat conincrijck soude regeren. Hi riep een tot hem die hem allen te boven ghinck in wijsheyt, ende seyde hem aldus: Mijn alre liefste gheeft my een vorm, regel hoe dat ic my selven ende oec mijn conincrijck sal moghen regeren."¹¹⁸

The medieval ruler did not often choose to be a king, but he was born in this position. To be able to rule his kingdom efficiently, he employed wise men to give advice regarding subjects such as philosophy, war, economy and many others. This chapter will describe the quality of listening to others, which was an extremely important factor for good rule.

3.1 The ruler and his advisors

A wise ruler listens to advice from wise men in his court to govern efficiently. A ruler might be wise himself and might enjoy the highest education but this is no guarantee for every situation. He listens to philosophers, engineers, clerics and other people in his court for the betterment of his realm. This is the second major quality which we find in the active rulers in *Die Geesten of geschiedenis van Romem*. This quality is divided between different layers of counsel. He may listen to advice from his peers or nobles, he may listen to philosophers (like Alexander was advised by Aristotle) and he may even listen to members of the populace if they have some worthwhile ideas.

From these sixteen selected stories in which the ruler listens to advice, twelve feature a wise man, men or philosophers.¹¹⁹ In the selected stories, not one advisor seems to actually be of noble birth. Some may have been but this is not specified in any story. This might be irrelevant to the story in itself but it is interesting enough to be pointed out. The other four stories involve 'regular' people. Rulers have had wise men to give advice to them as long as the institution of rulership has existed. These wise men were most often than not selected on basis of their power and influence, familial bonds or clerical hierarchy so they might actually not have been the brightest. These councils have been named *curia regis* in England or *conseil du roi* in France. In these councils, high members of the clergy often had a seat as well. This is only the case in one story, number CLXII. Another notable detail is that in the stories, the councillors were often called 'philosophers'. This might be for the ancient basis on which the general theme of the book is based. These philosophers were often Socrates or Aristotle, Plato is not featured. The explanation is fairly straightforward: Plato's works (except for his dialogue *Timaeus*, famous for the Atlantis-allegory) were only introduced after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Most of the stories were written and gathered much earlier than this. Aristotle was called 'The Philosopher' in the Middle Ages and Socrates was too influential to not be featured. These might have overshadowed Plato. Philosophers are not only a one-time counsellor, they are often called teacher as well. The most notable example of this is of course Alexander and his actual historical teacher Aristotle. They are therefore the ideal example of a mighty ruler and a wise advisor. The categories which can be derived from these stories in the context of 'rulers listens to advice' are: wise men/philosophers, wise men as teachers and 'others'. A small difference can be seen between the first two categories: where the ruler asks for advice in general, the story is for the first category but when the wise man actively teaches something, he is put in the second category. This can also be described as the difference between active and passive advisors, the one teaches on his own initiative and the other is asked for advice. The only advising clergyman is categorized in the last category because this instance is not enough for its own category although high clergy used to be important in rulers' councils. The advisor and *speculum* were tools for good governance when the institutions of rulership were still being formed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *Die Geesten*, CLXXIX (178, *Van die voersienicheyt, dat een moeder is van alle rijckdom*), 232r-234v, there 232r.

¹¹⁹ Stories XI, XVI, XXXIII, XXXVI, LXI, CIII, CXXXIX, CXLIII, CXLV, CLXII, CLXIII, CLXIII, CLXXIII, CLXXVIII, CLXXIX and CLXXXI.

¹²⁰ Leupen, *Keizer in zijn eigen rijk*, 44.

3.2 Wise men/philosophers as advisors

The greatest part of the selected stories feature several wise men or one wise man, which the ruler asks to give advice.

Another reason for the ruler to rely on his wise men, is when he comes across unknown cases. In the case of XVI (*Van dat exemplaerlijke leven*¹²¹), the emperor finds a golden casket with unknown inscriptions. To unravel these inscriptions, he calls for his wise men. The inscriptions were deciphered and they turned out to be wise lessons for the ruler, left behind by an ancient, pagan king.

In XXXIII (*Van die weghinghe des levens*¹²²), Alexander asks Aristotle to teach him and others things that might be profitable ('dat hij hem segghen woude dat hem ende anderen menschen zeer profitelich mochte sijn'¹²³).

The wise men are mostly involved when the ruler has specific questions to ask. In story XXXVI (*Vanden loop des mensch in desen tijtliken leven*¹²⁴), the king invites a philosopher specifically to ask him seven questions, which were answered by the philosopher. A wise man in story CLXXIX (*Van die voersienicheyt, dat een moeder is van alle rijcdom*¹²⁵) is asked by the king how to rule over himself and over his realm and his explanation is painted on a wall to remind the king of this advice. This 'only give advice when asked' is opposed by story LXI (*Van die voersorghe of voerdenkinghe ende voersienicheyt altijt te hebben*¹²⁶), where Socrates gives Alexander some advice. Socrates comes across one of Alexander's knights in the wild and he is brought to Alexander where he tells him that he reigns according to his will and not according to reason. Alexander thanked him for his advice and from then on, he reigned according to reason.

Another task of the counsellors was to criticize the ruler when this was needed. When the ruler was vain, the wise men had to tell him to look at himself to see his vain character. This is the explanation of story CXXXIX (*Van die wonden ende quetsueren der sielen*¹²⁷), where Alexander has difficulty with a siege. Men keep dying in the siege and this is because of a basilisk. His philosophers advised him to put a mirror in front of the basilisk to let it die from its own reflection. This is a literal form of a mirror for princes, which circulated around the courts. This is very similar to story CXLV (*Van dye wech des salicheyts dye God die vader doer sinen gebenediden soen ons op gedaen heft*¹²⁸), where king Philip is tormented by a miasma between mountains. He asked Socrates to solve this and he positioned a mirror upon a tower from which he could see two dragons. In the explanation, Socrates is a prelate who uses Christ (the mirror) to show vanity and unchastity (the dragons) in the general way of life (the mountain pass). This story has this aspect of the princely mirror again but it is used slightly different.

3.3 Philosophers as teachers

The philosopher as a teacher is featured in stories XI, CLXIII and CLXXIII. Here, he gives advice more or less on his own initiative.

In story XI (*Van dat venijn des sondes daer wy daghelicx met ghevoet worden*¹²⁹), Aristotle warns Alexander the Great to not marry a certain girl, who was raised to be vicious. Aristotle is called a teacher in this story but education is not the most important factor.¹³⁰ Alexander wanted some proof and he let a prisoner spend the night with her, after which the prisoner died. Alexander was very thankful to Aristotle for saving his life and the girl was sent back to her mother. In the explanation,

¹²¹ Idem, 20v-21v.

¹²² Idem, 45r-47r.

¹²³ Idem, 45r.

¹²⁴ Idem, 27r-49r.

¹²⁵ Idem, 232r-234v.

¹²⁶ Idem, 73r-74r.

¹²⁷ Idem, 169v-169r.

¹²⁸ Idem, 176v-177r.

¹²⁹ *Die Geesten*, 12r-12v.

¹³⁰ 'Aristotiles...sinen meester die hem in allen sciencien leerde.' Idem, 12r.

Aristotle is called the consciousness and reason, which battles against things which are bothersome to the soul.

Story CLXIII (*Van die ongheordineerde vrese*¹³¹) features Alexander, his (fictional) son Celestinus and Aristotle. Aristotle plays the role of court teacher and teaches prince Celestinus. Celestinus is ordered to put an incident which they both witness in verse. They witness a scabby horse with sheep on either side, bound together across the horse's back with rope. When the horse stands up, the rope irritates the scab on his back and both sheep are lifted from the ground. The horse runs into a mill and kicks a fire, which burns the mill and animals to the ground. Celestinus is not interested in composing his verses and invokes the Devil to write them in his steeds. Aristotle finds this out and orders Celestinus to renounce the Devil, after which Celestinus becomes a holy man. The two other stories are similar to each other. Chapter CLXXIII (*Van die lasten ende swaerten des werelts, ende van die bliscappen des hemels*¹³²) features an unnamed king, a philosopher and his student ('een meester filosooph met sijn discipel'¹³³). In both stories, the 'student' asks the master to teach them. The master does this and lectures their student with seven or eight wise statements. These wise lessons are often ambiguous or vague statements and the explanations try to make them more logical from a Christian point of view.

