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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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# FRENCH CROSSINGS: II. LAUGHING OVER BOUNDARIES

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ABSTRACT. Under the generic title, 'French Crossings', this Presidential Address explores the history of laughter in French society, and humour's potential for trangressing boundaries. It focuses on the irreverent and almost entirely unknown book of comic drawings entitled *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (Book of Caricatures, both Good and Bad), that was composed between the 1740s and the mid-1770s by the luxury Parisian embroiderer and designer, Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, and his friends and family. The bawdy laughter that the book seems intended to provoke gave it its nickname of the *Livre de culs* (Book of Arses). Yet despite the scatological character of many of the drawings, the humour often conjoined lower body functions with rather cerebral and erudite wit. The laughter provoked unsparingly targeted and exposed to ridicule the social elite, cultural celebrities and political leaders of Ancien Régime France. This made it a dangerous object, which was kept strictly secret. Was this humour somehow pre- or proto-Revolutionary? In fact, the work is so embedded in the culture of the Ancien Régime that 1789 was one boundary that the work signally fails to cross.

Jean-Georges Wille was a Parisian engraver. He kept a diary. And in that diary in June 1770 he recorded: 'We dined at the home of M. Basan with the family of Chereau and with the elder Saint-Aubin. We laughed a lot.'[1] Pierre-François Basan and Jacques Chereau were also engravers.

[1] G. Wille, *Mémoires et journal*, ed. G. Duplessis (2 vols., Paris 1857), I, 440. On another occasion Wille notes the two men being together again in 'un festin' where 'nous sommes restés assez longtemps à table de fort bonne humeur'. *Ibid.*, 578. (Note that the editor mistakenly takes this second reference to be to Charles-Germain's brother Augustin.)



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The 'elder Saint-Aubin' was Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin. He was by vocation an embroiderer, an artisan working in a luxury trade; but he also dabbled in much else besides, including engraving – and laughter. His family would retain the memory of him as 'likeable, witty, clever, very caustic, very satirical, very gallant with the ladies, and never out of place wherever he went'. Witty, clever, satirical, caustic, never out of place in society – he was thus a good man to spend an evening with, an evening laughing with.

For much of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin's adult life, seemingly from the 1740s through to the 1770s, in an atmosphere of scrupulous secrecy, he maintained, developed and shared with a small group of cronies a collection of nearly 400 drawings that he entitled *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (Figure 1: 675.1).[2] As its title suggests, it is a book of humorous drawings, a visual joke book. This extraordinary document, which is almost wholly unknown, testifies to that taste for festive sociability, that gift of laughter, that Wille's diary evokes. It not only offers a striking visual perspective on the culture and politics of Paris during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, it also provides a unique prism on the nature of laughter in France of the Ancien Régime, a society organised around those boundaries, frontiers and divisions which Charles-Germain, a man 'never out of place', it would seem, was adept at crossing.

Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, whom we can take to be the principal author of the *Livre de caricatures*, is an obscure figure, in whom historians have expressed little interest (Figure 2: 675.386).[3] Born in 1721 under the Regency, he lived all his adult life – down to his death in 1786 – in pre-Revolutionary, Ancien Régime, Enlightenment France. Among historians of art, he is far less-known than his brothers, Gabriel, the odd-ball artist and proto-*flâneur* of the streets of Paris, whose star is currently rising in art-historical circles, and Augustin, one of the most celebrated engravers of the late eighteenth century.[4] Charles-Germain too may well

[2] *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises*, Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775, 187 × 132mm, Waddesdon Manor, Classmark 675. It is currently located in the library of Waddesdon Manor, Bucks. In conjunction with colleagues from Waddesdon Manor, Juliet Carey and Pippa Shirley, and research assistant, Emily Richardson, I have recently completed an AHRC grant devoted to this volume. Note that to make references more manageable, I have included references to particular images in the text using Waddesdon Manor's classification. The digitised images plus critical commentary – may be accessed on Waddesdon's website: see the Waddesdon Saint-Aubin Project at www.waddesdon.org.uk. For all that follows, the curatorial commentary for each image mentioned is recommended.

[3] Victor Advielle, *Renseignements intimes sur les Saint-Aubin, dessinateurs et graveurs d'après les papiers de leur famille* (Paris, 1896), contains the fullest account of Charles-Germain's life and draws on autobiographical and biographical fragments described below, n. 5.

[4] Advielle, *Renseignements intimes*, has until recently offered the best description of the lives of Gabriel and Augustin. For Gabriel, see now *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, 1724–1780*, ex. cat. The Frick Collection, 30 Oct. 2007 – 27 Jan. 2008, Musée du Louvre, 28 Feb. – 26 May 2008

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have nurtured artistic ambitions. Like the rest of his family, he had painted and drawn from childhood and he dabbled in engraving. From the age of fifteen, he maintained a book of drawings and paintings of flowers – the *Recueil de plantes* – which he prized highly.[5] Flower designs were staple features of the rococo style which adorned the clothes in whose design he came to specialise. In 1748, he produced a set of engravings of *papillonneries*, the human antics of butterflies, which seemed to presage an academic career in the art world – which then fizzled out completely.[6]

Charles-Germain probably made the right decision in renouncing a career in fine art and in following his father, who was *brodeur du roi* (royal embroiderer) into the trade of fancy, high-end embroidery. He enjoyed almost instantaneous success. In 1747, when he was still in his twenties, he designed the dauphin's wedding costume.[7] He was already accounted as among the very the best in the business. He went on to prosper, and to have children, whom he tried to marry well. Flowers and design remained at the core of the 40,000 drawings which he claimed to have completed in the course of his lifetime.[8] His *Recueil de plantes*, to which he was adding even on the eve of his death, would pass into the hands of his daughter on his death, as did a family album that he had composed in the last years of his life, known as the *Livre des Saint-Aubin*. These two books are now in the possession of the Oak Spring Garden Library in Virginia and the Louvre respectively.[9] The travels of his *Livre de caricatures* are more obscure. The volume is mentioned in no private document nor public record before the middle of the nineteenth century. It was fleetingly seen

(Paris, 2007). More generally, cf. E. Dacier, *Gabriel de Saint-Aubin. Peintre, dessinateur et graveur (1724–80), l'homme et l'œuvre* (2 vols., Paris, 1929–31), which contains much material on the brothers.

[5] *Receuil* [*sic*] *de plantes copiées d'aprés* [*sic*] *nature par de Saint Aubin, dessinateur du Roy Louis XV, 1736–1785*, by Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, 365 × 245mm, Oak Spring Garden Library, Upperville, Virginia. See also Lucia Tongiori Tomasi, *An Oak Spring Flora: Flower Illustrations from the 15th Century to the Present Time: A Selection of Rare Books and Manuscripts in the Collection of Rachel Lambert Mellon* (Upperville, VA, 1997), and Adrien Moreau, 'Recueil des plantes de Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin', *L'Art*, 73–8 (1903), 129–34. It is from the *Recueil des Plantes* that the description of Charles-Germain's character evoked in the first paragraph of this paper derives.

[6] P. Mauriès, *Les papillonneries humaines* (reprint edn; Paris, 1996). Charles-Germain also was involved with brother Gabriel in preparing a pornographic novel in the mid-1740s. For details on this and on other biographical data, see Juliet Carey and Colin Jones, 'Introduction', to *eadem*, *idem* and Emily Richardson, eds., *Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin and his 'Livre de culs'* (forthcoming Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, 2012).

[7] Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *L'Art du brodeur* (Paris, 1770). The text and accompanying illustrations have been reprinted as *The Art of Embroidery*, translated and annotated by Nikki Scheuer (Los Angeles, 1983).

[8] The reference is in the autobiographical fragments in the *Recueil de plantes*.

[9] See above, n. 4, and also Pierre Rosenberg, *Le Livre des Saint-Aubin* (Paris, 2002), for the Louvre volume.

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by the Goncourt brothers, before it arrived at Waddesdon Manor in the 1890s – where it has been very little viewed.[10] It was evidently a book that the brothers Saint-Aubin did not wish to become public in their lifetime. They preferred to keep strictly to themselves and their closest intimates what was known in their family – with reason, as we shall see – as their *Livre de culs*, their 'Book of Arses'.[11]

My series of presidential lectures, which I have entitled, 'French Crossings', has as its motif the act of crossing – crossing territorial boundaries (I am a British historian of France; France is the framework for my talks), crossing disciplinary frontiers and exploring the act of crossing, and the meaning of crossing, in the lives of my subjects. Last year, I used the Channel hoppings of Charles Dickens to explore issues of personal and national identity focused around his great novel about the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities*. I suggested that understanding the act of constantly travelling between two cities and two cultures was crucial to grasping Dickens's relationship with, and the underlying meanings of, his famous novel.[12] In this paper, I shall be studying an individual who, in contrast to Dickens, was almost wholly obscure yet who was similarly adept at crossing – though over social rather than national boundaries – and for whom, as we shall see, that act was a key, until now a hidden key, to his identity.

