



Creating Communities and Discussing Citizenship through Juridical Parody (France and Burgundy, Fifteenth Century)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The year is 1497.¹ In the city of Metz, in Northeast France, the *bourgeois* (citizen) Jehan Aubrion (1440–1501) attends the Carnival festivities in his town and writes about the celebrations in his diary:

¹ This research is part of the VIDI project ‘Uncovering Joyful Culture: Parodic Literature and Practices in and Around the Low Countries (Thirteenth–Seventeenth Centuries)’, directed by Katell Lavéant at Utrecht University from 2016–2022, and financed by the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek/Dutch Research Council (NWO).

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Item, the weather was very beautiful, people rejoiced greatly, and went raving through the city in great company; Lords and Ladies, *bourgeois et bourgeoises*, Church people and other sorts of people, each one of his kind. Among the others, there was a *joyant* who came out of the house of Lord Renault Le Gornais, the young *échevin* of Neufbourg; who was well over fifteen feet high and went through the town, he was a real merryman. And, on the day of Carême, at night, the foresaid *joyant* went out of the house of the aforementioned Lord Renault, and went to betroth a *joyande*, in the inn of Lord Nicholas de Heu, [she was] taller than the foresaid *joyant*. The said *joyant* and the said *joyande* were made of very subtle straws. And the clerk of the foresaid Lord Renault carried the *joyant*, and one of the servants of the said Lord Nicholas de Heu carried the said *joyande*; and they were so covered by their clothing that only the feet of those who carried them could be seen. And so they went to the town, with the *joyant* in front and the *joyande* afterwards, accompanied by the said Lord Nicholas de Heu, the said Lord Renault, Lord Nicholas Remiat, then *maître-échevin* of Metz, the abbot of a [joyful] company in Porsailis, and the women of the said company, richly adorned and dressed. And it was a joyous thing, and all the people ran after them to see them. And, on their return, they went to the court of the said Lord Nicholas de Heu; and there they played a joyful farce, and then they took the said *joyant* and the said *joyande* to the inn of the said Lord Renault du Neufbourg.²

² Jean Aubrion, *Journal de Jehan Aubrion, bourgeois de Metz, avec sa continuation par Pierre Aubrion, 1465–1512*, ed. Lorédan Larchey (Metz, F. Blanc, 1857), 396–397. *Item, pour le beau temps qu'il faisoit, les gens se reioyssoient fort, et alloient raver par la ville a grant compaignie; seigneurs et dames, bourgeois et bourgeoises, gens d'église et autres manieres de gens, chacun à sa sorte. Entre les autres, y ot ung joyant qui yssoit hors de la maison seigneur Renalt Le Gornais, l'eschevin le jonne, en Nuefbourg; qui estoit bien xv piet de hault et alloit par la ville, comme se fut estez ung propre joyant. Et, le jour de caresme, (de) nuyt, le dit joiant yssit hors de la maison du dit seigneur Renalt, et allit fiancer une joyande, en l'ostel du seigneur Nicole de Heu, plux grande que le dit joyant. Lequel dit joiant et la dite joyande estoient fais de cherpignies bien subtillement. Et pourtoit le clerc du dit seigneur Renalt le dit joyant, et ung des serviteurs du dit seigneur Nicole de Heu, portoit la dite joyande; et estoient tellement couvert de lor abbit cons ne veoit que les piedz de ceux qui les pourtoient. Et ainssy s'en allont avalt la ville, le joyant devant et la joyande après, acompaigniez du dit seigneur Nicole de Heu, du dit seigneur Renalt, de seigneur Nicole Remiat, alors maistre eschevin de Mets, de l'abbé d'une compaignie à Porsailis, et des femmes de la dite compaignie bien richement parées et abillées. Et estoit chose joieuse merveilleusement; et couroit tout le peuple après pour les veoir. Et, au retour, ilz allont en la court du dit seigneur Nicole de Heu; et yllc fut jowée une farce joieuse, et après ons emmenait le dit joyant et la dite joyande en l'ostel du dit seigneur Renalt du Nuefbourg.*

This fragment illustrates some of the most important elements of late medieval urban festivities: a parade in which straw puppets are carried around, a mock marriage ceremony between two puppets, the performance of comic play and a banquet at an inn. In addition, this quotation shows that people of all layers of society were involved in the festive events, such as noblemen and noble women, citizens, the clergy, but also innkeepers, amateur dramatists and city councillors. Moreover, groups of people from surrounding towns were invited as well, such as the joyful company of the village of Porsailis, which is nowadays part of the city of Metz itself. All these different people were brought together to celebrate the last days before the upcoming period of Lent. Since Lent was marked by abstinence and penitence in commemoration of Christ's fasting in the desert, the previous days became, in contrast, a time of liberation from ordinary social and moral constraints.

During such festive events, parodies, or role reversals, played an important role, for instance during the aforementioned false wedding ceremony and the comic farce, which could take the form of a mock sermon by a festive priest or a parodic inauguration by a festive king, the authority responsible for the organisation of a festival.³ The purposes of such reversals of the ordinary world were multi-faceted and multi-layered, but three main goals have been discerned. In the first place, theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin have often seen role rehearsals in terms of a 'safety valve' theory, that is, as 'rituals of rebellion' that allow controlled, safe release of the tensions of hierarchical society, set apart from the normal and everyday world.⁴ Second, but still drawing on this, Natalie Zemon Davis argued that Carnival was more than merely a 'safety valve': according to her, it could reinforce the existing order, but it could also criticise it, and sometimes underpin rebellion, depending on the circumstances.⁵ More recently, it has been argued that parody brought people from all layers of society together to discuss ideas about social conduct and contemporary

³ Katell Lavéant, 'Obscène chevauchée? Théâtre, charivari et présence féminine dans la culture joyeuse à Lyon au milieu du XVI^e siècle', *Revue d'histoire du theatre* 269 (2016): 32.

⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Herman Pleij, *Het gilde van de De Blauwe Schuit: literatuur, volksfeest en burgermoraal in de late middeleeuwen* (Muiderberg, Coutinho, 1979).

⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 41–75.

issues, such as religious reform, differences between the rich and the poor, and authority in the city.⁶ Although these three views can be considered contradictory, all scholars agree that medieval parodies encompass collective activities that use role-inversion for expressive purposes, in which the negation of the established order provides a temporary opening for alternative systems to flourish. Characteristically, these parodies reinterpret certain fixed ritual acts and texts, such as religious sermons, commandments or juridical contracts, testaments or ordinances, and propose a comic content for these well-known formats, thus creating an amusing effect for the audience.⁷

Although some branches of medieval parodic texts and rituals associated with Carnival festivities have been studied in depth in relation to their impact on late medieval societies, such as comic plays (*sotties, farces*) that were performed and parades that were organised in cities like Lyon, Rouen and Paris, we still lack a profound study of many other festive texts that were presented during festivities. There is, for example, a large group of juridical parodies, more specifically the *mandements joyeux* or joyful ordinances, that were also performed during festive events. These *mandements joyeux* can be considered one of the most important performative dialogues initiated by festive authorities to evaluate civic order together with the citizens of a particular town, so that a renewed order could be established in the city after the events.⁸ In this respect, parody, and juridical parody in particular, functioned as a *discourse of citizenship*. For the Late Medieval period, the question of citizenship, which can be defined as the relation between the individual and the state, has mostly been studied from a political and legal point of view.⁹ However, more recently the notion of citizenship has come to focus not only on its

⁶ Katell Lavéant and Cécile de Morrée, 'Les festivités joyeuses et leur production littéraire: pratiques parodiques en scène et en textes, en France et en Europe (XVIe - XVIIIe s.). Introduction', *Cahier de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 37, no. 1 (2019): 275–276.

⁷ Aurélie Godet, 'Behind the Masks, the Politics of Carnival', *Journal of Festive Studies* 20, no. 1 (2020): 1–31.

⁸ For a full study of the *mandements joyeux*, see: Rozanne Versendaal, 'Le mandement joyeux et la culture joyeuse en France et dans les anciens Pays-Bas (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)' (PhD diss., Utrecht University, 2022), <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/416578>.

⁹ See, for example, Phil Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth. Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); James

legal dimensions but also on those that are social and cultural.¹⁰ Cultural expressions and social events shaped notions on citizenship as much as political decisions and juridical documents. As such, these discourses can be considered as discursive practices of members of urban communities allowing them to engage with civic life and to participate in events organised in their town.¹¹

In this article, it will be argued that parody, as part of medieval festive culture, was used by festive authorities as a discourse on citizenship in order to shape political and religious identity. To illustrate this, the article will study two *mandements joyeux*, written and performed in urban communities in fifteenth-century Burgundy and Northern France. The focus will be on the texts themselves and on the urban contexts in which this type of parody played a major role: Carnival celebrations in Valenciennes and religious reform in Compiègne. Together, these two case studies can shed light on how parody allowed individuals and groups to engage in discussions about political and religious issues related to their cities and authorities.

This article will first introduce the *mandement joyeux* as a cultural phenomenon by situating it more broadly in the context of medieval parody. It will then turn to the first of the two case studies: the *Mandement de froidure pour le roy de le pye* (1460), written by the francophone Burgundian rhetorician Jean Molinet (1435–1507), and explore how this *mandement joyeux* contributed to the dissemination of political ideas concerning inclusive communities in late medieval Valenciennes. The second case study will show how the joyful ordinance of the *Complaincte*

Casey, *Family and Community in Early Modern Spain: The Citizens of Granada, 1570–1739* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Dorota Pietrzyk-Reeves, *Polish Republican Discourse in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

¹⁰ See, for example, Nick Stevenson, *Culture and Citizenship* (London: Sage, 2001).

¹¹ This article adopts a broader definition of ‘citizenship discourse’ than the NWO VICI project *Citizenship Discourses in the Early Middle Ages, 400–1600*, that focuses on ancient Latin words related to city, citizen and belonging to a community of citizens. However, for the Late Medieval and Early Modern period, scholars prefer to use a larger definition of citizenship discourse and include in their analyses all types of discursive expressions related to the participation of individuals and groups in towns and cities. This is also the broader definition of ‘citizenship discourse’ that will be used in this article. For examples, please see: James S. Amelung, *Writing Cities. Exploring Early Modern Urban Discourse* (Budapest/New York: Central European University Press, 2019).

en matiere de nostre diabolique (1477, author unknown) advocated new ideas about religious reform for citizens in the city of Compiègne. It is important to mention that a selection of two texts was made within a broader corpus of parodic texts. In this article, a representative picture of the form and function of *mandements joyeux* in two late medieval cities in Burgundy and Northern France will be given, but this picture is necessarily not exhaustive.

2 PARODIC DISCOURSES AND THEIR FUNCTIONING IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL CITY

As Martha Bayless has shown in her studies about medieval parody in Latin, medieval parody shares with modern definitions of parody the idea that it is ‘an intentionally humorous literary (written) text that achieves its effect by imitating and distorting the distinguishing characteristics of literary genres, styles, authors, or specific texts’.¹² However, medieval parody had a particular character: instead of relying on the eccentricities of individual texts to ensure reader recognition (one of the main characteristics of modern parody), medieval parodists took as their ‘models’ the most widely known texts, such as sermons, ordinances, testaments and prognostic texts. Medieval authors parodied the classic and the conventional rather than anything else.¹³ In the same vein, John A. Yunck has argued that ‘[a]ges – or individuals – which respect tradition and value orthodoxy [...] tend to parody those works which they value most, rather than those which they wish to ridicule [...]. The text is the parodist’s weapon, not his target’.¹⁴ Parodic texts were thus humorous imitations of well-known formats, but did not necessarily ridicule the format they imitated. This is what Yunck describes as ‘exemplary parody’.¹⁵

Besides being ‘exemplary’, medieval parody is, according to Bayless, primarily social. This ‘social parody’ entails the act of ‘imitating [...] while in addition satirising or focusing on non-literary customs, events,

¹² Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages. The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 3.

¹³ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 3–5.

¹⁴ John A. Yunck, ‘The Two Faces of Parody’, *Iowa English Yearbook* 8 (1963): 29–37, here 36–37.