3.4 Other advisors

Other sources of advice to rulers are the centre of the following stories: CXXX (103), CLXII, CLXIII, CLXXVIII and CLXXXI. These persons are a merchant, a bishop, the ruler's mother, the queen's uncle (the Book of Esther which we have seen in chapter 2) and a knight/confidant of the king. The story where the merchant gives advice is illustrated by a woodcut showing the different parts of the story. A merchant once came to emperor Domitianus, who was just in every aspect, with three wisdoms which he would sell for one thousand guilders per wisdom. The three wisdoms were: do what you do wisely and anticipate the outcome, never deviate from the general path for a specific path and lastly to never stay at an inn where the innkeeper is old and the hostess is young. The first wisdom was written down everywhere in the palace to be reminded of it every time he saw it.



Figure 8 "Wat ghi doet aensiet dat einde". Close-up of the woodcut belonging to story CXXX (103) 121r. See figure 9 for the entire woodcut.



Figure 9 Woodcut with story CXXX (103), *Van alle dinc by rade ende voersienicheyt te doen*, (121v-123v, there 121r).

¹³¹ Idem, 207r-208v.

¹³² Idem, 226r-227v.

¹³³ Idem, 226v.

This wisdom came very handy because there was a conspiracy to kill the emperor. The emperor's barber was ordered to murder him while shaving but the barber saw the wisdom and did not go through with the plan. He confessed everything to Domitianus. The conspirators came up with a second plan: kill the emperor on a secondary road. The king went to a city and one of the knights proposed to follow another road, which supposedly led to the city more directly. Domitianus did not do this and the knights on the secondary road were murdered. The city had just one inn and the emperor was forced to stay there. When he came there, he noticed an old innkeeper and his young wife. After this, he ordered his chamberlain to find other lodgings but some knight stayed in the inn and were murdered. The emperor remembered these wisdoms for the rest of his life and died blissfully. A major difference is that the philosophers or wise men are almost always asked to give advice and that the 'other advisors' are mostly active actors who give advice without being asked. This is understandable because a merchant or a queen's uncle might not really be seen as fountains of knowledge. Another aspect is that advice from 'others' are always quite specific and not vague as is the case with philosophers. This story must have been of special interest to the reader because this story features an entire page filled with a woodcut. To follow the story, one must begin in the left bottom square where the wisdoms are presented, then the square on the right hand side where we see the presentation of the first wisdom and the emperor in the barber chair. The other two wisdoms are both portrayed in the same scene; on the left we see the murdered knights on the secondary road, the unharmed emperor and on the right a knight who is being killed with an axe and again the unharmed emperor who leaves the inn.

We have only one instance where a member of the clergy gives advice, and this is not even to the ruler himself. Story CLXII (*Van te scuwen ende te moghen ontgaen den vloken*¹³⁴) is taken from the 13th-century *Otia Imperialia* (Imperial Leisure) written by Gervase of Tilbury. This work is part of the mirror-genre, dedicated to emperor Otto IV of the Holy Roman Empire (1175-1218). Because it was written for a ruler, it still means that this quality would still be important to a ruler and this story is therefore included in the selection. This story warns the reader to not curse because what you may wish for in a curse, could happen. In the instance of CLXII, a man curses his daughter to be taken by the Devil and this happens. Eventually he finds his daughter and he goes to the bishop of Verdun, who warns the man to not curse anymore because the Devil sometimes imprisons people. The bishop was asked for advice and did not actively provide it.¹³⁵ This story is unique because the entire premise is of a Christian nature, not just a Christian explanation. Story CLXIII (*Van die natuerlike goedertierenheyt ende barmharticheyt Ons Liefs Heren doer welc dat hi nader naturen den sondigen mensch die mit berou tot hem weder om comen minliken ontfanget barmhertich is ende graci doet*¹³⁶) is another retelling of an ancient story. This time it is the story of Coriolanus, a Roman hero who was banished from his own city. He besieged Rome with his new ally but after his mother pleaded him to stop, he stopped. Wise men, young men and women were sent to him but he would only listen to his own mother after which he returned to his former city and forgave everyone who had wronged him. The lesson to be learned from this is that a ruler might not always listen to his actual advisors but that he will eventually listen to someone; in this case to a familial relationship.

3.5 The ruler who does not listen

In the stories where the rulers are portrayed as evil or unwise, they do not directly dismiss any of their advisors but the role of 'advisor' is played by certain omens. In story XX (*Van die onghewallicheyt ende tribulaci*), emperor Conrad the Younger hears an omen that a baby, born in the forest would become his son-in-law and heir. He did not want this and ordered his guards to kill the baby and to bring back the heart. The guards had mercy and presented the emperor with a deer's heart. The boy, Heynric (Henry the Fowler), grew up to be a talented young man and the unknowing emperor ordered him to be brought up in court. The emperor began to think whether the boy might be worthy of taking

¹³⁴ Idem, 205v-207r.

¹³⁵ 'ende vraechde raets wat hi nu best hier mede doen soude.', Idem, 206v.

¹³⁶ Idem, 208v-209v.

over his empire and suspected him to be the boy he had ordered to be killed. He wrote a letter to his wife that he should be killed, sealed it with his seal and gave it to a courier who rested in a church. A priest opened the letter and read it. He scraped this from the letter and rewrote it to say that the wife should give the daughter in marriage to the boy. The empress recognized the seal and read the letter. The marriage took place in Aachen. The emperor heard this and because the marriage was solemnized, he took the young man to be his heir. This story is illustrated with a full-page woodcut (see figure 10).

In story XCVII (*Van die doot*¹³⁷), we read about emperor Julius, who received three signs in the last hundred days of his life. The first one was when lightning struck his statue, the second was a night before his death when all windows were opened with much clamour and the last, a letter he received just before the moment he walked to the Capitoline Hill. If he had taken these omens seriously, he would have lived. This was explained in the following manner: lightning hitting the statue is the fact that wealth often becomes less to make people closer to their 'natural' poorness. The second is that the body often becomes sick before death and the last is great pain and sorrow even closer to death. These signs should be heeded because one should be penitent before death to avoid eternal suffering. Unfortunately, actual human councillors do not play a role in the portrayal of the bad ruler. If this were the case, it could strengthen the point that a ruler should not just make any decision himself but that he should listen to several sources.

3.6 Analysis of the listening ruler.

"The taking of counsel, or consultation of the wise and virtuous, was subscribed to by practically all writers of all schools in later medieval and early Renaissance thought. In monarchical states, it meant that the king ought to take advice regularly from certain people; the same was said of the pope."¹³⁸

As we have seen in the selection of stories, the *Geesten of Geschiedenis van Romen* contains several stories where the ruler takes advice from several sources. These sources have been categorized in three categories: the philosopher/wise men, the philosopher as teacher and 'other' sources of knowledge. These first two sources are quite obvious and, the wise man as advisor to the ruler is an ancient idea, which is portrayed in the stories by the historical example of Alexander and Aristotle. An interesting note is that the advisors in *Die Geesten* were almost always 'experts', in contrast to the 'natural' feudal advisors.¹³⁹ This would certainly be more appealing to a late-medieval urban public, who would probably be more interested in a meritocratic council instead of a feudal one, especially in the Low Countries. This emphasis on learned advisors may be derived from the nature of the authors of the stories who probably were learned monks of one of the minor orders and they would therefore rather see the wise man as advisor to the ruler.¹⁴⁰

Why this quality is so important is to be explained from both top-down and bottom-up. The ruler is always greatly assisted by the advice of one of his advisors and the advisors have some form of democratic influence on the ruler. The ruler who does not listen would also not listen to the pious prelate and therefore not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The importance of good advisors is a major aspect which is often featured in the mirror-literature.¹⁴¹ They warn against bad advisors and too influential advisors who could abuse their power.¹⁴² We see this in story CLXXVIII where a 'prince' abuses his power and tries to eradicate the Jews. Another story where we see a bad advisor of a power-abusing confidant is a story which was selected for the category of the just king where the king's steward abuses his power and eventually loses this to Guido. The importance to the perceived reader is that a good ruler will be assisted by a council of wise men and/or philosophers but that he would listen

¹³⁷ Idem, 114r-155r.