Coming to terms with the unusual laughing book that is the focus of this paper requires thinking about how as historians we deal with the subject of laughter. In recent years, this slippery phenomenon has enjoyed something of a vogue among historians, who have done their best to seek explanatory traction from other fields of scholarly endeavour, including philosophy, psychology, physiology, sociology, anthropology, literary criticism and visual theory.[13] Yet whatever its disciplinary livery, there is one virtually universal characteristic of scholarly studies of

[10] For the book's history, see Carey and Jones, 'Introduction'. This collection comprises essays on the work from very wide-ranging and divergent perspectives. The Goncourts provide the only substantial comment on the work before the present day: see their *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle*, 3rd edn (Paris, 1882).

[11] This in a loose-leaf page located in the *Livre de caricatures* at Waddesdon Manor. It is in the hand of Pierre-Antoine Tardieu, the husband of one of Charles-Germain's granddaughters, who inherited the book in the early 1820s and seems to have been party to a number of family traditions.

[12] Colin Jones, 'Presidential Address: I. Tales of Two Cities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20 (2010), 1–26.

[13] To focus solely on eighteenth-century France, particularly recommended on laughter, from a list which could be much extended, are Anne Richardot, *Le rire des Lumières* (Paris, 2002); 'Le rire', ed. Lise Andries, *XVIIIe siècle*, 32 (2000); Antoine de Baecque, *Les éclats du rire: la culture des rieurs au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2000); Jean Goldzink, *Les Lumières et l'idée du comique* (Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1992); *idem*, *Comique et comédie au siècle des Lumières* (Paris, 2002); and Elizabeth Bourguinat, *Le siècle du persiflage, 1734–1789* (Paris, 1998). For slightly earlier periods, see Daniel Ménager, *La Renaissance et le rire* (Paris, 1995), and Dominique Bertrand, *Dire le*

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humour. They are very, very rarely amusing. 'Those who seek the metaphysical causes of laughter', Voltaire noted, presciently, 'are rarely jolly.'[14] Present-day researchers beating their paths towards such works can be certain they will leave them with the straightest of faces. Indeed, there may even be something about the subject which attracts the constitutionally morose. The psychologist Vicky Bruce, author of important work on visual cognition and facial recognition, remarks in one of her books, 'I am forever passing people in the street who say "Cheer up, it might never happen"' – sadly going on to note, 'Clearly though quite unintentionally I tend to wear a troubled face.'[15]

The apparent attraction of the topic of humour to the serious-minded and lugubrious of countenance seems quite amusing in fact, as though just talking seriously and academically about humour was comic in itself. Warming to the notion of the unwittingly comic aspect of serious work on the topic of humour, the sociologist Peter Berger has remarked that

> writing a book about the comic could be construed as *prima facie* evidence of ... humourlessness. Conversely, the witness to such an endeavour may well find it funny. It calls for a humorous antithesis as occurs when a philosopher lecturing on metaphysics loses his trousers ... – the physical taking comic revenge on the pretensions of the metaphysical.[16]

An image from the *Livre de caricatures* appositely and punningly illustrates the point: the hot air of a musicology lecturer is met full on by wind of an altogether different kind emerging from a 'fundamental bass' (Figure 3: 675.63). The academic pretension to truth-telling finds itself subverted by the more earthy truth of the body, indeed in this case from this book of arses, the truth of the arse. This is a dimension of the comic, of which any academic researcher needs to remain acutely aware. Although I shall approach the subject of humour with due academic seriousness, I will be braced and tightly belted against the ironical realisation that just trying to be funny about the funny is supremely funny because the effort must needs be quintessentially unfunny.

Of course, one reason why historical studies of laughter are rarely amusing is that humour is both culture-bound and time-specific and

*rire à l'âge classique: représenter pour mieux contrôler* (Aix-en-Provence, 1995). Very useful general works include Georges Minois, *Histoire du rire et de la déraison* (Paris, 2000); Robert Favre, *Le rire dans tous ses éclats* (Lyon, 1995); Dominique Bertrand and Véronique Gély-Ghedira, eds., *Rire des dieux* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2000); C. Biondi *et al.*, eds., *La quête du bonheur et l'expression de la douleur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises* (Geneva, 1995); and Maurice Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte: histoire des fous de cour* (Paris, 1983). For a helpful comparative angle, see Jan Verberckmoes, *Laughter, Jestbooks and Society in the Spanish Netherlands* (Basingstoke, 1999).

[14] Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article 'rire'.

[15] Vicki Bruce, *Recognising Faces* (1988), 23.

[16] Peter Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (New York, 1991), xiv.

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consequently travels very badly. By the time a joke is explained in all its intricacy, any thought of laughter will probably have long vanished. Aristotle once remarked that surprise is an indispensable feature of laughter. But surprise cannot be patiently dissected and expounded at length. 'A joke explained', to cite Voltaire again, 'stops being a joke'.[17] Laughter theory thus travels as badly as humour itself. This point is all the more pertinent in that since the late nineteenth century, theories of laughter with scientific claims have been dominated by two disciplines, psychology and evolutionary biology, neither of which is very receptive to historical analysis. In psychology, Henri Bergson's influential 1899 lectures on laughter, and the work of Freud, stress the transhistorical universality of humour.[18] Following in the footsteps of Charles Darwin's work on the expression of emotion, evolutionary biology offers categories whose ultra-long time-frame also makes them recalcitrant to chronological periodisation. Neo-Darwinian theorists of the emotions in our own day such as Paul Ekman and his school espouse an evolutionist viewpoint which is difficult to reconcile with historical analysis.[19]

The starting point for this essay on eighteenth-century laughter is that we will be in a better posture for understanding something like the *Livre de caricatures* if we accept that laughter and laughter theory simply do not travel, are indeed radically incommensurable, and that humour from another period or another society is just basically not funny any longer. In this, I am taking further the methodological path mapped out by Robert Darnton, in his wonderful essay on the 'Great Cat Massacre', which appeared in 1984.[20] Darnton argued that the historian should be particularly interested in areas of opacity about past societies. It was precisely when historians could not see anything even faintly amusing in what people in the past found funny that one could be certain that there was something being transacted that was worthy of investigation. In the case that Darnton studied, it was the mass slaughter of neighbourhood cats by young apprentices in the neighbourhood of the Rue Saint-Séverin in Paris in the 1720s, a mass slaughter that, it was recorded, provoked unparalleled hilarity among the group. What indeed – Darnton nodded towards the phrasing of his Princeton colleague, the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, with whom he collaborated – was

[17] Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*.

[18] H. Bergson, *Le rire: essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris, 1900); for Freud, see esp. his *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905).

[19] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, ed. P. Ekman, 3rd edn (1998). Besides the introductory material by Ekman in this edition, see too Ekman, *What the Face Reveals*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2005); *idem*, *Emotion in the Human Face*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1982). Ekman appears to have never failed not to laugh at a historical joke

[20] Robert Darnton, 'Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin', in his *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1984).

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going on here? And understanding what indeed was going on – getting the joke in fact, understanding the laughter – would, Darnton wagered, permit us to gauge precisely what was specific, non-transferable, truly and intractably historical about a past society. Darnton wrote a brilliant essay, then a wonderful book, around this one grisly, surely unfunny, eighteenth-century 'comic' episode. Scholars of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin's *Livre de caricatures* will gulp at the prospect: for we have not one joke to decipher. We have nearly 400 comic drawings whose humour we have to unravel, whose capacity for eliciting laughter we have to understand.

In the daunting task of identifying the character of the humour to be found in the *Livre de caricatures*, it seems wisest to eschew laughter theories of the present day and to look for some guidance at least to those of the author's past. It is comforting that if we today lack the conceptual equipment to say just what people found funny in the eighteenth century and why, so did they. Laughter in the eighteenth century was almost as much of a puzzle and a conundrum as laughter theory is to us. For the era of Enlightenment which prided itself on coming up with rational answers to questions about the natural and social worlds, laughter was annoyingly difficult to pin down, as indeed Voltaire's comments highlight. Louis Poinsenet de Sivry, the author of a learned disquisition on laughter published in 1768, the *Traité des causes physiques et morales du rire*, agreed with Aristotle that laughter was the special privilege and province of humanity.[21] There was, it seemed, no individual in history who had never laughed. In antiquity even the supremely serious and virtuously po-faced Cato was known to have indulged once in his life, when he saw an ass eating thistles … .[22] Poinsenet de Sivry, who could catalogue over a dozen forms of laughter (the gracious laugh, the silly laugh, the civil laugh, the forced laugh, the belly-laugh and so on), concluded that it was shocking that, despite the ubiquity of laughter and the existence of theories of laughter going back to antiquity, mankind had still to reach a real understanding of the essence of the phenomenon.[23] Yet this did not stop mankind from trying.

