

# Celebrating, Interpreting, and Spreading News: Nicaise Ladam and Publishing Topical Poetry in the Southern Low Countries (1508-1522)

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## Abstract

Between 1508 and 1522, the Burgundian author Nicaise Ladam produced three pieces of topical poetry that not only circulated in manuscript form, but were published in five different editions. They each deal with a single contemporary event: a peace treaty, the imperial election of Charles v and the siege of Rhodes by the Ottomans. As such, they belong to a larger corpus of texts dealing with the news, but they have a different status from the majority of them, as topical poetic pieces that presented both news and Ladam's own commentary.

Analysing the books in which these poems were printed allows us to study the communication strategies of their author and his publishers, and their possible impact on the audiences they addressed. Seen in this light, Ladam's poetry and the context of its publication offers intriguing evidence of how news was interpreted and celebrated in the early sixteenth century.

## Keywords

book history – material bibliography – topical poetry – newsbooks – history of news

## Introduction

Between 1508 and 1522, the Burgundian author Nicaise Ladam produced three pieces of topical poetry that not only circulated in manuscript form but were also published in five different editions. The publication of these texts may seem somewhat surprising as the majority of Ladam's writing has been preserved only in manuscript form. When he died in 1547 at the age of eighty, he left behind a considerable corpus of unpublished poetry. His most celebrated work was not his short topical poems but a vast verse chronicle that detailed events at the Burgundian court over almost six decades.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Ladam had a long career in the service of the Habsburg rulers, occupying different functions that ranged from messenger to king of arms.<sup>2</sup> Even though he was also adept at producing shorter works, he was mainly renowned for his funerary pieces and epitaphs about various figures of the Habsburg court, such as Philip I of Castile (1506), Maximilian I (1519), and Margaret of Austria (1530).

The three texts we shall look at here do not belong to the funerary or chronicle genres that made Ladam's name. Instead, they each deal with a single contemporary event: a peace treaty between the king of France and the Holy Roman Emperor, the imperial election of Charles V and the siege of Rhodes by the Ottomans. As such, they belong to a larger corpus of texts dealing with the news, but they have a different status from the majority of them.

Aside from placards and other forms of official proclamations delivering information to the public issued by the authorities, there were three main forms of printed and manuscript media for spreading the news in the sixteenth century, before newspapers were invented. The often hand-written *avvisi*, the printed *Zeitungen* and similar newsletters presented the news in a very straightforward fashion and sought mainly to inform people.<sup>3</sup> Broadsheets, often illustrated and displaying short texts in prose or in verse (such as ballads),

1 There are several manuscript copies of the complete text but only the shorter version, the *Cronicque abresiet*, was published: 'Nicaise Ladam', *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, G. Dunphy ed., (Leiden 2010), p. 991 and *Universal Short Title Catalogue*: <http://www.ustc.ac.uk> (accessed 24 May 2016, henceforth USTC) 80703.

2 The most extensive biography of Nicaise Ladam is still to be found in Claude Thiry's introduction to Ladam's *Mémoire et épitaphe de Ferdinand d'Aragon* (Paris 1975). See also 'Nicaise Ladam', *Bibliotheca Belgica: Bibliographie générale des Pays-Bas*, ed. F. van der Haeghen (Bruxelles 1964-1975), III, pp. 627-41.

3 See A. Pettegree, *The Invention of News. How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London 2014), especially pp. 58-75 and 107-16; H. Ettinghausen, *How the Press Began. The Pre-Periodical Printed News in Early Modern Europe*, (In *Janus. Estudios sobre el siglo de oro* (Coruña 2015) pp. 15-54.

circulated sensational news such as crime reports or news about battles, often with a biting tone in the case of polemical topics.<sup>4</sup> Finally, there were ‘news pamphlets’. These reports on the news were circulated privately in manuscript form (such as the letters ambassadors would send to their sovereign) or publicly, sometimes to express controversial views, especially with regard to religious controversy.<sup>5</sup> However, the format proposed by Ladam does not fit perfectly into any of these categories.