¹³⁸ Black, *Political thought in Europe*, 156.

¹³⁹ Idem.

¹⁴⁰ Idem, 157.

¹⁴¹ Leupen, *Keizer in zijn eigen keizerrijk*, 44.

¹⁴² Idem.

to others with wise advice as well, just like the merchant who sold the three lifesaving wisdoms. This strengthens the 'democratic' aspect of co-operation between ruler and (learned) populace. Advice can be given proactively or the ruler can ask for advice. In the case where a philosopher plays the role of advisor, he is often asked by the ruler. In the case where the philosopher is featured as teacher or when another person gives advice, the active and passive roles of advisor are both presented.

3.7 Recapitulation of the listening ruler

A ruler cannot rule the realm on his own. He surrounds himself with wise men, nobles, clergymen and a jester or two. Of the total selection, 16 stories feature a ruler who listens to wise counsel. Of this number of rulers, not one listens to the 'noble' counsel. The most common form of councillor is the philosopher. This was often Socrates or Aristotle. In chapter 2, we have seen several instances where the more obvious councillor, the steward, plays a role. These stewards appear to be somewhat malicious and are replaced with the honest citizen. In this chapter, the wise man appears to be an 'expert' and there are even some non-traditional advisors. The perceived public of the *Gesta* might be more interested in a more bottom-up form of counsel than the traditional feudal structures. The *Gesta* must still not be seen as a political work but this perspective of the ruler who listens to the common man or 'expert' might be more interesting to a late-medieval urban public in the Low Countries.



Figure 10 Woodcut featuring story XX (*Van die onghewallicheyt ende tribulaci*) 33r.

Chapter 4: Minor qualities of the good and bad ruler

4.1 Minor qualities of benevolent kings

In *Die Geesten*, some thirty stories feature a minor quality of the benevolent ruler. These cannot be categorized in concrete qualities and therefore some of these will featured in this paragraph; these minor qualities are piety and self-sacrifice.

One minor quality, which did not include a substantial number of stories to be considered its own category is the piety of rulers. When we think about the overall volume, a dominant Christian message can be deduced. This is certainly clear when reading the foreword: 'Hier beghinnen ter eren Goods...'.¹⁴³

So the stories are for learning and salvation, regarding the virtues and sins, summarized to a spiritual meaning. In the chapters regarding law and advice, this moral/spiritual side does not play an extensive role, except in the explanations of course. Another quality which can be seen is self-sacrifice; the ruler sacrifices himself for the betterment of his people. These relate to two of the other aspects which Le Goff ascribed to the ideal medieval ruler: *le roi chrétien* and *le roi ministériel*.¹⁴⁴ The first aspect of the *roi chrétien* is most often found in the French tradition where the king is *très chrétien* or very Christian (*christianissimus* in Latin). This tradition dates back to the end of the fifth century when Clovis was baptized in the Nicene Creed and the title *Fils aîné de l'Église* (oldest son of the Church) was tied to the French monarch.¹⁴⁵ The ruler should be a good Christian and he should serve his people with *necessitas*, *utilitas* and *commoditas*.¹⁴⁶ This second aspect is tied to the role of the *roi ministériel*.

For actual, active piety we must look at story LIX (*Van die grote hovaerdie, ende hoe die hovaerdighe dicke comen tot grote oetmoedicheyt*¹⁴⁷) in which emperor Iovinianus redeems himself. The piety of Iovinianus stands out because of his actions in which he tries to redeem himself through confession. He once asked himself the question whether there was another God besides himself. Then he went out for a hunt but he had to take a bath because of the heat. An impersonator of the emperor dressed himself in Iovinianus' clothes and went away with Iovinianus' knights. The emperor went to multiple of his friends but they did not recognize him until he went to his confessor to whom he confessed his blasphemous transgression. The impostor was an angel and Iovinianus lived piously from then on.

Self-sacrifice is featured in XLI (*Van die victorie Ons Liefs Heren, ende van sine onsprekelijcke liefte*¹⁴⁸), where emperor Cosdras of Athens sacrifices himself because the oracle prophesized that the Dorians could only be conquered after his death. The Dorian ruler heard about this prophecy and forbid his soldiers to hurt emperor Cosdras. Cosdras then went to the enemy camp in disguise and was killed with a spear. The explanation tells us that emperor Cosdras is Christ, who let himself be killed to free the people. In story XLII, we read a retelling of the legend of the Lacus Curtius in Rome. Only when 'the greatest strength of the Roman people was shown', would the ravine on the Forum close.¹⁴⁹ In the *Geesten*-version of chapter XLIII (*Dat Christus die helle ghesloten hevet met sijn passie ende willighen doot*¹⁵⁰), we read that emperor Marcus Aurelius threw himself in the chasm and it closed after him. The explanation reads that the chasm was Hell, in which many fell before Christ sacrificed himself. There is one other story of self-sacrifice but the ruler here does not lose his life but only his lands. Story LII features a man named Fabius who wants to free imprisoned Roman citizens. The

¹⁴³ *Die Geesten*, 1r.

¹⁴⁴ J. Le Goff, 'Le Roi dans l'Occident médiéval', 1-40, there 3-4, 13.

¹⁴⁵ Hervé Pinoteau, *La symbolique royale française: Ve-XVIIIe siècles* (La Roche-Rigault 2004).

¹⁴⁶ Le Goff., *Le Roi dans l'Occident*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ *Die Geesten*, 67v-71r.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem*, 51r-51v.

¹⁴⁹ Several versions of this story are known but this version was written down by Livy. Titus Livius, *Ab urbe condita. Liber VII*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Die Geesten*, 52r.

senate does not give him any money so he sells his own lands to free the Romans. In the explanation is told that Fabius is of course Christ but he does not lose his lands but his life. These stories strengthen the christomimetic aspect of medieval kingship and their role in ensuring the good for the people. This servitude would strengthen both the position of the ruler and of the people. The ruler would derive legitimacy from being a *roi ministériel* and the people could demand accountability from the ruler for his degree of being dutiful.

There are several other stories which will not be featured here but which do convey certain good qualities but they are mostly good deeds. That piety in rulers is not as often featured must not be seen as a general theme in the *Gesta* because there are many stories in which a 'normal' person performs pious deeds or lives piously. In these stories, the emperor is often used as material for the stage: 'during [king/emperor's name] reign'. Here the emperor is explained as God, who has a kind of passive role and where Christ (a knight or other person) has the active role.

4.2 Minor tyrannical aspects

There are more bad qualities that a ruler could have to be considered bad, evil or tyrannical. In the stories, a distinction between these is not clear. One should stay cautious when wishing for another ruler. A ruler might be bad but one does not know whether a new ruler is better; he could even be worse than the last. This lesson can be derived from two different stories: LI and LIII. Both come from ancient sources: Iosephus' second part of the *Antiquitates Iudaicae* and Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem, Liber VI, 6,2.ext.2*. Story LI (*Van die onrechtvaerdige bescatters*¹⁵¹) is about Tiberius, who was asked why he did not replace certain lazy government officials. He responded that he once tried to swat away flies from a man but he told Tiberius not to because full flies were not as bad as new flies, which tried to drink fresh blood.¹⁵² A new official is much more likely to get as much from his position as possible, be it by abusing power or being inexperienced. In LIII, the populace of Sicily prays that the tyrant, Dionisius, might be removed from his position. An old woman actually prayed for the tyrant's health and he asked her why she did this. She responded that a comparable case presented itself during her youth but an even worse ruler took the place of the old one. The explanation tells us that God of the Old Testament was often cruel but when Christ appeared, he was a mild ruler and people should pray that there would be no other ruler than Christ. The lesson is that the populace should be very careful when wishing for a new ruler. A new ruler might be even worse than the old one.

The tyrant in story VI (*Van die redene nae te volghen*¹⁵³) deceives his wife. When they married, they promised each other that if one of them died, the other would take their own life. The tyrant wanted to test the loyalty of his wife and sent a letter describing that he died. She believed this and threw herself off a cliff but survived. She wanted to try it again but her father stopped her from doing this because God would be displeased because her plan would lead to death. The tyrant is the Devil who is bound together with the soul in sin. He tries to trick the soul because he himself fell from Heaven. The soul survived because of the Passion of Christ. The story itself does not teach us that much. The tyrant is called 'tyrant' without any other information except for the deception with which he tries to deceive his wife.