Early modern discussions of laughter invariably referred back to a sixteenth-century treatise on laughter written by Laurent Joubert, the *Traité du ris* or *Traité du rire* (the 'Treatise on Laughter'). Written in 1560, published in French in 1579, Joubert's treatise is a kind of ur-text of early modern discussions of laughter.[24] Its influence was very evident, for example, in Poinsenet de Sivry's 1768 text. Joubert is a helpful

[21] Louis Poinsenet de Sivry, *Traité des causes physiques et morales du rire, relativement à l'art de l'exciter* (Amsterdam 1768; reprint edn, Exeter 1986, ed. W. Brooks).

[22] The Cato example is given in Joubert (see references at n. 24): 228.

[23] Poinsenet de Sivry, *Traité des causes physiques*, 9.

[24] Laurent Joubert, *Traité du ris* (Slatkine reprint, Paris, 1970). See the English translation (with a helpful introduction): Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, ed. and trans. G. David

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guide, supplying a whole agenda for considering laughter physiologically and aesthetically, medically and morally, culturally and socially. Joubert himself was a Montpellier medical professor by vocation, as indeed François Rabelais had been. The latter's *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* could be taken as a faithful exemplification of Joubert's treatise – had the latter not in fact predated them by several decades. No matter.[25] For both Rabelais and Joubert viewed the issues of laughter along similar lines, as pitched between the disciplines of natural philosophy and medicine. (Evolutionary theory was two centuries distant, the psychological turn in laughter studies 300 years away.) Joubert expressed particular interest in questions such as: what happens to the human body when we laugh? What triggers off that laughter? And what was the experience of laughing like? He provided, for example, a kind of comparative acoustic typology of the laugh, noting a wide range of behavioural tics. Thus there were, he suggested, individuals who laugh like geese hissing, goslings grommeling, wood pigeons sighing, chicks peeping, horses neighing, strangulated dogs yapping and so on, through to individuals whose laugh resembles a pot of cabbage on the boil.[26] Joubert's physiology had it that laughter originates in the heart and radiates throughout the body by the muscles in the diaphragm, causing the chest to shake, the voice to tremble, the mouth to widen and open. Air coming up through the chest becomes too much for nostrils to handle, causing the mouth to open, setting off a range of facial movements as the eyes wrinkle, the cheeks expand and dimples form on and around the chin.

> Certainly [he states] there is nothing that gives more pleasure and recreation than a laughing face, with its wide, shining, clear and serene forehead, eyes shining, resplendent from any vantage point, and casting fire as do diamonds; cheeks vermillion and incarnate, mouth flush with the face, lips handsomely drawn back, . . . chin drawn in, widened and a bit recessed. All this is in the smallest laugh and in the smile, amidst salutations, caresses and greetings, favours an encounter of much grace.[27]

Joubert and his disciples were well aware, however, that, among the wide, gradated range of laughter forms that he could identify, less benign forms of laughter also existed. Two in particular stood out. First, there was sardonic laughter, which Joubert showed had been much described in antiquity.[28] It drew sustenance from Aristotle's proclamation that laughter

de Rocher (Alabama, 1980); and G. David de Rocher, *Rabelais's Laughers and Joubert's* Traité du Ris (Alabama, 1979).

[25] The works in the series appeared from 1532 to 1564 (Rabelais had died in 1553).

[26] Joubert, *Traité du ris*, 221. Following this cue, one later author maintained that four Galenic humours – melancholic, bilious, phlegmatic and sanguine temperaments – could be exactly mapped on to the different forms of laughter: hi-hi, hé-hé, ha-ha and ho-ho. *Ibid.*, *Épître*, no page number.

[27] Joubert, *Traité du ris*, 221.

[28] *Ibid.*, 225ff.

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derived from 'the joy we have in observing the fact that we cannot be hurt by the evil at which we are indignant', and was characterised as an involuntary sneering laugh, often displaying the canine teeth. It feigned a true, sincere laugh. And it characterised the liar, the embittered and the ill-willed.

Ugly, rude and indecorous, sardonic laughter should be steered clear of. The same caution should be exercised by another non-benign form of laughter. Joubert painted a frightening picture of laughter when it gets out of hand, instancing

> the great opening of the mouth, the notable drawing back of the lips, the broken and trembling voice, the redness of the face, the sweat that sometimes comes out of the entire body, the spraying of the eyes with the effusion of tears, the rising of the veins in the forehead and throat, the coughing, the expelling of what was in their mouth and nose, the shaking of the chest, shoulders, arms, thighs, legs and the whole body, like a convulsion, the great pain in the ribs, sides and abdomen, the emptying of the bowels and the bladder, the weakness of the heart for want of breath, and some other effects.[29]

Joubert itemised some of the other effects as convulsions, fainting, apoplexy and indeed death. The death claim was repeated in the mid-seventeenth century by the physician Cureau de La Chambre who made this kind of 'vehement' laughter sound uncomfortably like orgasm.[30] Joubert's description and this evocation of what was, literally, a killer laugh was much drawn on throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The vivacious, life-enhancing, attractive, salubrious laugh highlighted by Joubert thus had its dark avatar in mortiferous, uncontrollable, convulsive, body-shaking, sputum-spraying, self-soiling laugher. The latter form of laughter was also, as Joubert puts it, 'ugly, deformed, improper, indecent, unfitting and indecorous'.[31]

Joubert's basic physiology stood up relatively well to changes in medical knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even as the credibility of the Galenic system of the humours on which it had been based began to erode. In his *Treatise on the Passions* (1649), for example, René Descartes would introduce a Harveian acceleration in the circulation of the blood as a predisposing factor to laughter as conceptualised by Joubert.[32] This mechanistic approach was elaborated further during the Enlightenment by post-humoral, anatomically minded physicians. The article on laughter in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, for example, showed the continuing influence of Joubert's descriptions, but also sought a more precise, mechanistic understanding of laughter in terms

[29] Joubert, *Taité du ris*, 160–1.
[30] M. Cureau de La Chambre, *Les caractères des passions* (2 vols., Paris, 1658), I, 58.
[31] Joubert, *Traité du ris*, 52.
[32] René Descartes, *Traité des passions* (1649).

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of the facial muscles.[33] Moreover, the laugh was only one form in the broad taxonomy of mouth behaviours with which medical writers now concerned themselves: laughter took its place in advanced mouth morphology alongside the yawn, the smile, the hiccup, the rictus, the grimace.[34] Though also following a mechanistic approach, the great German physiologist Haller in addition highlighted the importance of the nervous system, as one would expect from one of the key theorists of the cult of sensibility.[35] For Haller, the laugh was essentially an alteration in the respiratory system. He twinned it with the equally involuntary cough. But the human mind was somehow engaged in laughter, he noted, except of course in cases of tickling (a practice in which Joubert had been particularly interested in fact).[36] The cult of sensibility developing across the eighteenth century highlighted how certain types of individual were particularly prone to laughter. The hyper-nervous constitution of women pushed them towards hysterical, pathological laughter, for example, while the crude nervous system of the common people predisposed them to coarse rough Rabelaisian mirth.[37]

Much of Joubert's physiology of the laugh remained recognisably in place; yet shifts were going on in the semiotics of laughter. In the middle of the seventeenth century, as Quentin Skinner has noted, Thomas Hobbes picked up the darker aspect of Laurent Joubert's account of occasions for laughter. Whereas for Joubert mocking, sardonic laughter was only one form among many, for Hobbes all laughter came down to rejoicing in the misfortunes of others. 'The passion of Laughter is nothyng but a suddaine Glory arising from the suddaine Conception of some Eminency in our selves by Comparison with the Infirmityes of others.' For Hobbes, all laughter was derision.[38]

This view became highly influential in France as well as in England in the late seventeenth century. It was buttressed in France by the political and religious conjuncture, which predisposed towards a highly pessimistic evaluation of laughter. The Catholic Church after the Council of Trent had a gloomy predilection for avoiding humour at all costs. By the late seventeenth century, Bishop Bossuet would be defining laughter as 'a

[33] *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (17 vols., Geneva, 1754–72), XIV, 298ff.

