

Personification

Embodying Meaning and Emotion

Edited by

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From the Parade to the Stage: Evolution and Significance of Personifications in Lyon's *Sotties* (1566–1610)

Katell Lavéant

The Lyon *sotties* are an intriguing and atypical corpus of plays. They were performed and printed in Lyon in the second half of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century. They continued the tradition of the medieval *sottie* in a period in which new theatrical genres such as comedy and tragedy met with a growing success, and give direct access to the researchers to the situation in which they were performed: the festivals held in the city by various so-called 'joyful companies' ('compagnies joyeuses'). Personifications played an important role in and around these plays. In particular, two figures are striking: the personifications of time and of the printing press, the first a traditional figure in late medieval allegorical drama, the second more specifically put on stage by the printers of Lyon during festivals they organised very regularly during the second half of the sixteenth century. These festivals must have had an important impact on the public life of the city, since they were organised on the streets: they involved both a parade of joyful groups (described more fully below) and the performance of plays. The prominence of the printers' corporation, because of the high economic and cultural impact of book production in the city, must also have given a specific public significance to these festivals.¹ In this context, I shall examine the way in which personifications appear not only on stage but also in the parade during which the plays were performed. It is particularly interesting to consider how and why these peculiar personifications—of a general concept on the one hand, and of an object as well as an activity on the other hand—become tangible figures. By analysing their role in and around the plays, I shall demonstrate how they express the

1 For an outline of book production and its importance in Lyon in the sixteenth century, see Davis N.Z., "Le monde de l'imprimerie humaniste: Lyon", in Chartier R. – Martin J.-P. (eds.), *Histoire de l'édition française*, 3 vols., 1: *Le livre conquérant. Du Moyen Âge au milieu du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 1982) 255–277. On the organisation of the printers as a corporation (although with some errors on their joyful company), see also Davis N.Z., *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London: 1975), especially chapters 1 and 4.

public discourse of the printers of Lyon on the historical and political events of their time.

Moreover, by studying how these characters were described in the plays, and how they were portrayed in the booklets that contain the plays, we can attempt to picture how they actually appeared in front of the audience. In particular, these personifications combine traditional features of allegorical characters from the medieval *sotties* and morality plays with new Renaissance symbols and accessories; in other words, there is no break between the two periods in this theatrical tradition, but rather a continued rhetorical discourse, renewed by images and metaphors borrowed from the Greek and Latin mythology. I contend that this specific, synthetic use of personification was a conscious choice of the authors, which produced original theatrical figures. The printers thereby adapted the medieval setting of the theatrical parade to the new features of Renaissance discourse, in order to include a broad audience in the performances of the joyful companies.

Context and Corpus

The Lyon *sotties* are seventeen short plays that were performed by the joyful company of the printers of Lyon, the so-called ‘supposts de la Coquille’, during a public festival organised by similar companies of this city in the sixteenth century, that is to say, by festive groups of men gathering together in order to organise playful activities, often with the (financial) support of the local authorities.² The printers would subsequently publish the plays they had performed during the festivals: surviving editions date from between 1566 and 1610.³ Several accounts of parades survive, and these contain the texts of the plays performed, which were also printed under various titles in 1566, 1568 and 1578.⁴ Separate texts of the plays, without an account of the festivities, were

2 For a survey of the characteristics of these groups, see Lavéant K., “The Joyful Companies of the French-Speaking Cities and Towns of the Southern Netherlands and their Dramatic Culture (Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)”, in Dixhoorn A. van – Sutch S.S. (eds.) *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: 2008) 79–118.

3 Some of these plays were published in the nineteenth century; the whole corpus is now available in Bouhaïk-Gironès M. – Koopmans J. – Lavéant K. (ed.), *Recueil des sotties françaises*, 3 vols. (Paris: 2014).

4 *Recueil fait au vray de la chevauchee de l’asne, faite en la ville de Lyon et commenee le premier jour du mois de septembre mil cinq cens soixante six* (Lyon, Guillaume Testefort: 1566) (Municipal library of Lyon, BM Rés. 356055); *Discours du temps passé et du present, publié en*

also published in most cases with the title *Plaisants devis* (Pleasant discourses). A complete study of the archival evidence pertaining to these practices is still needed, but it seems these celebrations were meant to be annual events (although plays do not survive for every year, and some plays evoke disruptions of this rhythm by explicitly mentioning that the printers had been prevented from organising their festivities for one or more years).⁵ They involved a parade of joyful companies through the streets of Lyon, the performance of at least one play at some point during this parade, and banquets afterwards. These celebrations can be compared with the earlier practices of joyful groups in other parts of France and French-speaking areas, for instance the company of justice officials and clerks or so-called Basoche in Paris and the 'joyful companies' in the Southern Low Countries, in the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century.⁶ As for the specificities of these festivities in Lyon, two features deserve attention: the spatial and professional organisation of joyful companies within the city, and the prolonged existence of the *sottie* as a theatrical genre.