There are two stories in which the ruler in question kills an artist which he invited to court. The first is Tiberius in story XXVIII (45). He used to be sharp of mind, eloquent and lucky in battle. After this, he left behind the chivalrous arts and he tormented the Roman people. He killed his own children and many members of the Senate, he rejected the virtues and sobriety and he changed his name from Tiberius to Liberius. An artist once came to him who worked with glass. Liberius tested his proficiency and he flexed the glass on a wall and it did not break; the artist hammered it straight. He asked how he did this and the artist answered that only he could perform this art. Liberius ordered the

¹⁵¹ Idem, 57v-58r.

¹⁵² See: Edward Champlin, 'Tiberius the Wise', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 57:4 (2008) 408-425, there 415-417.

¹⁵³ *Die Geesten*, 6v-7r.

artist to be beheaded. The explanation is short: Tiberius is the hypocrite who comes to power and thereafter abandons virtue. The artist is the poor man who tries to please the rich but they are not interested in this. They often rob him or even kill him. Here we see an actual reason why the ruler is considered evil: he used to be virtuous but thereafter became evil to his own people.

Story XLVIII (49, *Van die rechtvaerdighe naevolghinghe ende loen der quaden*¹⁵⁴) features an ancient torture method called 'the brazen bull', a bull made out of metal in which a person could be imprisoned after which a fire was lit under it and the victim was cooked alive.¹⁵⁵ This could be considered a tyrannical abomination from the beginning but this in combination with the explanation gives some insight into the juridical aspects of this case. Dionisius describes a great artist called Perillus who made a beautiful metal ox with a window in the side for entrance. He presented the ox to the tyrant of Agrigento. The ox would be used to burn people alive and from the mouth the human cries would be converted into ox's mooing. The tyrant let the artist test the bull and he burned him alive in it. The explanation does not only call the actual tyrant evil but the artist is compared to an evil steward. The tyrant is those who rob and ruin the poor and innocent. A new or tyrannical law is compared to the bull, which tortures the populace. Our Lord often takes care that these horrible things happen to the evil rulers as well:

"Mer Onse Lieve Heer die verhenghedet dicke dat aldusdanighen wreede tyran of hoor hofmeesteren of stedehouders ende dienaren in die selve wreetheyt die si over den onnoselen pleghen ontfanghen, of mit wreder plaghen werden gheslagen den duvel haer vrient, die si hebben ghedient haer eynde op draghen."¹⁵⁶

Then there are two stories in which there is a bad ruler and a son. In story LXXII (*Hoe dat die ondancbaer kijnder sellen werden gheloont uutgherecht ende doersteken*¹⁵⁷), the son does not take care of his father, the king. In the other, CXXXVI, the ruler is cruel but his son still takes care for him. The first is about a king who raised his son softly and after some time, the son asks his father to rule, to which he consented if the son would take care of him. The son did not do this and the former king wrote to his advisors, after which the old king was reinstated. In CXXXVIII (*Vanden ghenen diemen dicwijl niet verwinnen en mach met wreetheyt of hardicheyt, ende nochtan wel verwonnen werden met goedertierenheyt ende medeliden*¹⁵⁸), the prince leaves his father for Persia because the father is cruel. They once met in battle and the son sided with his father and was received in grace. The lesson that can be derived from these stories is that loyalty is very important to the ruler, even if the ruler is cruel.

In the last of the selected stories, number CXXVII (*Van die iustici rechtvaerdicheyt ende ghelikicheyt des alre wijsten ende onderscheyenste rechtens Cristi, doer sijn heymelike oordelen*¹⁵⁹), the knight and tyrant is actually compared to a prelate, fighting for God. The tyrant cuts off the foot of his servant, who he thought lost thirty marks of silver. This was apparently a punishment for years ago, when the servant had kicked his mother.

¹⁵⁴ Idem, 56r-56v.

¹⁵⁵ The historical bull was made by Perillos for Phalaris, tyrant of Sicily. Diodorus Siculus wrote about it in *Bibliotheca historica*.

¹⁵⁶ *Die Geesten*, 56v.

¹⁵⁷ Idem, 86v-88r.

¹⁵⁸ Idem, 168r-168v.

¹⁵⁹ Idem, 157v-159r.

4.3 Recapitulation of the minor qualities

Not every story from the total selection can be placed in one of the three distinct categories. One would expect that a major aspect for a ruler is piety but this is only featured once as a virtue on its own. The second benevolent aspect that does not fit into one of the major categories is self-sacrifice. This virtue can be seen from Le Goff's *le roi chrétien* and *le roi ministériel*. Christian because self-sacrifice is a major christomimetic aspect and ministerial because the ruler should be able to take care of his subjects. A tyrant is almost always called a 'tiran' but he should not be replaced too quickly because the next ruler might be worse. He does not heed bad omens and is punished for this. These minor or singular aspects do sometimes appear in the *Gesta*, can be explained by the wide range of origins of the stories.

Conclusion

After describing and analysing the several aspects of rulership as portrayed in the story compilation *Die Geesten of geschiedenis van Romem*, concluding remarks can be made. Although the stories are not centred around the question what a good or bad ruler is, we have seen that this is still an important aspect in many stories. This is not that remarkable for a deeply Christian story book, written in 13th/14th-century Europe. This is partly because most stories are set in an ancient staging and often begin with 'In the time/realm of king/emperor...'. These rulers can be unnamed kings and emperors or popular rulers from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The main question that is central to this thesis is: 'how is good and bad rulership portrayed in the Middle Dutch translation of the *Gesta Romanorum* of 1481'.

From the 181 stories featured in *Die Geesten*, two distinct categories have been selected to analyse the main aspects of medieval rulership. Of this total number of stories, fifty-one stories have been selected that feature an active ruler. Of these fifty-one, thirty-seven are centred around a benevolent ruler who is either lawful or who listens to wise counsel (both in story CLXXVIII). The categories are: the role of the ruler in relation to law, the quality of a fair ruler to listen to advice. The malevolent ruler in the stories have been used as a mirror to reflect on their benevolent counterparts. To answer the main question, these two categories have been analysed to form a portrait of the main qualities that a good and bad ruler possesses according to this medieval story book. One should keep in mind that this story compilation was already several centuries old when this print was published. It probably originated in the monasterial milieu, so the big question in earlier historiography is whether it was written as an aid for preaching or for personal meditation. Whatever the original intended use was, the stories became massively popular in the late middle ages and were translated in several vernaculars. Leeu had several contacts in Gouda's clerical milieu and might have approached one of these institutions to commission a vernacular translation. The Latin version had been amassing popularity since the 70's of the 15th century and Leeu saw a potential market in this book. Only a year after publishing the Latin version, he put a vernacular version on the market, illustrated with woodcuts. With this, he broadened the potential buyer market to include people not versed in Latin..



Figure 11 The total number of stories and the selections per category.

The most important aspect of the good ruler is his judicial role. After the 35 stories with minor, unspecified qualities, being a fair judge, with 21 stories, is the category with the most stories. He is both the highest ruler and lawmaker, which remained a point of debate: is the ruler bound to the law or is he above it to be able to make new ones? In *Die Geesten*, we see that the ruler is often a lawmaker but that he still is law-abiding. The just ruler makes fair laws and he leads by example. As highest judge, the ruler stands above regular judges and people often value the ruler's judgement higher. The

ruler is therefore also allowed to judge judges, as seen in XXIX where the unjust judge is skinned alive by the order of the king.

A major quality in Christianity is mercy and this quality is valued in judgement as well. This quality is featured in three stories. This is not a great number on a total of 37 stories but it can still be seen as a motif. The opposite is featured in three stories as well and this shows that mercy is not always given, even when this may be deserved. This shows that law still was not seen as a static institution but that law was to be interpreted according to every individual case. Then again, we must not see these fictional, moralized stories as actual lawsuits from which we can learn how medieval judicial procedures worked. We can learn which things in lawsuits were perceived by a larger public than actual professionals. If these stories were used for preaching or meditation, we must focus on divine justice and then we arrive at the Final Judgement. The judge and judged is almost always God/Christ and a good Christian or sinner who is judged for either a good or bad life. But still, both these judgements (actual worldly and the eschatological) were extremely present in the life of one of the readers of this story book: relatively literate urbanites with money for big illustrated tomes.