[34] See the excellent M. Guédron, *L'art de la grimace: cinq siècles d'excès de visage* (Paris, 2011).

[35] *Dr. Albert Haller's Physiology; Being a Course of Lectures upon the Visceral Anatomy and Vital Oeconomy of Human Bodies*, 2nd edn (1772), I, 346.

[36] 'Sis problemes du chatoulemant', in Joubert, *Traité du ris*, 201.

[37] A. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (1998); L. Wilson, *Women and Medicine in the French Enlightenment: The Debate over 'Maladies des Femmes'* (1993).

[38] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, ed. F. Tonnies, 2nd edn (1969), 42 (original 1634). Cf. Quentin Skinner, 'Hobbes and the Classical Theory of Laughter', in *idem*, *Visions of Politics*, III: *Hobbes and Civic Science* (Cambridge, 2002).

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deplorable sickness of our hearts'.[39] 'Did Jesus laugh?' was a question that had divided theologians back to the early church fathers.[40] The answer in absolutist France appeared to be absolutely not. The abbé Thiers's 1686 treatise on games must, for example, rank as a high-water mark in this post-Tridentine age of humour-phobia. It was quite legitimate to laugh and joke, Thiers maintained, but he then went on to list such a wide range of taboo areas and inappropriate times for laughter that his conclusion, 'it is best not to undertake a joke at all', came as no surprise. 'It is not excessive joking that we must avoid, but joking of any sort.'[41]

Divine-Right Bourbon monarchy added its weight to the religious condemnation of laughter. The state not only supported the Church's teachings, but also led an onslaught on existing forms of humour and laughter in its own right. Molière was banned from Louis XIV's court for simply being funny, as, later, was the Comédie Italienne. Carnivalesque popular festivities such as the Feast of Fools and other parodic rituals which offered a forum for laughter were a particular target.[42] Versailles court culture did not prize laughter. Indeed, La Bruyère, subtle analyst of court mores in the late seventeenth century, noted that Rabelais had become simply unintelligible.[43] Court behaviour affected a stiff solemnity in which any kind of laughter (save arguably the cruellest) was out of place. The ancient position of court fool was placed in mothballs. One simply did not laugh at the Sun King, whose regime seemed wholeheartedly dedicated to the erasure of simple fun.[44]

The early eighteenth century brought a lightening of the mood, however, and a revival in the fortunes of that more benign form of laughter also sketched by Laurent Joubert. This more optimistic account of laughter originated across the Channel in writings by Shaftesbury, Steele, Addison, Hutcheson and others. For Shaftesbury, humour had a sort of civilising mission; its task was to 'polish one another and rub off our corners and rough sides by a sort of amicable collision'.[45] Raillery, mockery and sardonic laughter should be avoided. And decorous, polite laughter should replace both negative forms of laughter identified by Joubert – sneering, sardonic, Hobbesian laughter and also plebeian, quasi-mortiferous uproariousness. The preachers of

[39] Bossuet in his *Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie* (cited in Richardot, *Le rire des lumières*, 37).

[40] J. Le Goff, 'Jésus a-t-il ri?', *L'Histoire*, 158 (1992), 72–4.

[41] Jean-Baptiste Thiers, *Traité des jeux* (Paris, 1686), cited in Minois, *Histoire du rire*, 305–6.

[42] Sara Beam, *Laughing Matters: Farce and the Making of Absolutism in France* (Ithaca, NY, 2007); cf. Minois, *Histoire du rire*, 307ff.

[43] Cited in Minois, *Histoire du rire*, 369.

[44] Cf. Colin Jones, 'The King's Two Teeth', *History Workshop*, 65 (2008), 79–95.

[45] Shaftesbury cited in Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (2006), 169. Gatrell provides an excellent account of this optimistic whiggish reading of laughter, targeting Hobbesian pessimism.

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politeness added to Joubert's physiology of the laugh a sense that laughter reflected not just social status but also the temperamental organisation of the self – as Voltaire put it, 'laughter arises from a gaiety of disposition, absolutely incompatible with contempt and indignation', an anti-Hobbesian statement if ever there was one.[46] It also had a collective history and social function. A progressive meta-narrative shaped up, which saw mankind emerging purposively from a Dark Age of Miserabilism. A nostalgic picture was painted of a kind of 'Merry France' that had been laid low by the forces of humourlessness that were the post-Tridentine church and the absolutist state.

How did these laughter debates, these early modern outcrops of laughter theory, play out in Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin's *Livre de caricatures*? Before exploring the book's contents, I want first briefly to highlight a point about the nature of the drawings, and to consider key features in the book's production and audience. The book's title may lead us to expect something which picks up the caricatural genre which English satirists exploited and which in France Daumier would later develop as a fine art.[47] This is misleading. The term 'caricature' derives from the Italian, 'caricare', meaning to load, as in, in the case of portrait caricature, to exaggerate or to put emphasis upon some distinguishing feature of the subject. The term and its practice had allegedly been brought into France in 1665 when the Italian sculptor Bernini was visiting Louis XIV's court.[48] Yet it did not catch on either as a social practice or cultural form within France. It would not be until 1762 – a full century after the Bernini episode – that the word entered a French dictionary.[49] Diderot's *Encyclopédie* noted that the word applied to 'grotesque and extremely

[46] Voltaire, *L'enfant prodigue* (1738), preface, no page numbers.

[47] Werner Hofmann, *Caricature from Leonardo to Picasso* (1957), offers a good introduction to the origins of caricature, as, more recently, do Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London, 1996), introduction; and T. Porterfield, ed., *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759–1838* (2010). See too E. Gombrich and E. Kris, *Caricature* (Harmondsworth, 1940); and Gombrich's two essays, 'The Cartoonist's Armoury' (in *idem*, *Meditations of a Hobby Horse* (1963)) and 'The Experiment of Caricature' (in *idem*, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1959)). Although many publications have been devoted to specifically French traditions of caricature, these tend to cut off at the end of Louis XIV's reign only to restart at the opening of the Revolution in 1789. Few texts concern caricature during the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century. One exception, which does cover the period of the Saint-Aubin drawings is André Blum, 'L'Estampe satirique et la caricature en France au XVIIIe siècle', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 52 (1910), 379–420, 53 (1910), 69–87 – which, however, has scant mention of Charles-Germain.

[48] Irving Lavin, 'Bernini and the Art of Social Satire', *History of European Ideas*, 4 (1983), 365–420, and *idem*, 'High and Low before their Time: Bernini and the Art of Social Satire', in *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik (New York, 1990), 18–50.

[49] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 4th edn (1762) ('Caricature, s.f. Terme de peinture, emprunté de l'italien. C'est la meme chose que Charge en peinture'). Word searches in

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disproportionate figures . . . that a painter, a sculptor or an engraver does in order to amuse or to make people laugh', adding sniffily, 'it is a kind of libertinage of the imagination that one should really only allow oneself for relaxation'.[50] And this seems to get the mood of the Saint-Aubin volume: comic drawings that displayed a 'libertinage of the imagination', and that constituted a pursuit appropriate for leisure-time.

Such a definition certainly chimes with the principal author of the *Livre de caricatures*'s description of the book's function. On the first page of the book, Charles-Germain recorded that in 1740,

> I found this volume on the quais [i.e. he purchased it from a Parisian *bouquiniste*] with figures naively drawn into it. My friends added captions and got me to continue this miscellany of follies which are not good enough to be shown to reasonable people. Fortunately there are still some empty headed people (*des crânes vides)* around. (675.1b)

Analysis suggests that around a third of the images in the book are fairly crude comic pictures which may have originally been drawn in another hand and then developed in ink and paint by the Saint-Aubin circle, and captions added. This 'miscellany of follies' was a kind of collective bricolage.[51]

Most of the finished drawings are by Charles-Germain himself, but we can also detect more than a dozen other hands, both in the drawings and in the captions which were an important ingredient in the book's humour. There are certainly contributions by Charles-Germain's two brothers, Gabriel and Augustin. In addition, a number of the jokes relate knowingly to individuals with links to the Saint-Aubin family drawn from the worlds of art, theatre, publishing and public administration. It seems plausible that such individuals were the 'empty heads' who composed the audience for Charles-Germain's inspiration, and this 'laughing group' may well have fitfully contributed their ideas to it too.[52] Yet if the making of the *Livre de caricatures* was something of a collective social event, Charles-Germain himself was principal contributor to the book's contents and overall impresario of its mirth.