Ladam offered topical poetic pieces that presented both news and his own commentary. His poetry expressed an opinion, but not a polemic one. This poetic form of comment on the news seems to have been rarer in print than in manuscript at the beginning of the sixteenth century, at least in French, in the Burgundian territories.<sup>6</sup> Although similar cases have been studied in other contexts, there is still much to say about this poetic production on the news in the Southern Low Countries.<sup>7</sup> Analysing the books in which they were printed allows us to study the communication strategies of their author and his publishers as well as their possible impact on the audiences they addressed. Seen in this light, Ladam’s poetry and the context of its publication offers intriguing evidence of how news was interpreted and celebrated in the early sixteenth century.

4 Pettegree, op. cit. (n. 3), pp. 88-94 and 121-9. See also A. Pettegree (ed), *Broadsheets. Single-Print Publishing in the First Age of Print* (Leiden 2017).

5 A strategy developed by Martin Luther, Pettegree, op. cit. (n. 3), pp. 67-70. On diplomatic dispatches, see pp. 96-107. On the characteristics of news pamphlets, see also Ettinghausen, op. cit. (n. 3), pp. 24-6, 29-36 and 46-54.

6 For manuscript versions of such poems see: C. Thiry, ‘L’honneur et l’Empire: à propos des poèmes de langue française sur la bataille de Pavie’, *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone* (Geneva 1980), pp. 297-324. See also chapter 4 ‘Swords and Stanzas: France v. Burgundy’, in A. Armstrong, *The Virtuoso Circle. Competition, Collaboration, and Complexity in Late Medieval French Poetry* (Tempe 2012), pp. 117-155. Katell Lavéant and Samuel Mareel are preparing an anthology of such poetry in French and Dutch, *Versifying the Event: Topical Poetry of the Burgundian Netherlands 1450-1530* (forthcoming). For Italian cases in print see M. Meserve, ‘News from Negroponte: Politics, Popular Opinion, and Information Exchange in the First Decade of the Italian Press’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59, 2 (2006), pp. 440-80.

7 See D. Potter, ‘War, Propaganda, Literature and National Identity in Renaissance France, c.1490-1560’, in: *Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identity in the Low Countries, 1300-1650*, eds. R. Stein & J. Pollmann (Leiden 2010), pp. 173-93, and *Vernacular Literature and Current Affairs in the Early Sixteenth Century: France, England and Scotland*, ed. J. Britnell & R. Britnell (Aldershot 2000). On topical poetry in the Southern Low Countries, see E. Doudet, ‘Un chant déraciné ? La poésie bourguignonne d’expression française face à Charles Quint’, *e-Spania*, 25 June 2012, <http://e-spania.revues.org/21220> (accessed 7 December 2016).

### La paix faicte à Chambray (1508)

The political context of the production of Ladam's first topical poem emphasises the ambiguous nature of the event. The treaty of Cambrai signed in 1508 sought to undermine the increasing power of Venice by forming a new alliance and dealt with issues far removed from the Low Countries. The conference did have some local relevance: it was organised between powerful neighbours, thus emphasising the city's position as a neutral territory and helping it assert its sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> However, this was not the event celebrated by Ladam. Instead he concentrated on a different treaty signed at the same time between Charles of Egmond, duke of Guelders, and the Habsburgs. The agreement between Egmond and the Habsburgs was originally presented as the reason for the talks and, as such, was a smoke screen to dupe the Venetians. By ostensibly meeting to sort out a local issue, they were able to invite the representatives of Egmond's protector, the king of France, and his opponents, the Habsburgs, without arousing suspicions.

The *Paix faicte a Chambray* composed by Nicaise Ladam fitted into this strategy: the Burgundian author was careful only to mention the first and not the second event in his celebratory poems.<sup>9</sup> They range from poems of anticipation to poems of celebration. The title of the first piece is given as 'L'attente de paix refformée' (a1v-a3r) and was written just before or when the negotiations started, as was the ballad that follows (a3r-a3v). The final poem, 'Chanson nouvelle de la paix de France' (b3r-b4r), gives the precise date at which the peace was signed and so must have been composed after the event, as is confirmed by its celebratory tone. The texts can be seen as accompanying the political process and, indeed, the first pieces could have been part of the propaganda to emphasise the importance of the peace and confuse the Venetians. This suggests that the poems would have circulated either in oral or written form prior to this edition. The printed version was a later compilation of Ladam's writing around the negotiations.