¹⁵ Yunck, ‘The Two Faces of Parody’, 36.

or persons'.¹⁶ Whereas most scholars often see engagement with extra-literary social issues as outside the compass of their study of parody, Bayless considers it a crucial feature of medieval parody that it satirises something other than (only) the text or genre it parodies. Social parody was, according to Bayless,

by far the more popular category of the genre and served as the vehicle for a significant proportion of medieval satire. Parodies went under the guise of the most familiar literature of the day – the Bible, liturgy, sermons, decrees – but the ridicule was often directed at [for example] illicit drinking, gambling, gluttony, ecclesiastical corruption, or the vileness of the peasantry.¹⁷

This social function of parody becomes particularly visible in urban spaces, as these were the places where most parodies were written, disseminated and performed. In fact, the parodies studied by Bayless can—especially when it comes to their performance and printing in the late medieval period—all be situated in an urban context.¹⁸ Well-known parodies such as the joyful Sermon on St. Nobody (*Sermo de sancto Nemine*)—which treats the Latin word *Nemo*, meaning no one or nobody, as a name, and quotes the Bible to give an account of this saint's extraordinary deeds—were printed in the vernacular in larger cities and printing centres such as Paris and Lyon, and were distributed from here (see Fig. 1).¹⁹ From readers' annotations found in early sixteenth-century editions of the Sermon on St. Nobody, it is known that this parody was read by students in catholic theology in Louvain, to learn preaching conventions, but at the same time this parody was performed before a wide Parisian audience during Carnival festivities.²⁰ The aim of the performance of

¹⁶ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 3.

¹⁷ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 5.

¹⁸ Andrea Livini, 'Étude de la circulation de la Cena Cypriani durant le Moyen-Âge', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 160 (2012): 309–358.

¹⁹ M. Merback, 'Nobody Dares: Freedom, Dissent, Self-Knowing, and Other Possibilities in Sebald Beham's Impossible', *Renaissance Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2010): 1037–1105.

²⁰ Ben Parson and Bas Jongenelen, 'The Sermon on Saint Nobody: A Verse Translation of a Middle Dutch Parodic Sermon', *Journal of American Folklore* 123 (2010): 92–107; Jelle Koopmans and Paul Verhuyck, *Sermon joyeux et truanderie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987).

the Sermon on St. Nobody for a broader audience was to temporarily ridicule saints' lives in general (various improbable deeds are attributed to the figure of Nobody/*Nemo*), so that the reading of hagiographical texts was taken even more seriously outside of the festive context, especially during Lent.²¹ With regard to the differences between satire and parody, one could also argue that the Sermon on St. Nobody is somewhat critical about hagiography, and therefore rather satirical than parodic. With regard to medieval texts, however, scholars agree that parody can be considered as one of the subgenres of satire.²² Parody can be a strategy, a rhetorical means, to achieve critical ends and to advocate new ideas.

The Sermon on St. Nobody scrupulously imitates the medieval sermon following the rules of the *ars praedicandi*. Joyful ordinances such as the *Mandement de froidure* and the *Complaincte en matiere de nostre diabolique*, which will be discussed in the next sections, were written according to the regular model and formulas of medieval diplomacy, as demonstrated in the *ars dictaminis*. The internal organisation of joyful ordinances is therefore often highly formulaic, the conventions in use varying little according to time and place.²³ In general, the joyful ordinances consist of three parts (the initial protocol, the text and the final protocol) and respect (most of) the following elements:

Part 1—The initial protocol:

1. invocation: an invocation of the deity;
2. superscription: a passage which identifies the authority issuing the document;
3. address: the part of the document that specifies the recipient(s).
Ordinances were public proclamations and not private letters, which

²¹ Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 7.

²² See among others the classical studies on parody by Gilbert Highet and Linda Hutcheon: Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

²³ Anna Adamska, 'L'ars dictaminis a-t-elle été possible en langue vernaculaire?', in *Le dictamen dans tous ses états. Perspectives de recherche sur la théorie et la pratique de l'ars dictaminis (XIe-XVe siècles)*, ed. Benoît Grévin and Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 389–414, here 413. On the rhetorics of the *ars dictaminis*, see: Martin Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis, Ars Dictandi* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991); Benoît Grévin, 'L'ars dictaminis entre enseignement et pratique (XII–XIVe siècle)', *Revue de Synthèse* 133, no. 2 (2012): 175–193.

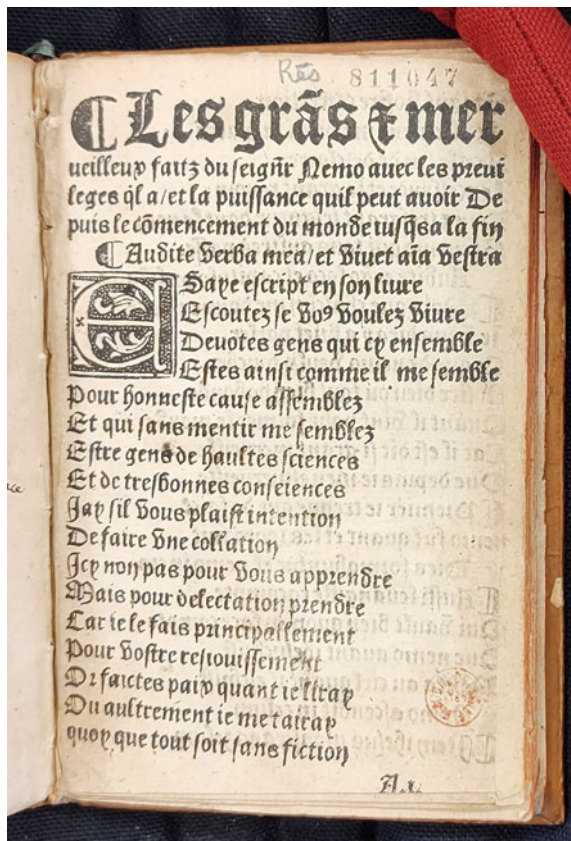


Fig. 1 Anon., *Les grans et merueilleux faitz du seigneur Nemo*. Lyon, Pierre de Sainte-Lucie, 1540. Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale, 811047 (Photograph Rozanne Versendaal)

is why they are often not addressed to one specific recipient, but to various (kinds of) citizens;

4. salutation: the (ceremonious) greeting, suggesting strongly that the writ was designed to be read aloud.