The following quality of the good ruler is that he should take advice from others. This emphasis demonstrates the preference of the assumed clerical writers and of the intended public for a meritocratic element, which could assist the ruler instead of the traditional feudal counsellors. The traditional feudal advisor does not actually feature in any of the stories and this aspect would certainly be noticed by readers. The only type of feudal councillor is the steward, who is often judged by the ruler for not doing his job correctly. These advisors were most often called 'philosophers'. This might be because of the ancient staging of these stories but it could certainly be related to the ideal view of the 'philosopher king' or at least a ruler advised by philosophers. This advisor or philosopher is not only a giver of advice but he is also a teacher, both to the ruler or to princes. One might expect more clerical advisors but this only happens in one story. This is certainly because of the 'fact' that these stories were 'seer notabile historien ghetoghen uutten gestalten ofte croniken der Romeynen'¹⁶⁰ so these histories did not really include that many bishops. The explanations did associate some of these wise men to the prelates so this strengthens the relationship between clerical advice and the good Christian or even ruler himself.

The major aspects of the ruler are quite easily categorized but this is not the case for the rest of the stories where an active, benevolent ruler plays a part. This is a result from the countless sources of the stories. Other benevolent aspects are self-sacrifice, which is perfect for the christomimetic quality and the eschatological role of Christ. Other qualities are le Goff's *le roi chrétien* and *le roi ministériel*. The ruler is pious (or becomes pious) and does several good deeds which are not further explained or analysed.

The bad ruler is can be seen more as an antagonist for the protagonist to be defeated or to be the stage for a lesson. A ruler might be evil but a new ruler could even be worse. The lesson which could be derived from this is that civil obedience is quite a virtue and that one must not be too quick to rebel. In a greater context, when regarding the clerical authors, is that rulers and even tyrants are put in place for a reason and to be careful when considering tyrannicide. If these stories about tyrants were seen as a whole, a political message for the time of publishing would be one of civil obedience and hesitancy of rebellion

Of the selected eighty-six stories with active rulers, thirty-seven are about a good ruler and fourteen are about a bad one. The two categories of ruler (law-abiding and listener) are divided in sub-sections. More than twenty stories feature a lawful ruler and this category will therefore be the most important of the categories.

In conclusion, the *Gesta Romanorum* and in extension the Middle Dutch translation of 1481 remained an immensely popular story book from the time of writing/collecting all the way up to the sixteenth century. Hereafter, it was still considered popular but very much less so than the ages

¹⁶⁰ *Die Geesten*, 1r.

before.¹⁶¹ Although the book is not a political work because the main usage (although still not entirely clear) would have been either preaching or meditation, the stories featuring an active ruler are a major part (almost a third). A clear portrayal can be constructed of certain qualities which were expected from a benevolent ruler and which qualities indicate a malevolent ruler. The sources for these rulers were a multitude: from ancient Persian tales to stories from Antiquity and from medieval German folk tales to legends of saints. To pinpoint the exact origin of the 'original' *Gesta* is therefore a Herculean task to indicate but this could be interesting research for the future. Classen has already indicated that the interest in this book is rising again and this is a good sign for this medieval bestseller.¹⁶² The hope is that this thesis could make a small contribution to the greater historiography and the importance of literary sources in our understanding of the medieval mind.

"Et sic est finis"¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Classen, 'The Gesta Romanorum: A Sammelbecken', 76.

¹⁶² *Idem*, 77.

¹⁶³ *Die Geesten*, 241v.

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Appendix I: The different incipits from four Latin versions of the *Gesta Romanorum*.

Veldener (Cologne 1472) (Fig. 1)

Incipiunt hystorie notabiles collecte ex gestis Romanorum et quibusdam allis libris cum applicacionibus eorundem.

Pompeius regnavit dives valde et potens qui filiam unicam **pulcherrimam** habebat quam tenerrime diligebat, et pro eius custodia quinque milites ei assignavit ut contra omne periculum sub pena gravi eam custodirent.

Zell (Cologne 1473) (Fig. 2)

Ex gestis romanorum hystorie notabiles: de vitiis virtutibusque tractantes, cum applicacionibus moralizatis et misticis: Incipiunt feliciter.

De dilectione,

Pompeius regnavit dives valde et potens qui filiam unicam **pulcram** habebat quam tenerrime diligebat, itaque per eius custodia quinque milites ei assignavit ut contra omne periculum sub pena gravi eam custodirent.

Ketelaer and De Leempt (Utrecht 1474) (Fig. 3)

Incipiunt hystorie notabiles atque magis principales collecte ex gestis Romanorum et quibusdam aliis notabilibus gestis cum moralizacionibus eorundem.

Pompeius regnavit dives valde et potens qui filiam unicam **pulcherrimam** habebat quam ita tenerrime diligebat, et pro eius custodia quinque milites ei assignavit ut contra omne periculum sub pena gravi eam custodirent.

Leeu (Gouda 1480) (Fig. 4)

Ex gestis Romanorum hystorie notabiles, de viciis virtutibusque tractantes, cum applicacionibus moralizatis et misticis. Incipiunt feliciter,

De dilectione, Ca. I.

Pompeius regnavit dives valde et potens qui filiam unicam **pulcram** habebat quam tenerrime diligebat, itaque per custodia quinque milites ei assignavit ut contram omne periculum sub pena gravi eam custodirent.

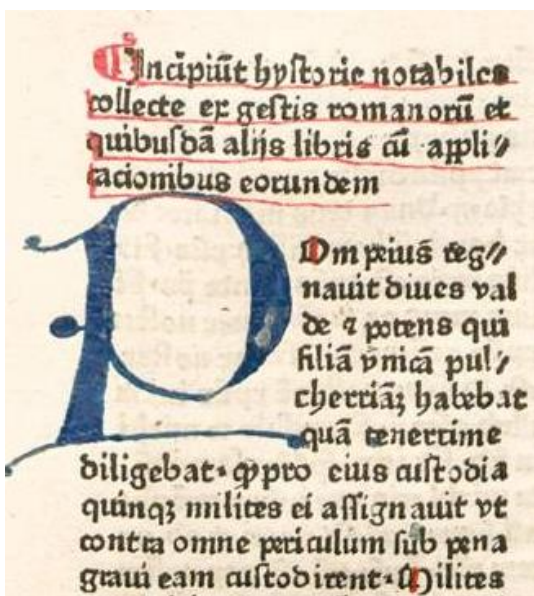


Figure 12 Incipit Veldener, 1472.



Figure 13 Incipit Zell, 1473.



Figure 14 Incipit Ketelaer en De Leempt, 1474.



Figure 15 Incipit Leeu, 1480.

Appendix II: Table comparing the Latin (1480) and Middle Dutch (1481) titles of the *Gesta Romanorum*-chapters printed by Leeu.

Chapter	Middle Dutch Title	Latin Title	Notes	End rhyme present?
I	Vander liefst	De dilectione		
II	Van die barmharticheyt	De misericordia		
III	Van dat rechtvaerdich oordel	Justum iudicium		
IIII	Van die iusticie der rechteren	De iusticia iudicantium		
V	Van die trouwicheyt nae te volgen	De sectanda fidelitate		
VI	Van die redene nae te volghen	De secunda racone		
VII	Van die haticheyt der quaden teghens die goeden	De invidia malorum adversum bonos		
VIII	Van die ydel glori	De vana gloria		
IX	Van die natuerlicke boesheyt die men boven sel gaen of verwinnen met saftmoedicheyt	De naturali malicia per mansuetudinem superanda		
X	Van die onghetrouwinghe des kersten siels	De desponsatione fidelis animi		
XI	Van dat venijn des sondes daer wy daghelicx met ghevoet worden	De veneno peccati quo cotidie nutrimur		
XII	<i>No title</i>	<i>No title</i>		
XIII	Van die ongeordineerde ende onrustighe liefst	De amore inordinato		
XIIII	Van die ouders te eren	De honorandis parentibus		
XV	Van sinte alexius leve, eufemiaens soen, die die principaelste was in des keyzers hof van romen	De vita sancti alexii, filii eufemiani in aula imperatoris primi		
XVI	Van dat exemplaerlijke leven	De vita exemplari		
XVII	Van die volmaectheyt des levens	De perfectione vite	Same title as LVII	
XVIII	Al ist soe dat alle sonden sijn alre swaerste, wantse teghen god die ewich is gheschyen, ende daer om ewighe pijn daer toe behoert, nochtan soe sijn si og doenlick, ende remissi quijtsceldinghe daer van te vercrighen, alsoe verre als die sondighe mensche	Quod omne peccatum quamvis predestinatorie gravissimum nisi desperationis baratro subiaceat sit remissibile		