However, the political justification for the creation and circulation of the poems does not explain their publication. Its objective cannot have been to inform—or indeed to misinform. Printed after the conclusion of the peace, the colophon indicated that the Parisian imprint was meant to be sold in Cambrai

8 This process continued over the following decades: J. J. Ruiz Ibáñez, 'Théories et pratiques de la souveraineté dans la Monarchie hispanique: un conflit de juridictions à Cambrai', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, LV (2000), pp. 623–44 at p. 626.

9 N. Ladam, *La paix faicte a Chambray entre l'empereur et le tres chrestien roy de France avec leurs aliez*, Paris, [Guillaume Bignaux] for Philippot Le Cocq, [1508], USTC 26149. Digitised and available on Gallica.bnf.fr.

and gave both the name of the bookseller who had commissioned the edition (Philippot Le Cocq) and his address.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the prime purpose of the book would not have been to spread news: the presence of the publisher's address on the title page was an indication that the copies were meant to be sent to Cambrai. In other words, they were sent to the very place where the news had originated. At best, Le Cocq would have been able to sell the first copies a couple of weeks after the event.<sup>11</sup> In this context, Ladam's poems did not herald the news. Rather, it would seem that the work represented a celebration, a comment in verse form that emphasised the importance of the peace by juxtaposing the anxious first poems and the final ones that exude a marked sense of relief. Speed remained an important issue as is underlined by the absence of a publication date. Instead above the colophon, the date is given in elliptical fashion: 'La datte de la paix'.<sup>12</sup> This linked the edition and the moment of the peace—a useful rhetorical device for intimating that the two were intrinsically linked.

Beyond any political capital that could be made from this association, there was also marketing value in suggesting that the imprint was closely connected to its subject matter. The imprecise phrasing of the date had another commercial justification: it gave the edition a longer shelf life. This was a particularly useful commodity for a text that must have been published at the end of the year, since the potential buyers wanted to purchase recent commentary on such news. With this in mind, the wider impact of Ladam's text can perhaps be understood more clearly. It was not a predominantly descriptive set of texts as

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10 b4r. Digitised and available on Gallica.bnf.fr. The printing of this edition has previously been attributed to the Parisian Guillaume Bigneaux, see U. Baurmeister et al., *Imprimeurs et libraires parisiens du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Tome troisième, Baquellier-Billon* (Paris 1979) p. 511. This attribution, however, is problematic. The Renouard team of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* identified the type as the same as that found in three imprints produced for Bigneaux. This led the team to conclude that Bigneaux must have been the printer. However, in all three cases the colophon or the title page explicitly indicates that the editions were produced for ('pour') Bigneaux and not by him. Furthermore, this type is not used in the other imprints he commissioned. It is safe to assume that Bigneaux had simply used an unnamed workshop for these three editions as had Le Cocq. All four items are simple, low cost imprints that are undoubtedly the only known examples of a much larger production by this anonymous printer.

11 Even if the copy had been ready, the contract between the printer and the publisher pre-arranged and the Parisian press on standby, it would still have taken at best 10 days of travel to take the text from Cambrai to Paris and back again (see the route described by Charles Estienne in his *La guide des chemins de France* (Paris 1552), USTC 52283).

12 b4r.

it would have undoubtedly been the case in a traditional news imprint. There is no detailed analysis of the negotiation process that would certainly have been included in contemporary letters sent by ambassadors to their sovereign. Nor can it be construed as it a polemic pamphlet. It is consensual, celebratory and entertaining.

That Ladam was at pains to indicate his authorship of the poem is significant. In contrast with the anonymous accounts of events to be found in many news imprints, this book offered the views of a well-known poet on the situation. In the fragmented political geography of the Low Countries, Ladam brought a degree of legitimacy that traditional political power alone could not. By indicating his position at court at the beginning of the fourth poem, he sought to convince his readership of the quality of his insights into the peace transactions.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on the present moment in the texts reinforced the idea that the publication was offering a commentary on the most recent news. The author is cast as a witness of events vividly depicting the issues at stake.