Part 2—The text:

5. preamble: the preamble is a general introduction to the ordinance, explaining the exact motives for the promulgation of the act;
6. notification: the notification is a formula expressing the authority's will by means of specific verbs, such as *faire savoir* in French;
7. exposition: the exposition reveals the background to or circumstances of the act;
8. disposition: the disposition reveals the essential content of the act, that is the orders;
9. injunction: the injunction requires the fulfilment of the act;
10. sanction: an enumeration of the punishments in case of disobedient behaviours with regard to the orders.

Part 3—The final protocol:

11. date: the final protocol first includes a dating clause, stating when and where the act was completed;
12. subscription: the subscription entails signatures confirming the correctness of the document and a list of witnesses.

To give a better and more precise idea of the joyful ordinance, the example of the *Mandement de froidure* will be used to describe its characteristics and its functioning.

The *Mandement de froidure pour le roy de le pie* (Ordinance of the Cold for the King of the Drinks) is known from the manuscript Tournai, Bibliothèque communale, MS 105, fol. 240v. Unfortunately destroyed during the Second World War, it contained several works from Jean Molinet. A critical edition was realised by Noël Dupire in 1936–1939, which is the reason why scholars still have access to this source.²⁴ The *Mandement de froidure* is a poem of 120 syllables, in which an authority, the King of the Drinks, the ‘pye’,²⁵ reveals himself in a superscription. He gathers his troops (the recipients) for a battle (the disposition) in order

²⁴ Jean Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz de Jean Molinet*, ed. Noël Dupire, vol. 2 (Paris: Société des Anciens textes français, 1936–1939), 732–735. Our study is based on the transcription provided by Dupire.

²⁵ CNRS and Université de Lorraine, *Dictionnaire du moyen français (1330–1500)* (2012), <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/definition/pic2>.

to regain the drinks that he obviously had lost because the King of Lent took them from him (specified in a preamble, verses 1–24). The king’s soldiers (described in verses 29–74, with many bodily, sexual metaphors, as poor, sick, drunk) benefit from the help of ‘eleven or twelve thousand cunts’, which are specified in the penultimate part of the poem (verses 89–110).²⁶ After the battle, the soldiers will be rewarded with alcoholic drinks. The ordinance concludes with a joyful date and subscription (verses 115–120). The ordinance is, for example, dictated in the ‘Palace of the Cold’ (verse 117),²⁷ ‘The twentieth of this month of ginger’ (verse 116),²⁸ a reference to the month of February, when ginger (‘gingembre’) is harvested. This date refers to carnivalesque festivities that took place in this month in preparation for Lent.²⁹

The form of the text may not be immediately recognisable to modern readers as an ordinance. However, this was very different for the medieval public, which was confronted with ordinances on a daily basis. Because the *Mandement de froidure* used a fixed, recognisable form to convey a festive message related to Carnival, the parodic effect was immediately obvious to medieval audiences. But what exactly is the link between the *Mandement de froidure* and the notion of citizenship? This requires a contextualisation of the joyful ordinance in the city of Valenciennes.

²⁶ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 734, verse 88. *bien onze ou douze mil cons.*

²⁷ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 735, verse 117. *pallais de froidure.*

²⁸ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 735, verse 116. *Le vintiesme de ce moys de gingembre.*

²⁹ Jean-Claude Aubailly, ‘Théâtre médiéval et fêtes calendaires’, *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 11, no. 1 (1980): 5–12; Jean-Claude Aubailly, ‘Théâtre médiéval et fêtes calendaires ou l’histoire d’une subversion’, *Between Folk and Liturgy*, ed. Alan J. Fletcher and Wim Hüskens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 31–64.

3 REINFORCING CIVIC COHESION THROUGH PARODY: MOLINET'S *MANDEMENT DE FROIDURE* AND THE INTEGRATION OF VALENCIENNES IN PHILIP THE GOOD'S BURGUNDIAN STATE

Valenciennes was part of the County of Hainault. During the fifteenth century, however, under Philip the Good, the city was re-attached to Burgundy and lost its independence.³⁰ Valenciennes in this period had several important authors working for the Dukes of Burgundy, Jean Molinet among them.³¹ As Katell Lavéant and Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès have argued, this author wrote the joyful ordinances presented in the *Mandement de froidure* for the organisers of the Carnival festivities of the city of Valenciennes, around the year 1460.³² Despite the fact that Jean Molinet was primarily a chronicler in the service of Philip the Good and, from 1467 on, Charles the Bold and Philip the Handsome, Dukes of Burgundy, the example of the *Mandement de froidure* shows that Jean Molinet was closely connected to the city councillors as well and that he was one of the authors who was consulted when the city had to organise a Carnival festival for its inhabitants.³³ This intermediary role of writers in Valenciennes has been described in detail by literary historian Jane Gilbert. According to Gilbert, writers performed a negotiatory role between the Duke and the town council, something that was certainly needed at a time when Valenciennes had to give up its autonomy

³⁰ Graeme Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy: Political and Historical Culture at Court in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 1997).

³¹ Jean Devaux, 'Molinet, Jean', in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016).

³² Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès and Katell Lavéant, 'Le Mandement de froidure de Jean Molinet: la culture joyeuse, un pont entre la cour de Bourgogne et les milieux urbains', in *Jean Molinet et son temps: actes des rencontres internationales de Dunkerque, Lille et Gand (8–10 novembre 2007)*, ed. Estelle Doudet, Jean Devaux, and Élodie Lecuppre-Desjardins (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 67–82.

³³ Jelle Koopmans, 'Rhétorique de cour et rhétorique de ville', in *Rhetoric – Rhétoriqueurs – Rederijkers*, ed. Kees Meerhoff (Amsterdam: KNAW, 1995), 67–81. On Jean Molinet and court poetry and history, see: Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, 'Poetry and History', in *Knowing Poetry. Verse in Medieval France from the 'Rose' to the 'Rhétoriqueurs'*, ed. Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 49–70.

for Philip's centralisation policy.³⁴ For example, writers contributed texts for festivals and helped organising festive events.³⁵ These festivals also facilitated the integration of separate territories into the Burgundian possessions.