The organisation of the joyful companies of Lyon deserves a more in-depth study. Certainly, from the plays and their paratext, some Lyon companies were clearly trade-oriented. The printers' Compagnie de la Coquille (Company of the scallop shell) is the most obvious example, as it was in charge of organising theatrical festivities, but we also note the presence of a Basoche in Lyon, mentioned in the *sotties* of 1566, 1593, 1596 and 1601. Other groups represented

la ville de Lyon, par les trois supports de l'Imprimerie, accompagnez du Seigneur de la Coquille et de plusieurs compagnons Imprimeurs en bon equipage, avec tabourins, fifres, timbales, et autres instrumens, le jour des Brandons 1568, suyvant leur ancienne coustume (Lyon, Pierre Brotot: 1568) (Municipal library of Lyon, BM Rés. B493544); *Recueil de la chevauchee, faicte en la ville de Lyon, le dixseptiesme de Novembre 1578. Avec tout l'Ordre tenu en icelle* (Lyon, Guillaume Testefort, Pierre Ferdelat & Claude Bouilland: 1578) (Municipal library of Lyon, BM Rés. 356054).

- 5 Texts survive for the following years: 1566, 1568, 1574, 1578, 1580, 1581, 1584, 1585, 1589, 1593, 1594, 1596, 1601 and 1610. In some instances, they survive in a single copy (this is the case for the *Discours du temps passé* of 1568), kept individually or in a collection of texts bound together (two such collections exist, one at the British Library and one at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris). In other cases, a single text is transmitted in several copies: this is the case for the *Chevauchee* of 1566, of which there exist at least three printed and two manuscript copies. For details about the editions, see Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* I. From this point on and for the sake of clarity (especially in the case of the plays displaying the common title *Plaisants devis*), when referring to a specific play, I use the year in which it was performed and printed.
- 6 Bouhaïk-Gironès M., *Les clercs de la Basoche et le théâtre comique* (Paris: 2007); Lavéant K., *Un théâtre des frontières. La culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord aux xv^e et xvi^e siècles* (Orléans: 2011).

a specific neighbourhood, street or parish, such as the Baron de la Rue-Neuve or the Abbots of Saint-Michel, Saint-Georges and Saint-Vincent (1566, 1578). Obviously, in some cases, profession and location in the city formed a coherent whole, when a trade had a long tradition of being implanted in a specific neighbourhood. The name of the *Compagnie de la Coquille* is a reference to the parish of Saint-Jacques, in the vicinity of which many printers had set up their shop, in the rue Mercière. But this was also notably the case for the tanners and dyers who worked in the neighbourhood of Bourg-Neuf, which had its own joyful company (1566, 1578).⁷ The surviving plays underline the prominent role of the printers in the organisation of these festivities. They seem to have led the way by calling the other companies to gather together, leading them in the parade and performing a play. However, the evidence may be misleading: as they printed their own material, the printers may have exaggerated the importance of their joyful company compared to the others. In any case, the fact that the printers actually printed their texts afterwards is extremely useful for us, as it is quite unique among French joyful companies. In other regions, these companies often kept no records, and therefore only a handful of texts have survived, which often prevents us from having a precise idea of the literary production of these groups.

Joyful companies have been seen as a medieval phenomenon. However, archival evidence seems to indicate they were active until at least the middle of the sixteenth century (as is for instance the case in the cities of Northern France and the Southern Low Countries). The example of Lyon shows that, in this city, joyful companies also maintained their festive practices in the second half of the sixteenth century, despite the tense context of the wars of religion. For their theatrical performances, they specifically chose to write *sotties*. Often presented as a medieval genre (although the vast majority of the extant texts date from the period 1450–1550), the *sottie* can be described in brief as a play in which fools ('sots') speak together about contemporary events in a rather cryptic way. The plot is secondary (when there is one), as the accent is laid on the comments and witticisms of the fools, rather than on solving a problem or a moral dilemma. The play must often be seen as one moment in a larger performative situation such as a festival or a parade.⁸ It may seem surprising that the printers of Lyon, who, thanks to their trade, were aware of the literary innovations of the period, deliberately kept writing *sotties*, rather than turning

7 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 371–380.

8 On generic and historical aspects, see the 'Introduction générale', 7–39, in Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, which recapitulates the historiography on this question.

to comedies. Several reasons can be adduced for such a choice. Comedy, the new type of play that appeared around 1550 and drew its characters and plots directly from the plays of Antiquity it took as a model, was immediately successful among humanist authors, and as such often performed in colleges and universities. However, this type of play did not gain wider audiences until only much later, with its heyday in the seventeenth century. Joyful groups continued to write *sotties*, first because these plays could appeal to a large audience used to their traditional backdrop; and second, because they were inscribed in this long festive tradition, and as such lent themselves particularly well to being performed during the parade of the joyful companies.⁹ However, from a stylistic and thematic point of view, literary tastes evolved in the second half of the century, and the discursive features of the *sotties* needed to evolve as well. This is why, while the printers stuck to the formal, performative frame of the *sotties*, they gradually introduced new figures (such as mythological ones), and adapted the existing ones, especially personifications. It seems that the printers saw in the specific genre of the *sottie* a more fitting way of expressing their opinions, in a civic context of joyful festivities that remained important in the public life of Lyon until the beginning of the seventeenth century. This type of play apparently had the elasticity that could accommodate the introduction of literary novelties into a traditional mode of performance. Personification thus appears as a perfect stylistic mirror of the genre of the *sottie*: inherited from the medieval tradition, it could also evolve according to new standards and necessities to reflect the changes in the printers' discourse, as I will demonstrate after briefly presenting the context of performance of the plays.