	niet ghevallen en is in dye helsche verslindelike mont des mistroesticheys			
XIX	<i>No title</i>	<i>No title nor chapter number</i>	Dutch version gives as chapter XX to this story and the next.	
XX	Van die onghewallicheyt ende tribulaci	De miseria et tribulacione		
XXI	Van droch ende conspiraci, ende subtilijcke voersieninghe tegen verraet	De dolo & conspiracione et cautela ipsis contraria		
XXIII	Van die wereltlike vrese	Timor mundanus		
XXIII	Van die gheestelike medicijn	De spirituali medicina		
XXIII	Van die inghevinghe ende temptaci des duvels doer tijtlijck goet	De suggestione dyaboli per temporalia		
XXV	Van die ondancckaerheit ende verghetelheit der godliker gaven	De beneficiorum oblivione et in gratitudine		
XXVI	Van die oetmoedicheyt	De humilitate		Yes
XXVII	Van die rechtvaardighe remuneraci of loninghe	De iusta remuneracione		Yes
XXVIII	Van die duvelsche scalcheyt, ende vermaledide bedroch der ouder wyven	De inexecrabili dolo vetularum		Yes
XXIX	Vanden quaden rechteren een merkelic stuck	Notabile de iudicibus malis		Yes
XXX	Van die sonde ende dat oordel	De peccato & iudicio		
XXXI	Van die strenginghe ende vervaerlicke scarpicheyt des doots	De rigore mortis		
XXXII	Van die goede invallinghe	De inspiracione bona		
XXXIII	Van die verwerpenheit of vermetenheit	De iactancia		
XXXIII	Van die weghinghe des levens	De ponderacione vite		
XXXV	Van die vrede ende soen te maken ende vestighen, ende van die wraeke der vredebrekers	De pacis reformatione & vindicta eam dissipantium		
XXXVI	Vanden loop des mensch in desen tijtliken leven	De cursu vite hominis		
XXXVII	Van opneyghinghe onser herten tot den hemel	De mentis in celum erectione		
XXXVIII	Van die subtijlheit, die sonden of te doen	De cautela delendi peccata		
XXXIX	Van die reconsiliaci, paysmakinghe tusschen god, ende die mensch	De reconciliacione dei & hominis		

XL	Van die maniere ende ondersoekinghe des temptacijs	De modo temptationis et eius pericia		
XLI	Van die victorie ons liefs heren, ende van sine onsprekelijcke liefde	De victoria christi et caritate eius nimia		
XLII	Van die ghebreke der lieften	De defectu caritatis		
XLIII	Dat christus die helle ghesloten hevet met sijn passie ende willighen doot	Quod christus clausit infernum sua passione & voluntaria morte		
XLIII	Van die haticheyte	De invidia	XXIII in M.D. version.	
XLV	Hoe dat die goede alleen sullen gaen oft comen in dat ewighe leve	Quod solum boni intrabunt regnum celorum		
XLVI	Van die seven dootlike sonden	De VII peccatis mortalibus		
XLVII	Vanden drye coninghen	De tribus regibus		
XLVIII	Van die rechtvaerdighe naevolghinghe ende loen der quaden	De iusta sequela malorum		
XLIX	Van die subtile verscalckinghe ende bedrog des duvels	De subtili dyaboli illusionem		
L	Van prijs ende lof der rechtvaerdighe oerdelaren ende rechteren	De laude recte iudicantium		
LI	Van die onrechtvaerdige bescatters	De iniustis exactoribus		
LII	Van die trouwicheyt	De fidelitate		
LIII	Vanden goeden regeerrers officiers niet te verwandelen	De bonis rectoribus non mutandis		
LIII	Van dat rijck der hemelen	De regno caelesti		
LV	Van wederom roepinghe des sondighen siels, die daer gheseynt ende geset wert int eylant des voldoeninghe van penitencien	De revocatione peccatricis anime in exilium satisfactionis misse		
LVI	Van die memorie ende ghehogenis des doots	De memoria mortis		
LVII	Van volmaetheyt des levens	De perfectione vite	Same title as XVII	
LVIII	Van biecht	De confessione		
LIX	Van die grote hovaerdie, ende hoe die hovaerdighe dicke comen tot grote oetmoedicheyt	De superbia nimia et quomodo superbi ad humilitatem maximam sepe perveniunt satis notabile		

LX	Van die ghyericheyt ende haer subtile poghinghe ende naersticheyt	De avaricia et eius subtili conamine		
LXI	Van die voersorghe of voerdenckinghe ende voersienicheyt altijt te hebben	De premeditatione semper habenda		
LXII	Van die scoenheyt des ghelovigen siels	De pulchritudine fidelis anime		
LXIII	Van die wereltlijcke schoenheyt	De mundanorum oblectacionibus		
LXIII	Van die godlijcke ontfanghinghe des menschelijke natuers	De dominica incarnatione		
LXV	Van die last of sorghe des siels	De cura animi		
LXVI	Van die volstandicheyt	De constantia		
LCVII	Van datmen int uterste gheen onscult en sal hebben of moghen maken	De excusacione in extremis non habenda		
LXVIII	Van die warachticheyt ter doot toe niet te swijgen	De non subticenda veritate usque ad mortem		
LXIX	Van die reynicheyt	De castitate		
LXX	Van die invallende beroringhe des ghelovighen siels	De conpunctione fidelis anime		
LXXI	Van loninghe des ewighen levens	De remuneracione eterne patrie		
LXXII	Hoe dat die ondancbaer kijnder sellen werden gheloont uutgherecht ende doersteken	De ingratorum trucidacione		
LXXIII	Hoe dat die ghyericheyt veel menschen blijnt maket	De avaricia quod multos execat		
LXXIII	Van die voersienicheyt	De prospectione & providentia		
LXXV	Van die sorghe ende last des werels niet te willen volghen of annemen	De cura mundi non sectanda		
LXXVI	Van eendrachticheyt	De concordia		
LXXVII	Van datmen die rijcdom niet liefhebben en sal noch dat herte daer op stellen	Quod ad divitias non est anhelandum		
LXXVIII	Van die volstandicheyt des onderlinge mins ende liefts	De constantia amoris mutui		
LXXIX	Datmen niet en weet en salmen niet dorren vermoeden	Quod quis nescit presumere non audebit		
LXXX	Van die boesheyt ende loesheyt des duvels, ende hoe dat die oerdelen goods ons onbekent	De versucia dyaboli. Et quod iudicia dei sunt occulta	In title heading "cum expositione inclusa". In	