From archival sources, it is known that the city councillors of Valenciennes, under the guidance of a festive authority called the Prince of Pleasure ('Prince de Plaisance'³⁶), were responsible for the organisation of festive events. The Prince of Pleasure was generally elected for one year. In Valenciennes, assuming this role of festive authority was a costly affair. The Prince and the festive committee (also elected for one year) did not only pay for all the events, but they also had to invite the town people, they had to form groups of amateur dramatists for the occasion (the so-called joyful companies), and they had to send invitations to people and groups in surrounding villages.³⁷ For example, the letter of invitation sent by the Prince of Pleasure to the neighbouring towns in 1448, inviting them to the Pleasure festival which was to take place in May of that year, stated that the festivities were organised 'to maintain the friendships, communications and conversations of the [...] inhabitants of the cities, towns and villages [...], and to revive all love and pleasure and recreational activities together'.³⁸ This quotation emphasises that the Prince of Pleasure did not only invite the people from other towns to reinforce the relationships with them, but also to discuss and communicate several issues in a joyful setting. The hospitality of the organisers was also shown to Valenciennes' inhabitants. From other archival sources that concern festivals in Valenciennes in the early sixteenth century, it is known that during parades '[q]uantities of newly-minted silver deniers were thrown, upon which the people shouted: "generosity, generosity from the Prince

³⁴ Jane Gilbert, 'Valenciennes (Hainault)', in *Europe. A Literary History, 1348–1418*, ed. David Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53–69.

³⁵ Gilbert, 'Valenciennes (Hainault)', 64–65.

³⁶ Katell Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières: la culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord aux XVe et XVIe siècles* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2012), 57.

³⁷ On these festive authorities, see: Torsten Hiltmann (ed.), *Les 'autres' rois: Études sur la royauté comme notion hiérarchique dans la société au bas Moyen Âge et au début de l'époque moderne* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2010).

³⁸ *Pour entretenir les amitiés, communications et conversations des manans et habitans des villes, bourgs et villaiges a nous prochaines et voisines, et meismes pour resveiller toute amour et plaisance et nous recreer par ensemble.* Quoted in Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières*, 57.

of [Pleasure at] Valenciennes”³⁹. In other words: coins were distributed among the participants of the festivities, and this was perceived by the people as an act of kindness. It gave them the impression that their city councillors had their best interests at heart and cared about the city and its inhabitants.

To have a better understanding of the ways in which specifically parody functioned as a discourse of citizenship during festivities in Valenciennes, the analysis of the *Mandement de froidure* by Molinet can be helpful. There are several indications in this joyful ordinance that this text may have been an invitation from the Prince of Pleasure for the inhabitants of Valenciennes and surrounding towns. For example, there are several lists of enrolment which, through the lens of a war metaphor, must be understood as a form of invitation. The festive king, the King of the Drinks, for example, calls for his ‘arrière-ban’ to enjoin all the soldiers who owe him obedience to rally with him in order to regain a couple of stolen drinks (‘[we] command you all of you [to] be ready for battle’⁴⁰). Instead of commanding his soldiers to follow him on a noble mission, which was often the case in official royal ordinances, the King of the Drinks of the parodic *Mandement de froidure* orders his subjects to reclaim some drinks confiscated by a hostile king. In the context of Carnival, this is not surprising. The ‘soldiers’, or the men participating in the joyful celebrations, are united in a battle against attempts to limit their freedom during Lent. However, apart from the ‘soldiers’ of the King of the Drinks, there is another category of people, namely women, who can help accomplish the mission. These women are described as vaginas of all kinds:

For in adjuvants [...],
 We have eleven or twelve thousand vaginas:
 [We] have vaginas in detail or in bulk,
 Vaginas in one blank and vaginas in half a blank,
 Vaginas in two columns and vaginas in two sheets,
 Vaginas with sleeves, vaginas with double eyelets [...].⁴¹

³⁹ Original text unknown. Quoted in: Godet, ‘Behind the Masks, The Politics of Carnival’, 4.

⁴⁰ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 733, verse 27. *a tous vous commandons [et] vous trouvés prestz pour livrer bataille.*

⁴¹ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 735, verse 89–94. *Car en aide, avec poix et baccons, Nous avons bien onze ou douze mil cons; cons a detail avons et cons en gros, a en aide avec*

This list, which could be interpreted as an obscene speech, continues with the enumeration of another thirty different vaginas. Until now, it has often been regarded as a misogynistic discourse, seeking gender inequality and the sexual objectification and degradation of women.⁴² However, in relation to this list, Katell Lavéant recently stated that this is not necessarily the case. She argues that the *Mandement de froidure* plays with vulgarity and language in a way that would have appealed to both men and women, far from being insulting towards female audiences. In the joyful ordinance, the vaginas have the same level of military expertise as men as is confirmed in the *mandement* when the King of the Drinks encourages the vaginas to join the men's army:

Come forward, [you cunts], without us hurting each other,
To help us and to serve the empire.⁴³

In fact, the women are essential to defeating the hostile king, who restricts not only eating and drinking during Lent but also engaging in sexual relationships. The poem therefore offers a fresh perspective on the relationships between men and women by showing the sexes fighting together to protect their right to bodily and sexual freedom. It also implies that the festivities organised were inclusive and accessible to both sexes. In addition, the long lists of enrolment give the impression that the festivities were aimed at people from all social strata. Parodic texts like the *Mandement de froidure* in this way ensure that social cohesion is enhanced and that all people are encouraged to participate in society. During the performance of parody, values such as cooperation and mutual aid are emphasised. The discourse of citizenship put forward in *Mandement de froidure* is therefore a discourse around civic engagement, inclusion, participation, collaboration and equality.

le Cons a ung blanc et cons a demy gros, cons a deux rengs, cons a doubles foellés, cons a manches, cons a doubles oeillés.

⁴² See in particular: Denis Hüe, 'Des mots dorés aux mots de gueule, étude sur le thème de l'or chez Molinet', *L'or au Moyen Âge: Monnaie, métal, objets, symbole*, ed. William Câlin, Jean Lacroix, and Jean Arrouye (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 1983), 186–207.

⁴³ Molinet, *Les Faictz et dictz*, 735, verse 111. *Venés avant, sans ce qu'on nous empire, Pour nous aidier et pour servir l'empire [...]*.