The laughing group around Charles-Germain was an enduring one, for the contents of the *Livre de caricatures* suggest a facture over around three decades – from the 1740s through to the mid-1770s. Our strong sense is that this was a joke-book that Charles-Germain would bring out on festive occasions as a custom involving close friends and family. There is indeed

Frantext (USA: ARTFL) reveal less than a score of hits. These include Mirabeau's *L'ami des hommes,* Diderot's *Essais sur la peinture*, Voltaire's *Correspondance* and Mercier's *Tableau de Paris.*

[50] *Encyclopédie*, II, 684.

[51] On these issues of authorship, materiality and use, see Colin Jones and Emily Richardson, 'Materiality and Archaeology', in *Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin*, ed. Carey, Jones and Richardson.

[52] On such 'laughing groups', see de Baecque, *Les éclats du rire.*

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a whole thematic within the book of special days, such as Mardi Gras and also of *étrennes*, the jokes, riddles and gift-giving practices associated with New Year's Day. Many of the drawings have a kind of quizzing, puzzling quality. One drawing, for example, depicts a figure composed of sheets of music. 'Guess who?' asks the caption – and a later hand has added 'Rameau', the visual reference apparently to one of the characters in Rameau's opera *Platée*, first performed in 1745 (Figure 4: 675.56). This helping hand is very welcome. The in-joke character of the humour of our little laughing society makes it difficult to prise open the meanings of many of the drawings.[53]

We should make clear one additional reason why the whole book remained an elaborate in-joke. Charles-Germain and his brothers can have been under no illusion that not everyone would find its humour very funny. In fact they would have been absolutely certain that had their book of jokes fallen into the hands of the legal or police authorities, its authors would have been thrown into prison and their precious book would have been publicly burned.[54] A great many of the 387 comic drawings were innocuous and mild, whimsical and harmless. Yet a fair proportion were rude, crude, offensive and irreverent, and carried a whiff of danger about them. Some, in the context of Ancien Régime France, were political dynamite. A man who publicly portrayed a naked Madame de Pompadour performing her intimate ablutions astride a bidet, while sundry Jesuits grovelled at her feet, would not be going anywhere fast in Ancien Régime France – except to the Bastille, that is (Figure 5: 675.282). Nor would the marquise have been anything but scandalised by the shrine to her radiant arse that Charles-Germain touchingly imagined (Figure 6: 675.281).

As these examples suggest, this volume of drawings is a book of surprises, and one surprise is to encounter political satire in Ancien Régime France in this visual form. This is extremely rare. Before 1789, France lacked the dynamic, explosively outspoken visual satire that Hogarth, Gillray, Rowlandson and many others provided for their English peers. France would only go down this route after 1789. There were some

[53] Pierre-Antoine Tardieu, husband of Charles-Germain's grand-daughter, who inherited the book in the 1820s, added captions explaining the jokes. The Rameau example is a case in point – though sometimes he got the jokes wrong. Jones and Richardson, 'Materiality and Archaeology'.

[54] On censorship, see esp. George Minois, *Censure et culture sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1995); Barbara de Negroni, *Lectures interdites: le travail des censeurs au XVIIIe siècle, 1723–1774* (Paris, 1995); and essays by Daniel Roche, Robert Darnton and Raymond Birn in Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds., *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775–1800* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1989). On the censorship of visual material, see ch. 3, 'Censorship of Caricature before 1830', in Robert Justin Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent, OH, and London, 1989).

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Figure 1 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.title-page), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

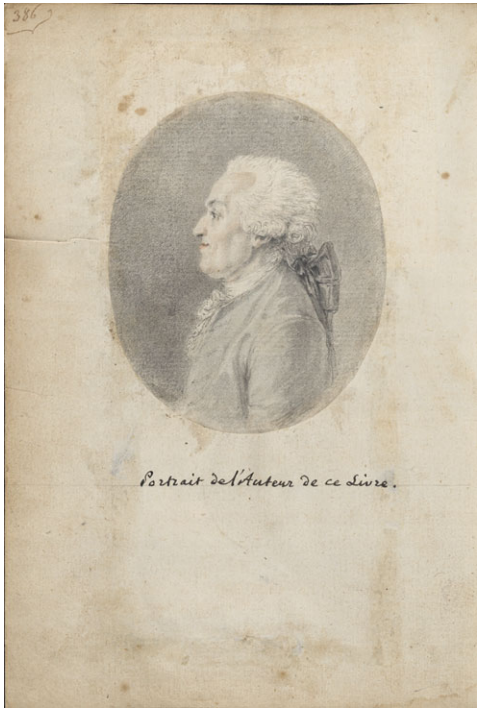



Figure 2 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.386), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 3 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.63), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 4 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.56), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 5 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.282), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 6 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.281), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 7 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.99), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 8 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.144), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 9 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.288), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 10 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.153), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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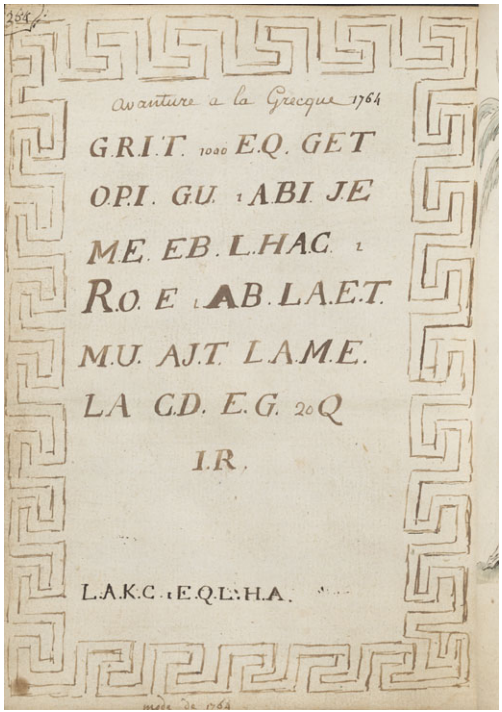



Figure 11 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.364), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

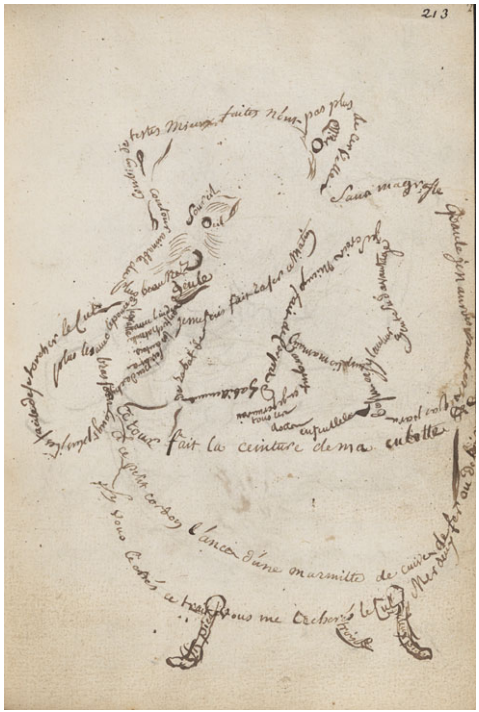



Figure 12 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.213), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 13 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.384), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 14 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.248), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 15 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.198–9), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 16 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.138–9), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 17 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.233), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 18 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.253), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 19 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.374), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 20 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.209), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 21 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.286), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 22 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.339), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 23 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.356), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 24 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.276), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

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Figure 25 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.132), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.




Figure 26 Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin, *Livre de caricatures tant Bonnes que mauvaises* (675.285), *c.* 1740 – *c.* 1775 (n.d.). Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (National Trust) © Imaging Services Bodleian Library / National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

pre-1789 French exceptions, it is true: historians have milked all they can out of a niche market in pornography, on occasion relating to the royal family, which was political in scope.[55] But political satire in Bourbon France simply lacked a solid base in the visual arts. Censorship of the image seems to have worked even more effectively than censorship of the word. This is one reason our book is such a rarity.