	heymelijck ende onbegripelic sijn met die exposicie ende verclaringhe daer in begrepen		Dutch version: "met die exposicie ende verclaringhe daer in begrepen". No separate moral lesson. End rhyme included in story itself.	
LXXXI	Van die godlike wonderlike dispensaci ende gheboerte des heylighen paeus sinte gregorius	De mirabili divina dispensacione & ortu gregorii pape		
LXXXII	Van dat oerdel des overspeelres	De iudicio adulterancium		
LXXXIII	Van die vol ende seer vreselijcke bewaringe des siels	De timorosa custodia anime		
LXXXIII	Van die gaven goods altijd in hoghenisse te hebben	De beneficiis dei semper memorandis		
LXXXV	Dat hier nae bescreven staet, mach verdriven groot quaet, het is hoe die oracie, is voer god een melodie	Quod oracio nostra melodya est coram deo		
LXXXVI	Van dat onse lieve heer barmhertelick te ghemoet comt den ghenen die sijn graci eyschen ende begheren	Quod peccatoribus divinam gratiam exposcentibus dominus misericorditer condescendit		
LXXXVII	Hoe cristus hem selven voer ons hevet gheset ende ghegheven ter doot	Quod christus se pro nobis morti exposuit		
LXXXVIII	Van die bangicheyt loesheyt subtijheyt des duvels daer hi veel menschen met leyt ter verdoemenisse	De cautela dyaboli que multos ad interitum subducit		
LXXXIX	Van die staten des werelts	De triplici statu mundi		
XC	Vanden vryen wil	De libertate arbitrii		
XCI	Van losicheyt ofte traecheyt	De accidia et pigricia		
XCII	Cristus heft ghecoren te sterven om ons dat leven te verwerven	Christus elegit mori propter vitam nostram		
XCIII	Van dat erf ende bliscap des ghelovighe siels	De hereditate & gaudio fidelis animi		
XCIII	Hoe dat die schone siel overmits sonden lelic ende vuyl ghemaect wort ende hair eerste scoenheyt niet wederom crigen en can noch en mach dan doer grote screyinghe ende hartelike versuchtinghe	Quod anima pulchra per peccati lepram infecta, pristinam pulchritudinem habere non potest nisi per altos gemitus et profunda suspiria		
XCV	Hoe ons cristus wederom ghegeven ende verworven heeft dat erve van hier boven ons vaders lant	Quod Christus restituit nobis hereditatem superne patrie		

XCVI	Hoe dit teghenwoerdighe leven is een tijt des quijt scelding ende gracelike remissi	Quod vita presens est vita remissionis et gratie		
XCVII	Van die doot	De morte	Wrongly Chapter XCVI in Latin version	
XCVIII	Hoe dat god in dit leven tevreden geschyct mach werden	Quod deus in hac vita placari potest		
XCIX	Van die vrome craftinghe manlike strijt cristi ons heren, ende van sijn victori	De virili pugna Christi et eius victoria		
C	Hoe dat onse lieve heer cristus ihesus den sondighen mensche niet en slaet doer de rechtvaerdicheyt, mer om dat hi hem beteren soude verbeyt overmits sijn barmharticheyt	Quod christus non statim peccatorem per iusticiam precipitat sed misericorditer eum penitentem expectat		
CI	Dat die werlt is vol bangichheyt, ende in boesheyt gestelt	Quod mundus in maligno profitus est & undique angustie		
CII	Van die overtredinghe des siels ende van sijn wonden	De transgressionibus anime et vulneribus eius		
CIII	Van alle dinc by rade ende voersienicheyt te doen	De omnibus rebus com consensu & providencia semper agendis		
CIIII	Van ghehoeghenisse der goeder ghiften	De beneficiorum memoria		
CV	Vander wederom looninghe een yghelyc goets ende sonderlinghe der rechteren die rechtvaerdelick oordelen	De vicissitudine cuiuslibet boni & presertim recte iudicancium		
CVI	Van datmen waken moet teghen dat bedroch ende stricken des duvels op dat hi ons niet en verscalke ofte bedriecht	Quod est vigilandum contra fraudes dyaboli ne nos decipiat		
CVII	Van die ghehogheniss des doots ende gheen ghenoecht te hebben in tijtlijcken dinghen	De memoria mortis & non delectando in temporalibus		
CVIII	Van die trouwelike volstandichheyt des beloftenisse	De promissionis fideli constancia		
CIX	So wie die duvel rijc maect doer ghyericheyt, die verscalket hi ten lesten eynde ende sleept ter hellen	Quos ditat dyabolus per avariciam in fine decipit ad gehennam		
CX	Van die wonderlike wederomropinghe der gheenre die dwalen ende die goedertieren troestinghe der bedructer	De errantium mirabili revocatione & afflictorum pia consolacione		

CXI	Van die bewaringhe ende voersienicheyt te hebben met hondert ogen over dat een yghelijc in officie bevolen wert	De custodia & circumspectione habenda ad gregem comissum		
CXII	Van die cuereringhe ende ghesontmakinghe der sielen doer medicijn des oppersten hemelschen meesters, doer welc sommige nochtan ist een meester ende een medicijn ghereynicht ende ghesont ghemaket werden, ende sommige niet	De curacione anime per medicinam super celestis medici, qua quidam curanter & quidam non		
CXIII	Van die gheestelike strijt, ende van tloen datmen hebben sal voer die victorie ende winninge	De spirituali pugna & remuneracione pro victoria		
CXIII	Van die verlossinghe des menshelike geslaches uter hellscher put	De liberacione humani generis a fovea infernali		
CXV	Van die doot ons liefs heren ihesu cristi om ons te versoenen teghen sinen hemelschen vader	De morte christi pro nostra reconciliacione		
CXVI	Van die liefde goods hoe dat hy allegader even lief heeft ter tijt toe dat wi hem overmits die sonde versmaden	De dilectione dei quomodo omnes nos equaliter diligit, usque dum ipsum per peccata nostra despiciamus		
CXVII	Van die verharde bose menschen die hen niet beteren en willen, ende van hoer plaech overmits die uterste sentencie	De obstinatis ac converti non volentibus & eorum plaga per diffinitiam sententiam		
CXVIII	Van bedroch ende verscalkinghe	De fallacia et dolo		
CXIX	Hoe dat vanden gaven goods nyemant van alden creaturen ondancberre en is dan alleen die mensche	Quod omnium viventium in mundo de beneficiis acceptis et ingratus homo		
CXX	<i>No title</i>	<i>No title</i>		
CXXI	Van die glorie des werelts ende van die wellusticheyt of oncuysheyt die veel menschen verscalct ende brenget totter verdoemeniss	De gloria mundi & luxuria que multos decipit & ad interitum deducit		
CXXII	Van die wyven dat overspeelsters sijn, ende van die blijntheyt sommigher prelaten	De adulteris mulieribus. Et excecacione quorumqdam prelatorum		
CXXIII	Hoe dat men den ionghen maechden doer ontsich leer ende toesien der ouderen sal bedwingen vanden wellusticheyt des vleesch van dansen ende te spelen metten luchtighen ghesellen, ende den toom niet te lanc geven	Quod iuveneule per parentes sunt a luxuriosis coercente & voluntati proprie non relinquende		

CXXIII	Datmen den wyven niet gheloven en sal, noch heymelijke dinghen te kennen gheven, want als si toernich sijn soe en moghen si niet swyghen	Quod mulieribus non et credendum neque archana committendum, quoniam tempore iracundie non celant		
CXXV	Die vrouwen en clappen niet alleen dat heymelich hen is gheseyt, mer oeck so segghen si daer meer toe, met loghentael sonder verbeyt	Mulieries non solum pandunt secreta sed ad hoc mentiuntur plura		
CXXVI	Datmen den wyven in ghenen stucken gheloven en sal, ende sonderlinghe om yet heymelicx te houden. Ende dit is een boertich exempel	Quod mulieribus in nullo est credendum & presertim de secretis celandis exemplum iocundissimum	A "funny" example.	
CXXVII	Van die iustici rechtvaerdicheyt ende ghelikicheyt des alre wijsten ende onderscheyenste rechters cristi, doer sijn heymelike oordelen	De iusticia & equitate disertissimi iudicis christi per occulta iudicia		
CXXVIII	Wat grote vervaerlijcker ondersoekinghe dat geschyen sal ende scerpelijke verwittinge over den genen die hier onrechtvaerdelic gheweldelic besitten ende houden eens anders goet, dat hem niet toe en hoert	De iniuste aliena bona occupantibus gravis erit in extremis disceptacio		
CXXIX	Van die beproevinghe des warachtige vrientscaps	De amicitie vere probacione	CXXXIX in Middle Dutch version.	
CXXX	Dat die wyse man meer mach doen met subtylheyte, dan een starck man met cracht	Quod vir sapiens plus valet viro forti	CXXXV in Middle Dutch version.	
CXXXI	Vanden rijcken die ghegheven wert ende vanden armen die dat selve dat si hebben ontnomen wert, hoe dat god hem ewelic loont met hemelsche lant	De divitibus quibus datur & pauperibus quibus id quod habent abstrahitur, quomodo deus eternaliter eos remunerat per celestem patriam		
CXXXII	Vanden wangustighen hatigen nydighen menschen die den goeden niet liden en mogen ende soeken te verderven om dat si quaet sijn van leven	De invidis qui bonos per malam vitam inficiunt		
CXXXIII	Van die gheestelijcke vrientscap	De spiritali amicitia		
CXXXIII	Vanden onnoselen door ons liefs heren ihesu cristi	De innocenti morte christi		
CXXXV	Wanneer ons consciencie is wroghende nau niet wel te vreden, soe sellen wy toeloop tot god hebben, met biecht penitencie ende goede wercken	De consciencia nostra dum angustiatur ad deum per confessione & opera meritoria recrucamus		