Most of these texts used in joyful associations, however, were never intended to be kept, because they were only relevant during one specific occasion.⁴⁴ This was probably also the case for the *Mandement de froidure*, which is not included in any of the numerous editions of Jean Molinet's *Les faictz et dictz* that were printed in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ Related to this is the idea that parodic and comic literature can be characterised by its 'situatedness' and that its meaning and identity depend largely on the specifics of particular social and cultural contexts.⁴⁶ This also implies that the emphasis on cooperation and equality in the *Mandement de froidure* was meant specifically for the inhabitants of Valenciennes, in a specific moment in history. In the context of the year 1460, this is not surprising. After a civil war, Philip the Good wrested the county Hainault from Jacqueline of Bavaria, finally, in 1433. This was also the moment when the city of Valenciennes lost its autonomy. The process of integration into Philip's Burgundian State caused several political agitations in Valenciennes, varying from protests against Philip's desire to make of Valenciennes a significant bulwark against France, to disputes about official languages (there were Romance speakers in the town, but also Low German, Rhenish and Dutch).⁴⁷ Philip's broader political agenda aimed at producing an overarching construct, if not an identity, able to weld together his disparate domains, centralising his courts and forming his nascent nation-state. In this process, literature not only served as a means to justify his political authority, but also to promote unity in the Burgundian agglomeration.⁴⁸ In this context, the *Mandement de froidure* can be seen as a text encouraging this unity among the inhabitants of Valenciennes and surrounding villages and towns, rather than linguistic, religious or political division.

⁴⁴ Rozaliya Yaneva, *Misrule and Reversals: Carnivalesque Performances in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2013), 267.

⁴⁵ For an overview of these editions, see: Adrian Armstrong, "'Imprimé en la ville marchande et renommée d'Anvers': Antwerp Editions of Jean Molinet's Poetry", in *Between Stability and Transformation: Textual Traditions in the Medieval Netherlands*, ed. Renée Gabriël and Johan Oosterman (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016), 123–137.

⁴⁶ Jelle Koopmans, 'La parodie en situation. Approches du texte festif de la fin du Moyen Âge', *CRMH*, 15, (2008): 2. 'Le texte médiéval est souvent, de par sa nature performative, lié à des circonstances concrètes plutôt qu'à un « canon littéraire »'.

⁴⁷ Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy*, 162.

⁴⁸ Small, *George Chastelain and the Shaping of Valois Burgundy*, 162–164.

Thus, the festivities, and parody in particular, also took on political significance, which fitted perfectly into Philip of Burgundy's strategic aims.

However, *mandements joyeux* were not only used as a political tool to promote certain citizenship discourses about collaboration and cohesion but were also written to articulate that citizenship embraced first and foremost a religious identity. What this form of faith was like for Burgundian citizens is described in the *Complaincte en matiere de nostre diabolique*, a text composed in the city of Compiègne. This *mandement joyeux* will be discussed in the remaining part of this article.

4 RELIGIOUS LIFE IN COMPIÈGNE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE *COMPLAINCTE EN MATIERE DE NOSTRE DIABOLIQUE* AND THE SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE *DEVOTIO MODERNA*

From the twelfth century onwards, parody was also used in joyful ordinances sent by a particular type of authority, the Devil. These parodic ordinances, which are also called *Epistolae Luciferi* or Devil's letters, gained more and more acceptance in the thirteenth century and became widespread in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁴⁹ The purpose of these letters, which were written in Latin and in the vernacular, was to satirise the corrupt morality of ecclesiastics and to attack ecclesiastical governance in cities such as Rome and Avignon. The form of the Devil's letters follows the format of the official ordinances which were read during festivities.⁵⁰ As such, they were comparable to the festive *mandements joyeux*. The letters seem to have been particularly popular in places amenable to both political and religious reform, which the example of the *Complaincte en matiere de nostre diabolique* (Complaint about our devilishness) can illustrate.

⁴⁹ Chris Schabel, 'Lucifer princeps tenebrarum ... The Epistola Luciferi and Other Correspondence of the Cistercian Pierre Ceffons (fl. 1348–1353)', *Vivarium* 56, no. 1–2 (2018): 126–175.

⁵⁰ This was mainly the case for the *Epistolae* that circulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Before the *Epistolae Luciferi* were read in monastic milieux. See: Helen Feng, *Devil's Letters: Their History and Significance in Church and Society, 1100–1500* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1982). See also: Fanny Oudin, 'Lettres de Dieu, lettres du Diable: correspondances entre Terre, Ciel et Enfer', *Quêtes* 19 (2010): 37–55.

In the ordinance of the *Complaincte en matiere de nostre diabolique* (found in the manuscript Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS Vu 22, see Fig. 2), Lucifer first abundantly thanks ‘our foresaid daughter, holy Religion’⁵¹ for providing so many possibilities for abuses and corruptions in monasteries (e.g. ‘drinking and eating without mitigating’,⁵² ‘more in accordance with secular views’,⁵³ with ‘prideful hearts’,⁵⁴ while ‘abandon[ing] the service of God or shorten[ing] it’,⁵⁵ or ‘chat[ting] during the service of God’⁵⁶). From folio 97r of the manuscript onwards, with the formula ‘And we command and begin with these present [orders]’,⁵⁷ Lucifer gives specific orders (dispositions) to the recipients of the text and for this reason the *Complaincte* is a *mandement* and not only a letter. With his hellish court (‘We command and defend in the name of ourselves and our infernal court’⁵⁸), Lucifer forbids any religious reformation, because this would directly lead to a decrease in the influx of the residents of hell. The recipients must therefore maintain their bad habits:

[...] we command and begin with these present [orders] that you maintain and guard, with strong obstinacy, our daughter [the Church] in her abusive properties and possessions [...], namely envy, rancour, hatred, discord, dispute, secret manoeuvres, leagues, gangs, murmurs and other similar vice.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 445. *nostre dite fille sainte Religion.*

⁵² Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 445. *sans tenir mesure en boire et en menger.*

⁵³ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444. *plus conformes aux abits seculiers.*

⁵⁴ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444. *cuers pompeux et orgueilleux.*

⁵⁵ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444. *delaisser le service de Dieu ou l’abregier.*

⁵⁶ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444. *pour gengler pour baver [...] durant le service Dieu.*

⁵⁷ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 446. *‘Et mandonz et commercons par ces presentes.*