Actors and Characters of the Lyon Parades and Plays

The Lyon *sotties* are unusual because we can reconstruct quite precisely the setting in which at least some of them were performed, thanks to the accounts of the parades that were printed afterwards. From the descriptions, which allude to the repetition of usual practices,¹⁰ we can assume these parades also

9 As underlined by Koopmans J., "Les *sotties* lyonnaises: le théâtre médiéval à la fin du xvi^e siècle", in Emerson C. – Longtin M. – Tudor A. (eds.) *Drama, Performance and Spectacle in the Medieval City: Mélanges Alan Hindley* (Leuven: 2010) 47–72.

10 The first texts mention customs that seem older than the first surviving printed account (1566): 'comme de coustume est de faire ausdictes chevauchées' (as is customarily done during these parades) in the 1566 *Chevauchee* 18, fol. Civ, 'suyvant leur ancienne coustume' (following their old custom) in the 1568 *Discours* (frontpage), etc.

took place in years for which only a printed record of the play survive, without any description of the festivities surrounding it, and even before we find the first printed records of these festivals. As such, these parades were not unique. They recall similar ones organised by the joyful companies of the Southern Low Countries, as well as the 'monstre' or parade by the Parisian Basoche.¹¹ The difference here is that the parade and the performance of the *sottie* were not dissociated, as was the case in these earlier examples. Rather, the plays were integrated into the parades, and therefore often referred to figures that were present in the relevant procession. Although more research is needed to complement the corpus with archival evidence, we can reconstruct the parade as follows: the joyful companies marched through the city and paused regularly in order to perform plays that in fact had a double audience, the people on the streets and the members of the other joyful groups. In the Lyon *sotties*, a trio of 'supposts' replaces the characters of the fools. 'Supposts' is a medieval term referring to servants, here the men in service of the Printing Press, hence: the printers. In some of the plays, the 'supposts' call on others to join the parade (one can imagine the parade entering a specific street or neighbourhood and pausing there so that the 'supposts' could invite the local joyful group to join them in a ritualised way). In other plays, they comment on the current situation of the city and its inhabitants, and make allusions to economic circumstances as well as to events such as war and peace. In these cases, as we will study in more detail below, the audience would receive brief texts during the performance, that explained the significance of the play and especially of its personifications. The plays end on a call to go drinking that certainly reflects the way the parades ended, with libations and banquets either in taverns or in private places booked by the joyful groups for the purpose.

Cross-examining the plays and their festive context reveals important differences between the following, sometimes porous, categories in late medieval and early modern drama: actor, character and personification. The members of joyful companies, led by their chiefs, were dressed up in a recognizable way (with specific colours and accessories representing their company) or even doubly dressed up, such as the monks of the mock Abbeys of the Temple and of Saint-Michel, who, in 1566, were dressed as women:

First came the aforesaid Abbot of the Temple accompanied by the Abbot of Saint-Michel, in good company, followed by more than a hundred

11 Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières* 64–74; Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les clercs de la Basoche* 104–108.

monks of the said abbeys; most of them dressed up as women, in diverse and strange fashion, holding distaffs and other fanciful staffs.¹²

The play following this description then starts with the horrified exclamations of the three 'supposts', seeing this army of menacing women.¹³ As such, the members of the joyful companies played a role in the procession; they were actors in these festivities. These were men dressed as monks dressed as women, who probably sported fierce facial expressions in order to make the spectators laugh upon seeing these mock women-warriors, but they were neither actors in the play nor personifications. Among them were the three actors who played the characters of the *sotties*, the three 'supposts' dialoguing together. These characters can be seen either as individuals or as stock characters speaking for their community, but they were not personifications either. However, a third category was present during these festivities: personifications walking in the procession, who might or might not appear on stage afterwards. In what follows I explore the meaning and use of such personifications in and around the theatrical performances, by studying two specific examples: the dual personification of Past Times and Present Times, especially in the 1568 *sottie* and festival, and the shift in the description of the printing press from a medieval personification, Lady Printing Press (*Dame Imprimerie*), to the muse Typosine over the period 1566–1610, especially when this personification appeared on stage in 1610. It is particularly interesting to contrast the use of these two personifications because they were used in a peculiar way by the printers, as mute figures on and outside the stage. My contention is that these personifications were used differently from other, more traditional personifications, in order to support the printers' message and as a specific mode of communication with the audience.

Medieval Personifications of Time in the Lyon *Sotties*

The most striking of the characters derived from the *sottie* tradition and still present in the Lyon *sotties* is Present Times (*Temps Présent*), as opposed to

12 'Premierement marchoit ledict Abbé du Temple, accompagné de l'Abbé saint Michel, en bon equipage, accompagnez de plus de cent Moynes desdictes Abbayes; la plus part d'iceux habillez en femmes, de diverses et estranges façons, portans en main quenoilles à filler et autres bastons fantasques'. *Chevauchee* 8, fol. A4v.

13 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 397.

Good Times (*Bon Temps*), in Lyon also called Past Times (*Temps Passé*). In many plays in the fifteenth century, Good Times had been a symbol of better times during which everything went well.¹⁴ It evoked a golden age, now lost, to which characters referred nostalgically in order to create a contrast with the present situation, which had inevitably deteriorated. This figure has an interesting specificity: the past is often represented by a personification (Good Times), but in some cases it is given a human individuality, in the shape of Roger Bontemps (evoked but not present on stage in Lyon 1593).¹⁵ In the different surviving morality plays and *sotties* on this topic, the personification of good times is either absent or present on stage. In the first case, the characters call for him on stage, but he never comes, and they keep searching for him in vain and lamenting his loss throughout the play. In the second case, he appears on stage, often in a sorry state (the good times have deteriorated), or as a running character that cannot be caught (since it is hard to find and keep the good times).¹⁶ In the case of the Lyon *sotties*, he does not appear on stage, but is evoked in several plays by the ‘supposts’ (1568, 1593, 1594).