CXXXVI	Hoe dat een pastoer een siel bewaere sal ende behoort te waken	Quod vigilare debet pastor animarum		
CXXXVII	Vanden ghenen diemen dicwijl niet verwinnen en mach met wreechtheyt of hardicheyt, ende nochtan wel verwonnen werden met goedertierenheyt ende medeliden	De illis quos austeritate vincere non possumus benignitate superemus	Is Chapter 138 in Latin and Middle Dutch version.	
CXXXVIII	Van die wonden ende quetsueren der sielen	De vulneribus anime	Chp. 139	
CXXXIX	Van die rechtvaardicheyt ende middelicheyt goods, die niet en wert geneycht met enighen wint an die een side of an die ander, in dit tegenwoerdighe leven, dat wi vinden ende bekennen sullen in dat ander leven	De iustitia & equitate in vita presenti & futura seper inveniendis	Chp. 140	
CXL	Datmen den goeden salighen raet altijd sal ghehoer gheven, ende quaden raet versmaden ende verwerpen	De sano consilio semper audiendo & contrario abijciendo	Chp. 141	
CXLI	Van die stricken des duvels dair hy ons in te vanghen naestelijc arbeyt nacht ende dach	De dyabloli laqueis quibus nos circumvenire satagit	Chp. 142	
CXLII	Van die vrese des utersten oordels	De timore extremi iudicii	Chp. 143. No separate moral lesson.	
CXLIII	Van dese wereltlijcke staet des werelts	De statu mundi actuali	Missing chapter number in Lat. version. Chap.144 in Middle Dutch version.	
CXLIII	Van dye wech des salicheyts dye god die vader doer sinen ghebenediden soen ons op gedaen heeft	De via salutis quam dominus deus per filium suum aperuit	Chp. CXLV in Latin and Middle Dutch version.	
CXLV	Hoe datmen den princen ende ander groten heren stoutelic sal berispen van horen quaden werken	De principibus & aliis magnatibus fortiter arguendis pro eorum forefactis	Chp. CXLVI	
CXLVI	Van den venijn der sonden daer die ziel mede vergeven wart	De peccati veneno quod animam intoxicat	Chp. CXLVII	
CXLVII	Hoe die sonde hier of elwaerts sekerlic ghepinicht sal warden	Quod peccatum hoc vel alibi certissime punietur	Chp. CXLVIII	
CXLVIII	Hoe veel quaets dat ydel glorie volghet na dat	De vana gloria quam multa mala sequuntur	Chp. CXLIX	
CXLIX	Van dou des hemelsche graci	De rose celestis gratie	Chp. CL	
CL	Hoe dat die siel die besmet is mit die lasarie des sondes gereynicht mach warden	De anima peccatrice per peccati lepram infectam quomodo curabatur	Chp. CLI	

CLI	Dat ons cristus van die ewige pijn ende van die belegginge des duvels verlost heeft	Quod christus ab eternis piculis & demonum obsidionibus nos liberavit	Chaper number correct in Latin version. Chap. CLII in Middle Dutch.	
CLII	Vandie tijtlike trijbulaci ende weder spoet dye ten utersten verwandelt sal warden in ewighen blijscap	De tribulacione temporali que in gaudium sempiternum postremo commutatur	Chp. CLIII in both versions. No moralizing explanation. History of Apollonius of Tyre (see Introduction and footnote 37).	
CLIII	Vanden hemelschen lande	De celesti patria	Chp. CLIII	
CLIIII	Van die manier des vechtinghe in die passie ons liefs heren ihesu cristi teghen den duvel	De modo pugne in passione christi contra dyabolum	Chp. CLV	
CLV	Van die sake dat troeyen ghedestruert wert	De causa subversionis Troye	Chp. CLVI	
CLVI	Van die pinen der sondigher menschen die nu hier niet en voldoen voer haer sonden	De pena peccatorum non satisfacientum in presenti pro delictis	Chp. CLVII	
CLVII	Van die ewicheyts des siels	De perpetuitate anime	Chp. CLVIII	
CLVIII	Van die vindinghe der wijngaerden	De inventione vinearum	Chp. CLIX	
CLVIX	Van die oftreckinghe des duvels dat wi gheen goet doen en souden	De retractione dyaboli ne bonum operemur	Chp. CLX	
CLX	Hoe datmen god altijd dancken ende loven sal van sinen gaven	De deo pro suis beneficiis semper regraciando	Chp. CLXI	
CLXI	Van te scuwen ende te moghen ontgaen den vloken	De cavendis imprecacionibus	Chp. CLXII. No separate heading for moral lesson.	
CLXII	Van die ongheordineerde vrese	De timore inordinato	Chp. CLXIII	
CLXIII	Van die natuerlike goedertierenheyt ende barmharticheyt ons liefs heren doer welc dat hi nader naturen den sondigen mensch die mit berou tot hem weder om comen minliken ontfanget bermhertich is ende graci doet	De naturali benignitate christi & misericordia quibus naturaliter peccatoribus convertentibus miseretur. Et quod christus recipit quos mundus eicit	'Capitulum', no number. Chap. CLXIII in Dutch version.	
CLXIIII	Van die verkeertheit des werlts	De perversitate mundi	Correct number in Latin version. Chap. CLXV in Dutch version.	
CLXV	Item een ander gest vandy verkeertheit des werlts	Item de mundi perversitate	Chap. CLXVI in Dutch. No separate moral lesson.	

CLXVI	Van dat scaeck spel	De ludo schacorum	Chp. CLXVII. No separate moral lesson.	
CLXVII	Van goeden raet te horen	De audiendo bono consilio	Chp. CLXVIII	
CLXVIII	Van die ewighe verdoemenisse	De eterna damnacione	Chp. CLXIX	
CLXIX	Van twalef wetten, ende van die manier te leven	De duodecim legibus & modo vivendi	Chp. CLXX	
CLXX	Van die wederom roepinghe des sondighen mensch tot penitencien	De revocatione peccatoris ad viam penitentie	Chp. CLXXI	
CLXXI	Van die liefde ende zeer grote betrouwinghe, ende hoe dat die warachtichheit verlosset vander doot	De dilectione et fidelitate nimia & quod veritas a morte liberat	Chp. CLXXII	
CLXXII	Van die volstandicheyt des ghelovighen siels	De constancia fidelis anime	Chp. CLXXIII	
CLXXIII	Van die lasten ende swaerten des werelts, ende van die bliscappen des hemels	De sarcinis et gravaminibus mundi & gaudiis celi	Chp. CLXXIII. A dialogue between a philosopher and his student.	
CLXXIII	Dat die natuere gheeft en mach nyemant of nemen. ende van die peyn ban of plaech des ondanchbaerheysts	Quod natura docet nemo tollere potest. Et de talione ingratitude	Chp. CLXXV	
CLXXV	Van die vreemde, veelrehande, wonderlicheden des werelt metter exposicien ende verclaringhe	De diversitate et mirabilibus mundi cum expositione	"With explanation" (similar to chapter LXXX). Chp. CLXXVI	
CLXXVI	Van die gheestelijcke medicijn	De medicina spiritali	Chp. CLXXVII	
CLXXVII	Van die vervolginghe ende persecuci	De persecucione	Chp. CLXXVIII	
CLXXVIII	Van die voersienicheyt, dat een moeder is van alle rijcdom	De omnium divitiarum matre providentia	Chp. CLXXIX	
CLXXIX	Van gulsicheyt ende dronckenscap	De gula & ebrietate	Chp. LXXIX. No separate moral lesson.	
CLXXX	Van die trouwicheyt	De fidelitate	Chp. LXXXI	
CLXXXI	Vanden overspel	De adulterio	Chp. CLXXXII	
	Chapter register.	Chapter register and index of themes in alphabetical order.		