⁵⁸ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 446. *En faisant commandement et deffense de par nous et de par nostre cours infernale.*

⁵⁹ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 445. *[...] mandonz et commercons par ces presentes, que tu maintiengues et gardes, par forte obstinacion nostre dite fille, en sesdites possessions et saisines abusives [...], assavoir envye, rancune, hayne fraternelle, discord, litige, brigues, ligue, bandes, murmure et autres vices semblables.*

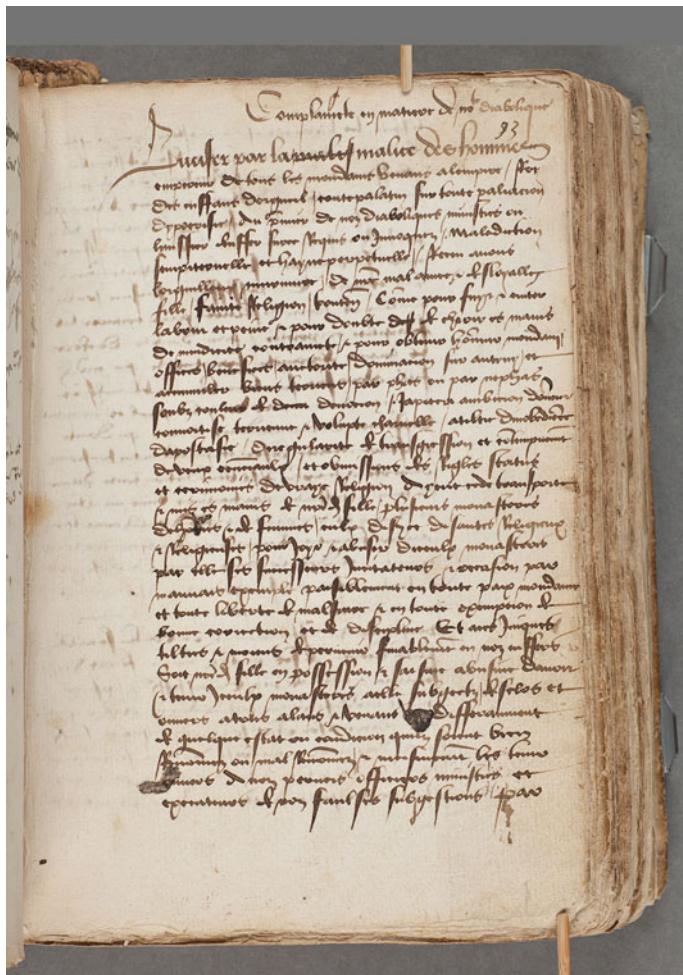


Fig. 2 First folio of the *Complainte en matiere de nostre diabolique*. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS Vu 22, fol. 93r (Reproduction National Library of Sweden)

Since he orders the maintenance of the abuses of the Church, Lucifer is thus opposed to any form of religious reform in general, and to monastic reforms in particular. However, it is remarkable that the *mandement* is based on a highly developed *praeteritio*, which speaks in detail about religious reforms and then prohibits them. Folios 96v and 97r set out the measures necessary to ‘reduce the state of religion to its first religious institution’,⁶⁰ the original aim of the reforms. After describing the reforms in detail, Lucifer states that exactly these measures he can never tolerate in the religious houses because they prevent monks and nuns from continuing the abuses. By this rhetorical figure of speech, the author of the *mandement diabolique* does not need to take full responsibility for his statement concerning measures of religious reform. At the same time, Lucifer uses the usual theological justifications for the actions necessary to achieve a higher form of devotion and a better religious life. The *praeteritio* is certainly intended to draw attention to a delicate, even confrontational or polemical subject, i.e. the proposals for reform. But what types of reforms Lucifer exactly wishes to prohibit?

The reforms are primarily concerned with the renewal of the religious impulse of the first Christians and the first Church, as the words ‘those in the monastery who care for the good of the community and the Reformation and who would like to return the state of religion to its first religious institution’⁶¹ show. In the spiritual houses, this impulse was characterised first of all by the spiritual union of monks and nuns in order to achieve purity of heart and the highest possible devotion (‘union, the more pleasing to God’⁶²). From folio 96r, the reforms are specified in a very precise manner:

[...] [c]ontrary to this, the Reformation, the daughter of Charity to Pursuit, established by the True Religion, has endeavoured and is endeavouring the said monasteries of high enclosures, so that no one may pass over, and of walls so closed and thick that neither men nor women other

⁶⁰ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444, l. 43. *reduire l'estat de religion à sa premiere institution religieuse.*

⁶¹ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444, ll. 41–43. *ceux et celles du monastere qui tendront au bien de la communaulte et a la Reformacion et qui voudroient reduire l'estat de religion a sa premiere institution religieuse.*

⁶² Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 444, l. 46 *plus complaire [...] a Dieu;* l. 49. *union [...].*

than the children of the True Religion may not enter them, nor see or look at them, nor speak to them through the boards or fences without license and good company. And of all individual wealth, [they must] make a common wealth, subject to the discretion of the prelate and the wise men or women, [they must] eat together in the same refectory, sleep in the same dormitory, have only one infirmary, the same habit of the same value and one will, that is to say, [that of] their prelate, prior or prioress, and [the Reformation has endeavoured and is endeavouring] to remove them from what was the community of apostates, that they have only one [individual] heart, one will, one affection [as opposed to the collective], and [the Reformation strives to] keep silence in the cloister, the dormitory, the refectory, and [to make them] attend divine service, sing beautifully, keep the true ceremonies and statutes of religion, while disturbing and preventing this suppliant [the Reformation] and its abusive possessions. [They do it] rightfully and for the right cause, as is the right cause, as it should be and again, every year and every day, to the great benefit and salvation of the souls [...].⁶³

To return to the ‘True Religion’, this passage suggests that it is first necessary to strictly separate the religious space and the outside world. The religious house must be a closed space into which only ‘children of the True Religion’ may enter. The creation of such a sacred space, separated from the laity, goes hand in hand with strict rules, imposed by the prior, the superior of the religious house.⁶⁴ In order to stimulate the union of the heart, the religious community must ‘eat together in the same