This figure represents a complex medieval version of the myth of the Golden Age. On the one hand, it allows the development of broad, abstract considerations about the dire consequences of an unstable context and is in this sense a way for the playwright to allude more or less directly to the current political situation. On the other hand, it stresses very tangible aspects of what makes life bearable for the people, especially those whose precarious situation can easily tip from barely scraping out a living to utter destitution.¹⁷ This is why plays on this topic are often set in spring, its improved weather conditions creating the possibility of a better life after a dire winter. Very basic elements, such as the quality of beverages (wine and beer especially) and the price of essential food such as bread, are central topics of discussion between the characters, since they touch on vital aspects of existence (for instance in Lyon 1568 and

14 Roch J.-L., “Le roi, le peuple et l’âge d’or : la figure de Bon Temps entre le théâtre, la fête et la politique (1450–1550)”, *Médiévales* 22–23 (spring 1992) 187–206.

15 On the character of Roger Bontemps in morality plays and *sotties*, see Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières*, 356–367; Koopmans J. (ed.), *Le Recueil de Florence. 53 farces imprimées à Paris vers 1515* (Orléans: 2011) 53–54.

16 The running character of ‘Le Temps qui court’ appears in the *Sottie des Trompeurs* in Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 91–123.

17 Koopmans J., “Les démunis mis en scène: satire ou utopie, répression ou contestation”, in Sossons J.-P. – Thiry C. (eds), *Les Niveaux de vie au moyen âge. Mesures, perceptions et représentations* (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1999) 123–139.

1574). Interestingly, this medieval system of references was still in use in the later Lyon *sotties*, well into the end of the sixteenth century, which confirms its evocative power for the audience (for instance: 1593, 1594). This happened at a moment when this city found civil peace again, after a troubled period of political instability caused by the conflicts of the wars of religion and especially the episode of the Holy League. In the plays, the 'supposts' express their hope for the return of Good Times at last.¹⁸

In contrast with the invisible Good Times or Past Times, the representation of Present Times did appear on stage in the Lyon *sottie* performed in 1568, but in a peculiar way, since this figure did not speak. The play, again, has no real plot. It is rather a dialogue between the three 'supposts' on the current political and economic situation of the city and of the country: they complain that Good Times has disappeared, and with him peace and prosperity, because now the reign of Present Times has come. They describe this personification as if it were on stage, or close enough to it for the spectators to see it—we shall see below that this was most likely the case. Present Times appears as a frightening man with two faces, holding a scythe and ready to grab everyone, a living image of death reaping human souls.¹⁹ The dialogue of the three 'supposts' is punctuated by deictic verbs and describes this personification in detail, reinforcing the impression that Present Times is directly pointed at by the characters:

First suppost

Alas, my God, alas, my God,
Present Times is so hostile!

Second suppost

I'm afraid that I'll fall backwards
When I see how fierce he looks.

Third suppost

As for me, I don't dare to speak
Seeing his equipment [weapons].

18 The members of the Holy League or Ligue, contesting the authority of the King, took over the leadership of Lyon between 1589 and 1593, a situation alluded to in three *sotties*: 1589, 1593, 1594. See Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 509–557.

19 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 433–436, ll. 57–100.

First suppost

He will spare neither fool nor wise man:
 See with what he is equipped! (...)
 The scythe he holds is heavy:
 It is not a weapon of war (...)²⁰

Indeed, the play is followed, in the booklet published after the festivities, by a small text describing Present Times:

Present Times walking in front of the 'supposts', holding a big scythe in his hand, wearing two sickles on his shoulders, and on his chest a big knife, having two frightening faces and wearing weapons on his body [or: armour on his torso], and the rest of his clothes decorated with fiery flames: a very horrific thing to see.²¹

From this excerpt, we can conclude that the personification of Present Times was indeed present in the parade in 1568: a man was wearing this costume, and walked through the streets during the parade, ahead of the printers. When the parade came to a halt for the performance of the play, he must have stood next to the stage or on it, and the three actors on stage must have been pointing to him and pointing him out to the spectators during the performance. It is also

20 *Le Premier*

Helas, mon Dieu, hélas, mon Dieu
 Que le Temps Present est divers!

Le Second

Je crains de tumber à l'envers
 En le regardant si farouche.

Le Troisième

De moy, je n'ose ouvrir la bouche.
 Le voyant en tel equippage.

Le Premier

Espargner ne veut fol ny sage:
 Voyez comme il est équipé! (...)
 Le faulx qu'il porte est pesant:
 Ce n'est pas instrumens de guerre.

Ibid. 433–436, ll. 57–64, 69–70. The last line evokes the fact that the scythe the personification holds is not a weapon of war that would be used only to fight against soldiers, but rather the scythe of death, used indiscriminately to kill all humans, hence a particularly menacing instrument for the audience and the 'supposts' alike.

21 'Le temps Present marchant devant les suppos portant en la main ung grand faulx, et sur ses espauls, deux vollans, et au devant de sa poytrine, un grand cousteau, ayant deux visaiges farouches, et arme du corps, et le reste de ses habitz à flammes de feu, chose hideuse à veoir'. *Discours*, fol. B3.