In order to analyse the forms that the humour of the book takes, it is helpful to turn again to our friend Laurent Joubert. In his laughter treatise, Joubert derives from Aristotle the idea that there can be humour in words and humour in deeds.[56] Taken together, these sub-categories give a good sense of the range of Saint-Aubin humour. The first two of Joubert's five sub-categories of humour in deeds are the exposure of the shameful parts and the exhibiting of the behind. The Madame de Pompadour examples highlight this. There are dozens of arses in the *Livre des culs*. The fairgound wonder-arse at 675.99 (Figure 7), for example, given an anti-Jesuit spin by the caption, highlights scatological humour (for the shameful parts are almost always anal rather than genital or erotic in focus) as one of the most significant registers in which Saint-Aubin works. The third group of occasions for laughter cited by Joubert is the comic fall – the familiar prat-fall in essence – examples of which do not lack in the *Livre de caricatures* (Figure 8: 675.144). The fourth occasion for laughter is the misapprehension of taste – as, in Joubert's words, 'when one mistakes stinking smells for sweet'.[57] This kind of misprision is evident, to give a single example, in this drawing of perfumed lips (Figure 9: 675.288). Joubert's fifth category is the somewhat indeterminate 'light damage', or inconsequential harm, of which there are any number of examples. In drawing 675.153, for example, blind Belisarius is about to fall down the hole (Figure 10).[58]

Besides his five sub-categories of laughter through deeds, Joubert, taking his cue from Aristotle, also underlined the role of words in stimulating laughter. He cited a whole slew of linguistic devices which could provoke laughter, including puzzles, metaphors, allegories and innuendoes. The *Livre de caricatures* is full of such devices, ranging from

[55] The English tradition is superbly encapsulated by Gatrell, *City of Laughter*. For post-1789 France, see esp. James Cuno, ed., *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789–99*, ex. cat., Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Art Gallery, University of California (Los Angeles, 1988); Antoine de Baecque, *La caricature révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1988); and Claude Langlois, *La caricature contre-révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1988). For the pornographic tradition, see Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia, 2010).

[56] Joubert, *Traité du ris*, ch. 2, 'Des fais ridicules', 16ff, and ch. 3, 'Des propos ridicules', 29ff.

[57] *Ibid.*, 26.

[58] Cf. 675.3, 675.305.

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puzzles like the Rameau example cited earlier (Figure 1), through to forms such as the rebus (Figure 11: 675.364), jokey textualised drawings (Figure 12: 675.213), allegories and all manner of puns. The celebrity dancer Dupré is represented as master of the ballet – or is it master of the brooms (*balais*) (Figure 13: 675.384)? Then again, the caption, the '3 synonyms of the abbé Gouget', is deliberately misleading, for depicted are only two forms of crane (or *grue*), the bird and the lifting gear (Figure 14: 675.248). Where is the third? *Grue* was a slang word for whore. It may well be Madame de Pompadour who is being invisibly targeted.[59]

Many of the linguistic triggers of laughter are deliberately set up to work through contrast between text and the accompanying image. Thus the rule of Polykleitos, the measure of ideal human beauty derived from Ancient Greece, is illustrated with a small, dumpy, weeble-like figure (675.39). Similarly, the drawing of an ancient vessel – which was in fact copied from the *Recueil d'antiquités* of the polymathic proto-archaeologist, the comte de Caylus – is made to look ridiculous by a caption which states that what went on to become a pomade pot for Queen Christina of Sweden and holy water stoup for the pope started life as the chamberpot of Queen Semiramis of Babylon (675.126).[60] The practice of linking images on facing pages also allows the potential for such incongruities to be exploited. Thus the images at 675.198–9 show a bare-arsed couple blowing farts at each other in a mock instantiation of civilised politesse (Figure 15). Such matching farts are evident in a similar, punning couplet (Figure 16: 675.138–9). Here, the *propositions de paix* could be either peace (*paix*) or fart (*pet*) proposals. Meanwhile the enema-syringe-wielding Dutch Stadtholder is poised to administer his own radical solutions to both. These drawings refer to the inglorious peace negotiations leading to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle after the War of Austrian Succession in 1748.

In these last two sets of images, the crudeness of the body, specifically the arse, seems to be an implicit critique of both high-falutin politesse and diplomatic claims to glory. The truth of the arse finds out the hollow portentousness of elite culture. This charge brings us close to the influential notion of grotesque realism expounded by the Russian formalist critic, Mikhael Bakhtin.[61] Bakhtin analysed Renaissance popular culture by way of the writings of Rabelais, and he highlighted how the collective and festive deployment of the crude and obscene body

[59] On this point, see the discussion in Colin Jones, *Madame de Pompadour: Images of a Mistress* (2002), 141.

[60] Cf. Perrin Stein, 'The Vase as a Site for Satire', in *Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin*, ed. Carey, Jones and Richardson.

[61] M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, MA, 1968).

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humour of the streets offered a parodic critique of elite culture. Certainly within the *Livre de caricatures* there is more than enough arsiness to suggest a willing embrace of this aspect of Rabelaisian humour. The Rabelaisian reference point is also evident in a number of images which depict scenes from the author or else foreground images that had accompanied past editions of his works.[62] Many of the comic drawings which lack an obvious humorous point also celebrate good and riotous living in a way of which Rabelais would doubtless have approved.

Although the *Livre de caricatures* is thus ironic about politeness, the spirit of the book does overlap with the meta-narrative developed by theorists of politeness according to which Merry France of yore had been wrongly turned away from the paths of happiness by the dark forces of politico-religious miserabilism. The book not only presides over a kind of Rabelaisian Second Coming. On a related note, it also makes particular reference to long-defunct provincial convivial associations and ceremonies linked to the old Feasts of Fools such as the convivial group of the Mère Folle (the 'Mad Mother'), which had flourished in Dijon from the late Middle Ages before being snuffed out by central government in the 1630s.[63]

As well as drawing inspiration from the archaeology of French laughter, the Saint-Aubin circle was also probably influenced by more recent laughter societies, such as the Régiment de la Calotte. Formed in 1702, and coming to prominence under the freer mores of the Regency after 1715, the Régiment de la Calotte had been dedicated to ridiculing pretensions and tyranny in high Parisian society, selecting as the butts of its humour those who needed to be laughed into better, saner ways.[64] This 'aristocratic comicocacry'[65] used patrician wit in order to laugh down at its pretentious social and upwardly-mobile inferiors through the publication of contemptuous and humorous attacks. Though initially protected by high state officials, the group over-reached itself by publishing obscene verbal ditties about the king's new mistress, Madame de Pompadour, in the late 1740s and was dissolved forthwith by royal fiat.[66]

[62] See e.g. 675.75 and 675.111 for direct Rabelaisian citations. For a generally 'Rabelaisian' spirit, cf. 675.72–3 and 675.271.

[63] The Saint-Aubins derived much of their material on the topic from the antiquarian work, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la fête des fous* published by the antiquarian, du Tilliot: Jean-Bénigne Lucotte du Tilliot, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la fête des fous* (Lausanne and Geneva, 1751). There had been an earlier 1741 edition. For related drawings, see 675.161, 675.372.

[64] De Baecque, *Les éclats du rire*, esp. ch. 1, 'Le Régiment de la Calotte, ou les stratégies aristocratiques du rire bel esprit (1702–52)'.

[65] *Ibid.*, 44.

[66] There is a good account of the episode in Evelyne Lever, *Madame de Pompadour* (Paris, 2000), 145ff. See too Robert Darnton, *Public Opinion and Communication Networks*

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The two laughter groups shared much in common, notably festive sociability, a firm belief in alcohol as a life-giving force and as a stimulus for jollity, and deep antagonism towards Madame de Pompadour. Many of the motifs mentioned in the writings of the Régiment de la Calotte – the *calotte* (or ecclesiastical skullcap), the jester's stick or *marotte*, the caps and bells of folly, whirligigs, antlers and rats – are also echoed in the *Livre de caricatures*. Yet whereas the Régiment operated largely through text, the Saint-Aubin circle preferred visual imagery. And while the pronouncements of the Régiment were published openly, the Saint-Aubins in contrast kept their humour secret and under wraps. Nor was there much that was aristocratic about the Saint-Aubins' sense of humour either. The Régiment's sense of humour had been very *de haut en bas*, and seemed closer to the cruel Hobbesian ethic than was the case with the altogether more benign Saint-Aubin circle. There is little overt patrician refinement in the *Livre de caricatures*, literary or otherwise. Indeed, the book glories in the transgression of refinement in all its forms. As the *Livre des culs* label and its overall, all-round arsiness suggests, it claimed to be 'popular' rather than elitist.

The principal author of a joke-book in which a fart is never far away was something of a hybrid, who was well situated to cross both generic and social boundaries. Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin worked in trade – a luxury trade, it is true – but this still placed him irredeemably outside the French status elite. In autobiographical fragments in his *Recueil de plantes*, he evoked his great-grandfather who had been a clog-wearing peasant from the Beauvaisis. But that was in the distant past. The Saint-Aubin family may not have been patrician but they were emphatically not plebeian. Charles-Germain was a pillar of bourgeois respectability, a frequenter of the royal court, who held his head high among the most elevated company, a member of the public (to use a classic Enlightenment distinction) but not one of the people. It would be foolish to imagine the *Livre de caricatures* somehow channelling Rabelaisian-esque popular culture in a direct and unmediated form. Its elaborate word games and engagement with antiquarian scholarship on humour back to Rabelais show that. Rather, the work engages with popular culture at a meta level, playing with the plebeian, making jokes through it, offering visual evocations of it, trying to chart its history – in short slumming with it to some degree. There may be a lot of arsiness in the Saint-Aubin *Livre de*

*in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, www.historycooperative.org/ahr/darnton_files/darnton/pocn/, especially sub-section entitled 'Court Politics'. Further examples can be found in Marie André Alfred Emile Raunié, *Chansonnier historique du XVIIIe siècle … Recueil Clairembault-Maurepas…* (10 vols., Paris, 1879–84), esp. VII: 'Le règne de Louis XV: Madame de Châteauroux et Madame de Pompadour, 1743–1763'.