⁶³ Versendaal, ‘Le mandement joyeux’, 446, ll. 106–118. *[n]eantmoins Reformation, fille de Charité au Pourchas, et instauré de Vraye Religion, s’est efforcée et efforce clorre lesdits monasteres de la haulte closture, que personne n’y puisse pardessus passer, et de si close et espese muraille, que homme ne femme autres que les enfans de Vraye Religion, n’y puissent entrer, ne les veoir ou regarder, ne au postes ou treillis parler sans licence, et sans bonne compaignie; et de toute les bourses particulieres, faire une bourse commune, souzmettre a la discrecion du prelat et des discretz ou discrettes, menger ensemble en ung mesme refectoir, dormir en ung mesme dortoir, n’avoir que une infermerie, ung mesme habit d’ung mesme pris et couleur, une seule voulonté, c’est assavoir de leur prelat, prieur ou prieure, et les reduire que estoit le college des apostas, qui n’avoient que ung cuer, une voulonté, une affection, et faire tenir silence en cloistre, dortoir, reffectoir, et resider au service divin, chanter attraît, garder les vrayes ceremonies et status de religion, en troublant et empeschant ladite suppliante en sesdites abusives possessions. A droit et a bonne cause, deuement et de nouvel puis an et jour aura, au grant prouffit et salut des ames [...].*

⁶⁴ On the importance of this aspect for monastic life, see: June L. Mecham, *Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions. Gender, Material Culture, and Monasticism in Late Medieval Germany* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

refectory, sleep in the same dormitory'. Its members must participate in the Divine Office, sing with care and beauty and respect the ceremonies and statutes of the monastery. The final objective of all these activities is to come 'to the great benefit and salvation of the souls', i.e. to attain salvation.

The dating of the *mandement* reveals that this text must be placed at the end of the fifteenth century, more precisely in the year 1477, as the date of the ordinance suggests ('mil CCCC LXXVII'⁶⁵). The ordinance is therefore part of a rather specific context: it refers to the great influence of the pre-reformation spiritual movements of the second half of the fifteenth century. This period was characterised by major attempts at religious reform. Reform movements can be discerned among the Franciscan, Benedictine, Dominican and Augustinian orders, but also among the Brothers of the Common Life (Canons of Windesheim), belonging to the *devotio moderna* movement.⁶⁶ At the time of the composition of the *Complaincte en matiere de nostre diabolique*, the ideas about reforms were thus far from new. More precisely, the reforms proposed in the *Complaincte* are in line with the ideas of *devotio moderna*. This spiritual movement originated in the Low Countries and reached its greatest development in the fifteenth century, in the Eastern Low Countries, in the Burgundian agglomeration and in the Holy Roman Empire. The aim of the *devotio moderna* was to return to the way of life of the first Christians in order to recover the true Christian religion.⁶⁷ While following the models of early Christianity, the *devotio moderna* re-emphasised the importance of unity of heart and soul and thus the uniformity of practices in religious houses in order to achieve the greatest possible devotion.⁶⁸ The *devotio moderna* was also a strongly urban movement which is highlighted by the fact that their monasteries were located in the city centres. Religious life and the world outside merged from the moment a monk

⁶⁵ Versendaal, 'Le mandement joyeux', 446.

⁶⁶ Michel Kaplan and Patrick Boucheron, 'Grands centres monastiques et intellectuels en Occident', in *Le Moyen Âge, XI^e-XV^e siècle* (Paris: Bréal, 1994), 127; Jean-Marie Le Gall, 'Réformer l'Église catholique aux XV^e-XVII^e siècles: restaurer, rénover, innover?', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 56 (2003): 61-75.

⁶⁷ R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 216-227.

⁶⁸ R.T.M. van Dijk, C. Caspers, and R. Hofman, *Twaalf kapittels over het ontstaan, bloei en doorwerking van de moderne devotie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 255.

or nun stepped out of the door of the religious house. This mixed religious and urban life was an attractive concept for city councillors, who sometimes financially supported the formation of religious houses.⁶⁹

If one takes the provenance of the Vu 22 manuscript into account, most probably the city of Compiègne,⁷⁰ it is conceivable that this manuscript was produced in an urban environment that was associated with the ideas of the *devotio moderna*. Indeed, Compiègne was besieged and taken from the Kingdom of France by Philip the Good in the middle of the fifteenth century, which could explain the influence of the *devotio moderna*, that flourished in Burgundy, in this city.⁷¹ Again, the parodic mode of the joyful ordinance can be related to a political context, i.e. to promote spiritual renewal and purification of the French cloisters in and around Compiègne. In fact, this political ‘mission’ is also evident in the other texts bound in the manuscript. These texts are not parodic, but testify to an aversion to the Kingdom of France and a sympathy for the Burgundian State.

5 CONCLUSION: ENGAGING WITH CIVIC LIFE

Juridical parodies from the late Middle Ages, such as parodies of ordinances, were highly intertwined with specific social contexts. They were used by festive authorities in order to promote or shape political and religious identity in the city. In a performative context, they encouraged people to participate in city life. As such, parody can be considered a discourse of citizenship.

The parodies were versatile in the sense that they could be used for various purposes. The traditional view that parody entertained and provided relief from the authoritarian discourse of their ‘official’ counterparts does certainly play a role in certain situations, but this was not

⁶⁹ Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 227.

⁷⁰ There are notes by former owners of the manuscript on fols. 211v, 212r and 260v, with the signatures ‘Jehan de Jouengnes, controleur de Compiengne sur Oyse’, Claude Fauchet (1530–1601) and Paul Petau (1558–1614). These people came from the Compiègne region. On these notes, see the notice of the manuscript published on Arlima: <https://arlima.net/no/2243> (consulted on 2 July 2022).

⁷¹ M. Sommé, ‘Le testament d’Isabelle de Portugal et la dévotion moderne’, *Publications du centre européen d’études bourguignonnes: La dévotion moderne dans les pays bourguignons et rhénans des origines à la fin du XVIe siècle* (1989): 38–45.

the only function of these texts, as the examples of Valenciennes and Compiègne have shown. Parodic ordinances served the political purpose of creating unity in the city and could emphasise social criticism or even satire in the matter of religious reform. The texts always deal with matters that are affecting all of the inhabitants of the city, and as such they are texts that reflect what citizenship can, could or should entail.

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