FIGURE 8.1 *Temps Présent* on the title page of the *Discours du Temps Passé et du Présent* (Lyon, Pierre Brotot: 1568). Lyon, Municipal library, BM Rés. B493544.

IMAGE © MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, LYON.

worth noting that the front page of the booklet bears an engraving that seems to represent the same personification, although its attributes are slightly different: it holds a scythe but has only one face and is wearing a plain cloth [Fig. 8.1].

It is represented eating a child, which assimilates it to Kronos devouring his children. The name of this Titan and that of the Greek personification of Time, Chronus, are spelled very similarly in French: Cronos / Chronos, which can account for the syncretic representation of both entities here. The differences between this image and the description of Present Times in the booklet may

be explained by the likelihood that the printer reused a woodblock used for another (mythological?) text, thinking it was close enough to the description of Present Times to decorate the front page of this print.

To underline the specificity of personification on stage, Estelle Doudet insists on the difference between the world of the written text (such as moral treatises or allegorical fictions) and the world of drama. In written texts meant for individual reading, a narrator can describe the personification and expose its allegorical meaning, thus allowing the reader to reach a clear understanding of this figure. On stage and in the absence of a narrator, a personification needs to achieve autonomy thanks to visualisation and the reinvestment of meaning in the spoken word. That is to say, this personification must present clear visual elements as well as utter words that allow the spectator to identify it as such and to understand its message.²² As underlined by James Paxson, speech is a crucial element in the definition of personification.²³ Can we then talk of personification in the case of Present Times, since this figure does not utter its own message? In this case, the absence of discourse is compensated by the presentation of the figure during the parade (indeed this is a situation described by Doudet as a strategy to introduce the personifications in some theatrical festivals), and by its description on and off stage by others. In the 1568 festival, before the actions and meaning of Present Times were described by the ‘supposts’ on stage, the audience had been prepared for decoding the personification in two ways. During the parade, the spectators could see it in the streets, and they were also given leaflets on which was printed a poem describing the negative meaning of this figure.²⁴ We see here the same mechanism as that described by Doudet: it combines the visualisation of the personification with an external discourse that allows its meaning to be understood, even if the personification itself does not speak. As such, it functions in a way similar to the ‘allegorical ekphrasis’ (‘allegorische Ekphrasis’) described by Werner Helmich, that is to say the auto-description of a personification in order to identify it for

22 Doudet E. “Oiseuse et Tartelette. Personnage et personnification allégorique, des narrations au théâtre (XIII^e–XVI^e siècle)”, in Brun L. et al. (eds.), *Le Moyen Âge par le le Moyen Âge, même. Réception, relectures et réécritures des textes médiévaux dans la littérature française des XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (Paris: 2012) 278–301; Doudet E. *Essai sur les jeux moraux en français (1430–1560)*, dissertation for the ‘Habilitation à diriger des recherches’, Université Paris IV Sorbonne (Paris: 2013) 269–327. This unpublished monograph is to be published in 2016 at Classiques Garnier, Paris (provisional title: *L’Ecole du théâtre. Moralités et jeux allégoriques en français (XV^e–XVI^e siècles)*).

23 Paxson J.J., *The Poetics of Personification*, Literature, Culture, Theory 6 (Cambridge: 1994), see chapter 1: ‘A history of personification theory’.

24 This poem, composed of three octets of decasyllables, is reproduced after the text of the play in the *Discours* fol. B2v.

the spectators.²⁵ However, in this case, it functions through the combination of an oral discourse (the 'supposts' in the play) and a written medium (the printed poem) that gives the key to the substance of the personification, which remains mute and does not gloss itself.

In the 1568 festival, the play as well as the poem referred to the troubled times of the wars of religion and their impact on the local Lyon context. The armed conflict between French Catholics and Protestants lasted from 1562 to 1598, and saw troubled years and prominent battles but also brief periods of respite. Most of our seventeen Lyon *sotties* were written and performed during this period, and although some do not deal with this religious conflict as a main topic, they all contain direct or indirect allusions to it, and to the troubled times in which their authors and spectators lived. Indeed, Lyon was briefly in the hands of the Protestants in 1562–1563, before surrendering to the king. There was a brief period between 1563 and 1567 during which Protestants and Catholics worked together in the municipal council or Consulat, but the Catholics gradually took power back from the Protestants by excluding their representatives from the council. There were also several dramatic events leading to a massacre in Lyon at the end of August 1572, a few days after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris. The printers needed the support of the municipal authorities to be allowed to perform in public and print their plays afterwards. It is therefore not surprising that the plays of 1566 carefully avoided political allusions at a time when the Consulat was divided, while they clearly took the side of the Catholic king from 1568 onwards, that is to say from the moment the Catholics had regained authority in Lyon.

Indeed, in the 1568 festival, the texts on Present Times allow an anti-Protestant reading of this personification. In the poem that accompanies the performance, the figure is described as being accompanied by the vices that caused the wars of religion: Hypocrisy, Folle Opinion, Rébellion:

Temps Present is nothing but Hypocrisy,
 Together with Mad Opinion:
 He has chosen to follow Rebellion
 Because of whom the nobility is divided (...)²⁶

25 Helmich W., *Die Allegorie im französischen Theater des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 1976) 46–50.