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*caricatures* – but it is cerebral arsiness, developed in the interests of a very idiosyncratic sense of humour.[67]

The *Livre de caricatures* thus reveals its authors as individuals capable of crossing the social boundary from bourgeois to plebeian, and of appropriating traits and features of the culture of the streets, turning them into something that, if not high art, was not low art either. The simple, sometimes even rough and crude, execution of the drawings and colouring is likewise a bit of a pose. In fact the *Livre de caricatures* contains numerous visual cues to the history of art. There are quotations from or homages to Arcimboldo (Figure 17: 675.233) and Lyotard (Figure 18: 675.253) – as also to Bosch, Jacques Callot, Della Bella, Poussin, Watteau and Boucher – and doubtless others.[68] A lot of these drawings may look vulgar – but probably only to the vulgar. It is very erudite vulgarity.

Capable of crossing generic boundaries between high and low, the *Livre de caricatures* also ceaselessly switches from reality to fantasy. The latter half of the volume appears to offer many insights into Parisian street-life, most notably in the 1750s and 1760s. Thus we are shown, by way of example, the new Paris street lighting system (Figure 19: 675.374), the abolition of cumbersome shop signs, new taxes on street traders, and the invention of a city postal system.[69] Talking points and *causes célèbres* of the Parisian public sphere are also present: the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, for example, elections to the Académie française and Académie des sciences, lectures from the Academy of Painting, the furore caused by La Mettrie's 'man machine' and musical polemics between Rameau and the supporters of Lully. [70] Yet as these images hint, Saint-Aubin transcends the simple chronicle. He invariably includes a choice artistic trait, a satirical barb, a humorous nudge, a smidgeon of fantasy. Invariably, the truth of the arse implicitly subverts any intellectual claims being made.

It would thus be misguided to take the *Livre de caricatures* at the face value it disingenuously presents. Street-traders, for example, might be shown uttering their customary cries in a way that was only too familiar to Charles-Germain, who lived in the parish of Saint-Eustache, next

[67] As was the case, it must be said, with Rabelais.

[68] See as follows: Bosch, 675.102; Callot, 675.11; Della Bella, 675.27; Poussin, 675.379; Watteau, 675.26 and Boucher, 675.303. These are only single examples; in some cases there are multiple quotations. Besides the pastoral style and evidence of heraldry (e.g. 675.2, 675.181), there is a lot of chinoiserie throughout. Charles-Germain's *papillonneries* and his botanical drawings are also referenced (675.163; 675.320; 675.160).

[69] For shop-signs, 675.358; for street traders, 675.348; for the post, 675.347.

[70] For the *Encyclopédie*, 675.162 and 675.313; for the Académies, 675.266, 675.341 and 675.355; for La Mettrie, 675.202; plus many on Rameau, including 675.239 and 675.241.

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to Les Halles.[71] But such images are as much a commentary on the artistic genre of the *cris de Paris*, which went back to the Renaissance, as a verisimilitudinal description of life on the streets.[72] Similarly, representations of street theatre reference *commedia dell'arte*, but more in regard to artistic tradition than to real life players.[73] Then again, shepherds evoke the mock pastoral not the authentically rustic. Similarly, the Savoyard beggars and manual workers who composed a significant part of the Parisian immigrant labour force are here too, but more often than not in the guise of stage Savoyards, who look fancy and wear high heels.[74]

If the *Livre de caricatures* sardonically and whimsically theatricalises Parisian street life and culture, it also presents a fascinating perspective on the Parisian stage. The Saint-Aubins had numerous contacts within the theatrical world, and, like many of their social level, would have been avid theatre-goers. Stage celebrities – the ballet-dancers Dupré (Figure 13), Gaetan Vestris, Mademoiselle Heinel, the actor Le Kain and the poet and dramatist Sedaine – all receive particular attention, and some indeed may well have formed part of the Saint-Aubin circle.[75] Other polite public spectacles also get a mention: the scientific demonstrations of the abbé Nollet, for example, who is captured suffocating himself in his own air-pump (Figure 20: 675. 209)**,** the physics experiments of the comte de Lauraguais and the ocular harpischord of the abbé Castel.[76] The underlying theme of many of these drawings is the need to puncture the pretentious showiness of urban spectacle, so as to reveal the somewhat humdrum underlying reality. Thus while Charles-Germain transmutes the realism of the streets to urban fantasy, he also draws on the mock heroic mood to collapse the purposively spectacular into the drab and everyday.

Overall, the *Livre de caricatures* is a very Parisian book – and no doubt this is only to be expected from someone who strayed beyond city walls

[71] Cf. 675.24, 675.330.

[72] V. Milliot, *Les cris de Paris, ou le peuple travesti: les représentations des petits métiers parisiens (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1995).

[73] E.g. 675.17.

[74] E.g. 675.98, 675.232. Cf. E. Munhall, 'Savoyards in Eighteenth-Century French Art', *Apollo*, 87 (1968), 86–94.

[75] For Vestris, 675.380; for Heinel, 675.102; for Le Kain, 675.283; and for Sedaine, 675.353, 675.360. For plays, see too 675.142, 675.222–3, 675.352, 675.384. On Charles-Germain's theatrical links, see M. Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze and the Boundaries of Genre* (Oxford, 2000); *idem*, 'Theatrical Life', in *Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin*, ed. Carey, Jones and Richardson.

[76] For Lauraguais, 675.176; for Castel, 675.302. See also 675.175 for the panic about the 'Beast' of the Gévaudan, and 675.377 for the papal conclave of 1774. The latter images are rare for being outside the Paris–Versailles axis which frames the volume as a whole.

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almost only so as to get to the royal court at Versailles.[77] Yet Charles-Germain evidently enjoyed switching elements and crossing boundaries of all kinds. The *Livre de caricatures* is a work which reveals a sensibility comprehensively transformed by knowledge of – and, ultimately, disdain towards – the showy ostentation of court life at Versailles, which of course was shadowed in the fashion business in which Charles-Germain made his living. The crown and the court aristocracy were among the best clients for his fancy embroidery. This meant that he and, for related reasons, his brothers were perfectly situated within networks of courtly patronage to be on the receiving end of current courtly tittle-tattle, and to be able to grasp the essence of court mores. No doubt in order to prosper at court, Charles-Germain had to play the court games. Yet the *Livre de caricatures* is full of references to the dark side of court life – its sex, its lies, its propaganda. The 1756 alliance between France and Austria, arranged by Madame de Pompadour and the Austrian envoy Starhemberg (Figure 21: 675.286) for example, is given satirical treatment, as are the military campaign of 1757, the melting down of court silver to finance the war effort (Figure 22: 675.339), the torture of Louis XV's would-be assassin Damiens in the same year, the suppression of the Jesuit Order and the ups and downs of the Jansenist conflict pitting the archbishop of Paris against the Paris parlement. Though the book seems to end in 1775, this just leaves enough time to note the rumours about the sexual frigidity of the duc de Berry, the future Louis XVI, and his Austrian bride, Marie-Antoinette (Figure 23: 675.356).[78]

The social boundary-crosser who brought a sense of Versailles culture to his depiction of Parisian cultural life thus applied a very frondeur-ish Parisian sensibility to court life at Versailles. We see this most spectacularly in his treatment of Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV's official mistress from 1745 to her death in 1764.[79] The marquise was one of the great patrons of the arts and of the luxury trades in the eighteenth century, and in her way a fashion icon. Saint-Aubin knew her personally rather well, and dedicated a book of flower drawings to her; he encouraged her to draw, particularly flower designs; and he humbly received the gifts she made him of inks imported from China and baubles and porcelain from Japan.[80] He enjoyed terms of some intimacy with the marquise, visiting her home, the present-day Elysée palace, and its gardens. Yet despite

[77] Charles-Germain's autobiographical fragments in the *Recueil des plantes* reveal that his father forbade him to go to Lyon as a youth to learn silk design; and that he only made trips outside the city in the early 1770s to Flanders and Provence.