26 Le Temps present ce n'est qu'Hypocrisie,
 Accompagné de Folle Opinion:
 Qui a pour soy Rebellion choisie
 Dont la noblesse est en division (...)
Discours fol. B2v, ll. 9–12.

At a time when the Catholics were in power in Lyon, such notions clearly pointed the finger at Protestants for being the supporters of a wrong faith and troublemakers who chose to rebel against the authority of the king, causing a great divide among the members of the nobility. In the play, the 'supposts' underline the fact that these vices, evoked as allegories (together with Heresy and Disobedience), had been banned from France when Temps Passé reigned. In conjunction with the poem, we therefore understand that these negative allegories are companions of Present Times, or even facets of his being. However, they do not appear on stage. They are evoked as if from afar, while the personification of Present Times embodies everything that has gone wrong. Present Times thus embodies not only the current situation with its very tangible consequences, but also a larger spectrum of abstract notions that help to explain the deterioration of the present context. The personification is central here, as it becomes the embodiment not only of an abstract notion, the 'temps présent', but also of several allegories that are only evoked in the discourse, but not represented in the flesh. It is a very economical way of placing a series of abstract and complex notions in one character, thanks to the double medium of the text (the poem read by the audience) and the performance (the appearance of Present Times on or near the stage). This use of the personification in a combined strategy of performance and reading is also a more interesting and original technique of presentation than, for instance, the more conventional figure of the 'Pauvre Monde' (Poor or Sick World) in the *sottie* of 1574, which draws heavily on traditional patterns of late medieval drama.²⁷ In this play, Pauvre Monde is sick and looking for a cure. Dubious medicines with fanciful Latin names are presented to him by Le Médecin (the Physician), whose pedantic speech is mocked by the 'supposts'. This literal manner of debating about everything that does not go well in the world was used in many moral and joyful French plays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It might be argued that from a performative point of view, this traditional way of staging these issues would be more evocative for the audience, since the personification becomes a character that speaks and takes part in the play—a somewhat rounder character than the flat figure of Present Times, which remains a mute personification hovering at the edges of the play in the festival of 1568. However, by becoming a character in the play, Monde Malade appears as a mere individual to which the spectator may relate on a personal level, but which loses its symbolic impact as a personification, while Present

27 See for instance Koopmans J., "L'allégorie théâtrale au début du XVI^e siècle: le cas des pièces profanes de Marguerite de Navarre", *Renaissance and Reformation* 26,4 (2002) 65–89.

Times, by remaining a mute and ominous figure, is able to retain its polysemic, abstract significance and at the same time its threatening stature in the eyes of the audience.

From Medieval to Renaissance Personifications

While, as described above, the Lyon *sotties* are clearly inscribed in a framework inherited from the medieval tradition of this dramatic genre, at the same time we can see a growing use of references to the Greek and Latin literature the Lyon printers had been publishing since the beginning of the sixteenth century. This is especially obvious in the new set of references used to underline the consequences of conflict, when religious tensions threatened to turn into a civil war. A number of mythological figures were then summoned in the various *sotties*. First, we see mentions of divinities linked to war in Antiquity such as Bellona, the goddess of war (1581, 1596, 1601)²⁸ or Janus (1594, 1596, 1610), whose temple had a great symbolic significance in Rome, since the opening or closing of its doors indicated a state of war or of peace.²⁹ In the plays, notably, it is King Henri IV who has the crucial role of closing the door of this temple to indicate that peace has been restored (1594 and 1596). Other divinities associated with violence and death are also evoked by the 'supposts': the Furies or Erinyes, goddesses of justice and revenge, the Moirai or Parcae, divinities of destiny, as well as various monsters. Such references are multiplied in the last *sotties* (1601 and 1610), but it is worth noting that some of these figures appeared in earlier *sotties* as well. For instance, Atropos, the Parca who cuts the thread of life, was already invoked in the 1568 play: together with Satan, she is portrayed as repellent to the characters of the play, who want to rejoice despite the difficult times.³⁰ This is a good example of the way these *sotties* try to unify the metaphorical traditions of the Middle Ages and of Renaissance.

The authors of the *sotties* also made use of beneficial mythological and historical figures that could counterbalance the influence of negative divinities and end war. Astraea (*Astrée*), goddess of justice, is prominent. Latin authors (such as Virgil in the famous Eclogue 4 of the *Bucolics*) often invoked her to announce the return of the Golden Age. It is not surprising, therefore, that the 'supposts' also call for her in the *sotties* of 1589, 1594 and 1601.³¹ Other historical

28 Ibid. 479, l. 52; 565, ll. 78; 583, l. 55.

29 Ibid. 545, l. 44; 565, l. 79; 618, l. 294.

30 Ibid. 438, l. 121.

31 Ibid. 19, l. 105; 545, l. 48; 581, ll. 29, 249.

figures, such as emperor Augustus and Alexander the Great, and mythological figures of kings and heroes, such as Hercules and Achilles, became metaphors of either the King of France, or the Governor of Lyon (1594, 1596, 1601, 1610). Such comparisons are anything but surprising in texts of this period, but mixed with the medieval figures, they contribute to a second network of references that enriches and renews the first one, inherited from the Middle Ages.³²

However, these personifications are merely descriptive or paraphrastic, to use the terminology of Paxson.³³ They are described by the 'supposts' in the plays but have no dramatic function. Another figure is more interesting, as it is not only illustrative of this blend of old and new rhetoric, but also presents a peculiar case of a personification that gradually materialises in the plays. This is the personification of Lady Printing Press (*Dame Imprimerie*), later called Typosine. The way she appears in most of the *sotties* is revealing. First, she is summoned to the parade of the joyful companies of Lyon in the *sotties* of 1566, just like other figures such as the Count of the Basoche.³⁴ She is also described in the account of the parade as marching with her 'compagnons de la Coquille', together with the 'Seigneur de la Coquille' who is the leader of this group.³⁵ In contrast with the other joyful companies, which have only one leader, the Coquille therefore seems to have one leader and one protecting lady. It is not possible, from these texts, to know what differentiated their roles within the company, but we have to underline this striking case. The personification is evoked as such in the plays by the supposts, but is also embodied in the parade just as Present Times is present in the march of 1568; it even seems to have had a ritual function in the activities of the joyful company of the printers, outside the parade (although we do not know what this function could be, since there are no surviving internal records of the company that could describe the activities and the role of its different members). As such, the personification of the printing press functions on three levels: literary (play), performative (parade) and ritual (activities of the Compagnie de la Coquille).

32 Another, earlier instance of parade and play performed in Lyon in 1541 gives a similar example of this combination of medieval and Renaissance rhetorical devices, albeit in a school play written by the humanist Barthélemy Aneau. See Doudet E., "Pédagogie de l'énigme, *Le Lyon Marchant* de Barthélemy Aneau (1541)", *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes* 22 (2011) 395–411.

33 Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification*, 36–38.

34 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 390, ll. 56–60; 42, ll. 69–72; 43, ll. 69–72.

35 *Chevauchée*, 1566, 28–29, fols. D2v–D3.

In the play of 1568, she is invoked as a tutelary figure, able to give joy to the members of the joyful company, as they call for her to contain the negative influence of Atropos and Satan.³⁶ In the *sottie* of 1584, in which one of the important topics is the economic rivalry between the printers of Lyon and of Geneva, she is glorified for her power in a sonnet at the beginning of the booklet: without the printing press (especially in Lyon), it would be impossible to spread any texts, hence any literature, poetry, philosophy, etc.

In the *sotties* of 1601 and 1610, the personification gradually reaches the status of a revered entity, close to the gods. Mistress of an 'art', Lady Printing Press is described as 'learned' (she is called 'docte' several times),³⁷ and can even deliver oracles, just like the Pythia of Delphi:

This is the very learned Printing Press
Who will receive from the Pythia
The tripod of Apollo
Thanks to an oracle from Delphi,
And will deliver through a riddle
An oracle of very high importance.³⁸

In this case, she announces the reign of a new French King, Louis (the future Louis XIII), who will be able to restore Christianity in the Middle East (already a topic evoked in 1601).³⁹

In these two *sotties*, 1601 and 1610, Lady Printing Press is given a new name, Typosine, the so-called Muse of Print. This muse seems to appear for the first time in a series of poems by Jacques Grévin, in 1560. In his *Gélodacrye*, the poet reveals the secret of the existence of this tenth Muse, unknown (and for good reasons!) until now.⁴⁰ In this, he follows Du Bellay, who evoked the printing press as a tenth muse, without giving her a name, in his *Defense et illustration de la langue française*.⁴¹ This literary creation does not seem to have inspired later authors; in fact, as far as I am aware, Typosine does not reappear until the

36 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 437–438, ll. 116–125.

37 *Ibid.* 594, l. 322; 605, l. 23; 616, ll. 264; 623, l. 404.

38 'C'est la tresdocte Imprimerie / Qui doit recevoir de Pythie / Le trepier apollonien / Par un oracle delphien, / En proposant sous un enigme / Quelque oracle de grand estime'. *Ibid.* 616–617, ll. 264–269.

39 *Ibid.* 587, ll. 149–158.

40 Grévin Jacques, *Gélodacrye* in *L'Olimpe de Jacques Grévin, de Clermont en Beauvaisis. Ensemble les autres euvres poétiques dudict auteur* (Paris, Robert II Estienne: 1560).

41 Du Bellay Joachim, *Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise* (Paris, Arnoul l'Angelier: 1549), chapter IX.

Lyon *sotties* some forty years later. In 1601, she is referred to for the first time as such: the printers refer to her as their mother, and describe how Vulcan used his skills to create typographic characters.⁴²

Unfortunately, neither the text nor the paratext of the plays describe the appearance of Typosine precisely. However, a woodcut used in several editions of the *sotties*, including the 1610 edition, represents the symbolic attributes of the personification [Fig. 8.2]. In classical dress and winged, she stands on a skull and on what seems to be a terrestrial globe. She holds several books under her arm as well as an hourglass. On her forehead and above her head is written the word 'God' in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. The image also shows a scallop shell, the symbol of the joyful company of printers, as well as two vignettes representing a typographer composing a text (left) and a two craftsmen working with a printing press (right).

The emphasis on the activity of the printers is not surprising. The references to God as well as death could be read as praise of the printing press as a divine gift to humans to fight against the passing of time that destroys their words, thanks to the printed texts that allow their survival. This is certainly how both Grevin in his poems and the printers in their *sotties* want to insist on the essential role of Typosine for the arts.