[78] For the 1757 campaign, 675.354; Damiens affair, 675.262–263; Jesuits, 675.354; Jansenist issues, 675.357.

[79] Lever, *Madame de Pompadour*; Jones, *Madame de Pompadour*.

[80] The documents on the settlement of the estate, discussed in Advielle, *Renseignements intimes*, are located at Archives Nationales, ET LIV 1029; and the 1780 will at ET XI 736.

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these close bonds between the two, Charles-Germain revealed himself a scabrous and abrasive critic of the marquise as soon as he picked up his pencil or prepared his palette. Around a dozen drawings make direct reference to Pompadour. All are hostile and critical, sometimes scandalously so. Matching the bidet scene cited above is an equally obscene rendition of a Pompadour in full cardinal's apparel, crudely and scatologically shattering the dreams of preferment of her one-time favourite, the abbé de Bernis (Figure 24: 675.276).[81]

The attacks on Madame de Pompadour highlighted particularly vehemently her *arrivisme*. Pompadour came from trade – her critics never allowed her to forget her family name (Poisson – 'fish' in French) (Figure 25: 675.132).[82] She had used her beauty and cunning to gain a social niche way above her station. To the author of the *Livre de caricatures*, her promotion of a circle of parvenu financiers threatened the state with ruin. She feminised the aristocracy and the king, who turned to cooking and tapestry-making.[83] The reign of *la Pompadour* was one where the whole establishment made a god of money, and was riddled with moral failings. Besides mistresses on the make, there were greedy financiers avid for gain at anyone's expense, ministers flying too high for their abilities, power-mad Jesuits out to take over the world, and uppity parlements thinking they were intelligent enough to rule. Politics was a game of ins and outs, ups and downs on the wheel of fortune (Figure 26: 675.285).[84] In Charles-Germain's vision, Madame de Pompadour was a perfect representation of the ferment of corruption which was rotting traditional values and producing a risible inauthenticity. Anything of value in this world was likely to be as fragile and as ephemeral as the butterflies which were Charles-Germain's special signature.

Let us move from butterflies to cats. In the 'Cat Massacre' article that I mentioned earlier and that I have used as a heuristic device in this paper, Robert Darnton's analysis of the Saint-Séverin cat-slaughter highlights underlying class tensions between workers and their masters.[85] One of the reasons that the artisans of the Rue Saint-Séverin found cat-killing so funny, he argues, was that they were enjoying a joke at the expense of their social betters. Killing their master's cats and the laughter that this instigated was social revolt, metaphorised. It was if, in other

Much of the detail on Charles-Germain's relations with Madame de Pompadour come from the fragments in the *Recueil de plantes*.

[81] Other anti-Pompadour drawings include drawings at 225, 316–17, 322, 328, 339, 359.

[82] Cf. 675.235.

[83] 675.165, 675.359. On the latter drawing, see Juliet Carey, 'The King and his Embroiderer', in *Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin*, ed. Carey, Jones and Richardson.

[84] Making a god of money, 675.308; greedy financiers, 675.294; ministers, 675.103, 675.121, 675.318; Jesuits, 675.277, 675.354; and parlements, 675.357.

[85] See above, p. 8.

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words, this cat-killing somehow prefigured the aristocrat-killing of the same neighbourhoods in the radical phase of the French Revolution: social revolt first as farce and second as tragedy, to reverse the more usual Marxian sequence. Using the same logic, we might wonder: was Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin a proto-Revolutionary?

A by now venerable current of historiography places great store by an alleged 'desacralisation' of attitudes towards the crown in particular and the social and political elite over the course of the eighteenth century.[86] Certainly it is tempting to rank the *Livre de caricatures* alongside other evidence of desacralisation, and to suppose that the attitudes found within the volume must have been widespread, but that similar works have simply not survived. Yet such a move is perhaps too easy, and certainly fails to do justice to this extraordinary work and the idiosyncratic sensibility of its principal author. Moreover, even leaving aside some of the presuppositions of the 'desacralisation thesis' (to what extent, for example, had attitudes to the crown in the past ever been homogeneously 'sacralised'?), it is difficult not to conclude that Charles-Germain's proto-Revolutionary credentials are not strong. He closed the *Livre de caricatures* in 1775. He died in March 1786, before the pre-Revolution, let alone the Revolution, had started. There was very little about the situation in 1786 which would allow anyone – let alone an ageing royal embroiderer – to think a Revolutionary process was about to unfold. Faced with what he knew, Charles-Germain seems to have accepted the follies of the world as, precisely, the follies of the world. If they excited anything in him, it was not a yearning for a new political world, but an ingenuity in finding ways of responding to them, critically, yes – but also artistically, philosophically, ideologically, wittily and humorously. He drew on the cultural resources at hand and operated within inherited frameworks of humour coloured, as I have suggested, by a range of influences from Laurent Joubert, François Rabelais and the Feast of Fools through to the more-recent Régiment de la Calotte, so as to create a very original and unusual book of jokes, that revelled in contradicting all available narratives and theories of humour. It is true that in his humour, disdain emerges, but it is invariably for his social superiors, and there is little resembling systematic Hobbesian contempt for inferiors. There are glimpses in the work of the civilising humour of the sensibility school that opposed Hobbesian pessimism. Yet as we have seen, current politeness was also a target for his humour too,

[86] The desacralization thesis is laid out in Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralisation of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1990); and Dale Van Kley, 'The Religious Origins of the Revolution, 1560–1791', in Peter R. Campbell, *The Origins of the French Revolution* (Houndmills, 2006), 160–90. See too the critique of Jens Ivo Engels, 'Désigner, espérer, assumer la réalité: le roi de France perçu par ses sujets, 1680–1750', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 50 (2003), 96–126, and *idem*, 'Beyond Sacral Monarchy: A New Look at the Image of the Early Modern French Monarchy', *French History*, 15 (2001), 139–58.

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and he revelled in Rabelais-style slumming in popular culture. Far from looking forward to a new age of reason and good manners, moreover, Saint-Aubin looked fondly back on a rumbustious and fictive 'Merry France', and sought to effect its recovery, anachronistically of course. If there was anything of the Revolutionary about him, it was the backward-looking Revolutionary. Revolutionary, Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin? *Son cul* is the more obvious response.

Furthermore, we lose much about Charles-Germain in seeking to slot him into any prefabricated social or political identity. What is most striking about his humour was its deliberate predilection for crossing borders and denying stable identities – even and especially that most stolid bourgeois identity which everything else that we know about his life proclaims. His 'laughing over boundaries' operated in contradictory, paradoxical ways. His laughter transcended boundaries; but boundary-breaking was also the subject of much of his humour. Social (and sexual) climbing was for him a cardinal sin, and he reserved his most acerbic laughter for those (like his patron, Madame de Pompadour) who thought they could cross boundaries with impunity – but were found out, so to speak, and commonly mocked for their pretentiousness. Charles-Germain was a serial boundary-breaker, and the crossing of boundaries of every sort – from social frontiers through to artistic styles and genres, and the very distinction between the world and the imagination, and between reality and fantasy – were hard-wired into his being. But he refrained from revealing his views and evaded being ever found out to be the author of these drawings. Secrecy was not only a pragmatic lifeline. Coming out with such drawings would have transformed him and them into something they emphatically were not.

It is probably more profitable, in conclusion, to rank the Saint-Aubin *Livre de caricatures* less as a case-history than as a microhistory, drawing its value not from any putative representative value but from its stubborn exceptionalism. Our French royal embroiderer, in this estimation, would be the same frame as Menocchio, the wild, heterodox Friulian miller at the centre of Carlo Ginzburg's classic microhistorical study *The Cheese and the Worms*.[87] We find in both figures not the fixed and replicable *mentalité* of a preexistent social category, but rather a quirkily individual temperament, invaluable to the historian precisely because of its untypicality and its exceptionality. Yet Menocchio never laughed – or if he did Carlo Ginzburg kept quiet about it. Spending time in the company of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin was (and is) fun. He made people laugh. And although my whole approach in this paper has been to argue that humour is radically incommensurable between time periods – that it just does not travel – I

[87] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, English trans. (Baltimore, MD, 1980).

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hope in a way that my argument has not been totally convincing. For it is difficult not to come away from the *Livre de caricatures* without a contagious sense of the idiosyncratic warmth, charm, humour and humanity of a figure – 'likeable, witty, clever, very caustic, very satirical, very gallant with the ladies, and never out of place wherever he went' – whose *Livre de caricatures* challenges us to think more deeply about a very serious question: how can we hope to write the history of laughter – without crossing boundaries?

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