However, in the last surviving *sottie*, composed in 1610, Typosine is also made to speak on more political matters. In this play, the 'supposts' meet again after ten years of silence. They start by evoking the return of peace and prosperity thanks to king Henri IV, and especially the end of the religious conflicts that divided the country. In the second part of the play, they describe wagons on which a series of figures are standing (Nobility, the son of the king, Janus, the Pythia, etc.), before concluding, in the traditional way, that such a lengthy description has made them thirsty and that it is time to go drinking and banqueting. Typosine herself comes on stage, after the 'supposts' have described her prophetic status, in order to glorify the Dauphin, the son of Henri IV and future Louis XIII, in a song.⁴³ It is striking that this play in particular is obviously a text that accompanies and comments on a parade in which allegorical figures as well as symbolic tableaux vivants are presented. One can imagine what these tableaux vivants on wagons could look like from this description of a figure of the Dauphin (represented by a real eight-year-old or by a puppet?), between two nymphs:

42 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 594, ll. 325–338.

43 Ibid. 623–624, 428–459.



FIGURE 8.2 *The Printing Press/Typosine on the title page of the Colloque des trois supports (Lyon, printer unknown: 1610). Lyon, Municipal library, BM Rés. 316454.*

IMAGE © MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, LYON.

This one holding a sword in his hand
 Is representing the Dauphin.
 This nymph wearing a crown
 Shows us France,
 With the sceptre of glory
 And the laurel wreath of victory;
 The other nymph is representing
 Nobility, strong and powerful (...)⁴⁴

The 'supposts' describe Typosine as they see her, passing along on a wagon, like all the other figures in the parade.⁴⁵ The difference between Typosine and the other figures in the parade is that this personification also comes on stage later in the play. Thus, while slightly modifying the tradition of the *sottie* as a dialogue between the three 'supposts' by introducing a new character on stage, the author clearly wanted to go back to the original setting of the earlier *sotties*, in which the summoning and the parade of the joyful companies through the streets of the city was a central element in structuring the play. Nevertheless, despite this traditional setting, the last two plays of the series insist less on the entertainment of the parade, and more on the political message it has to convey. In 1601 and 1610, the plays are much longer than the previous ones,⁴⁶ and they insist heavily on the pacifying action of Henri IV, the future role of his son, and the importance of the governors of Lyon who secure public order. It is clear that the joyful company of the printers considered themselves able to contribute to the public debate on the importance of civil peace and the authority of the King and his representatives, thanks to the staging and printing of these *sotties*. The references to the printing press, and even her appearance as a character on stage in the last *sottie*, are thus to be seen as components of an obvious metapoetic reflexion. The printers deliver a clear message on the role the printing press (and therefore they too) may play as a tool to spread the news of the good deeds of the king, and thus contribute to maintaining and enhancing social peace inside and outside the city. The decision to have Lady Printing Press come on stage and to give her a voice through the song she sings

44 'Celuy qui tient l'espee en main / Nous represente le Daufin. / Par cette nymphe coronee / La France nous est demonstree, / Ayant le sceptre glorieux / Et le laurier victorieux; / L'autre nymphe nous represente / La Noblesse forte et puissante (...): Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* I, 616–621, ll. 243–251.

45 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* I, 616–621, ll. 240–355.

46 439 lines in 1601 and up to 711 lines in 1610, versus 100 to 200 lines in most of the other *sotties*, except 1594: almost 300 lines.

is therefore a way of reinforcing their message, by giving a substance to their trade, their corporation and indeed their identity via the personification.

Through the heavy use of references to Greek and Latin mythology and Antiquity, as well as the choice of topics and themes that forsake the relative freedom of tone of the medieval *sottie* to insist on the supremacy of royal power, the last play of the corpus, in 1610, clearly illustrates a shift in writing. Nevertheless, the author still chooses to conclude in the very traditional way all these *sotties* (and many others before) were concluded, with the departure of the characters looking for wine to celebrate, and with a quotation in local Lyon dialect:

On an old, antique medal,
A relic of the past,
Are written these words in Lyon dialect:
'The Printing Press and her servants
Will make me live ten more years'.⁴⁷

It is not clear to whom Lady Printing Press gives such longevity. These lines may be interpreted as claiming that this play, by being printed after the performance, will survive and be available for readers long after the festival for which it was written. In any case, they make a direct reference to the earlier *sotties*, since the fourth play performed in 1566 was written entirely in Lyon dialect.⁴⁸

Very clearly, far from denying the tradition these *sotties* stem from, the author of the 1610 play inscribed his text in that tradition, linking the old with the new, the local with the national. He thus reaffirmed the very special link between the theatrical activities of Lyon's joyful and performative culture, the printers and their positioning in public debate on contemporary issues, over a long period. His insertion of the personification into the play and in the context of the parade also connects with earlier uses of this figure, such as in the play and parade of 1568. By giving them a special status in this spectacle, the printers managed, throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, to maintain a tradition of allegorical reading by the spectators of the plays according to the medieval performative tradition. Yet they also created an original use of the figure that connected the theatrical performance of the play with the larger context of the parade, involving the different actors of this parade (actors in

47 'Une vieille antique medaille, / Des ans l'ancienne anticaille, / En lyonnois dit ces propos: / "Los Imprimu et los Suppos / Me faran encour dix an vivre": Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 635, ll.704–708.

48 Bouhaïk-Gironès – Koopmans – Lavéant, *Recueil des sotties* 1, 417–425.

the plays, members of the joyful companies parading on the streets, and all spectators of these festivities) around personifications that enjoyed a real presence on and close to the stage, while still retaining a strong abstract, polysemic signification.

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