But this was not the key to understanding the value or effectiveness of his commentary. This came from the intellectual authority derived from his literary success as a poet and a historiographer. Through his verses he reasoned in a different manner to the official proclamations and legal texts. The pleasing nature of his rimes appealed to the reader by encouraging him to let himself be carried away by the vision Ladam was creating. His poems were an invitation to his readership to celebrate the event with him. The edition's objective is to be read as offering not just instant but entertaining comment conceived before, during and in the immediate aftermath of the peace. Rather than the breaking of news, this tract was a validation of the treaty, but it was also making news into good news, transforming an event into something worth celebrating. This imprint was not the only occasion on which Ladam employed this technique; it is also to be found in another text, the *Joyeux Reveil*, printed some ten years later.

### Le joyeux reveil de le election imperial (1519)

Nicaise Ladam's account of the election of Charles v as Holy Roman Emperor in 1519 was written in very different circumstances to his celebration of the peace of Cambrai a decade earlier. Unlike his previous piece, the printed

13 'S'ensuyt cy apres le Conditor composé par le songeur Officier de monseigneur l'archiduc', a6v.

editions of this text only feature a single poem written in the aftermath of Charles's success against Francis I.<sup>14</sup> As the vote took place in a distant location, the imprint could, unlike the verses on the peace of Cambrai, be seen as conveying news.<sup>15</sup> Yet there were also similarities, not least the fact that both dealt with important international events. It is also noticeable that in the last stanza the poet gave the precise details of the date of the event. As with the *Paix faite à Chambray*, this was probably a device for stressing the exactitude of the account and the recent nature of the event. The colophons of the *Joyeux Reveil* do not give a date of publication alongside the name of the publisher.

The survival of two editions of this text enables a comparative analysis, which offers insights into the appeal, nature and readership of this genre. Edition A has been identified as having been printed in Brussels by Thomas van der Noot and has a colophon that indicates that the book was published for the bookseller Antoine Membru in Valenciennes.<sup>16</sup> Printed in quarto, this edition contained two large woodcuts, one of Charles v's arms on the title page and the bicephalous imperial eagle on the final page. Each stanza begins with a paragraph mark and the pages were set up with ample margins and regular blank lines. The bookseller was careful to indicate both on the title page and at the end of the text that the work was protected by an imperial privilege that gave him a commercial monopoly on the production and sale of the text.

Edition B also claims to have been published for Antoine Membru, though this time typographical research has not enabled scholars to identify the printer.<sup>17</sup> As in A, this version was produced as a quarto edition and also features two woodcuts, one of Charles's coat of arms and one of the imperial eagle, but in this case both are featured on the title page. They are much smaller illustrations that have been set side by side in order to take up less space whilst still offering some decoration. In contrast with A, no blank lines have been inserted between the different stanzas, and the final stanza and the colophon were printed with a smaller typeface than the rest of the text. Whilst

14 N. Ladam, *Le joyeux reveil de le election imperialle au magnifique honneur de treshault tresexcellent tresillustre et trespuissant prinche Charles*, [Bruxelles: Thomas van der Noot], for Antoine Membru [in Valenciennes], 1518 and [s.l., s.n.] for Antoine Membru [in Valenciennes], 1518.

15 A similar strategy was often used to glorify through the imagery, see R. Gerits, 'The "Triumphal Procession" of Charles v and Clement vii in Bologna (1530): Printing and Copying the News in the Netherlands. Robert Peril, Nicolas Hogenberg and Martin Lempereur', *De Gulden Passer*, 94 (2016, 2), pp. 197-218.

16 See W. Nijhoff & M. E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540* ('s-Gravenhage 1923-1971) 3327 and USTC 72782.

17 See Nijhoff & Kronenberg, op. cit. (n. 16), 3328 and USTC 13005.



A offered a traditional title page, the text of the poem starts immediately below the illustrations on B's first page. The text of A and B is, with a few small exceptions, identical. But, though the name of Antoine Membru is associated with both editions, two printers seem to have been involved. The Gothic type is very dissimilar even though for most of the text they are approximately of the same size.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the setting habits of the compositor were clearly different.

The comparison of Charles's arms allows us to analyse how the different woodcuts dealt with having to simplify such a complex design. In A, the arms of Aragon are absent but those of Castile and Leon have been correctly rendered in the first and final quarters. In B, all reference to Charles's Spanish inheritance has been removed. This leaves only the traditional quartered arms of the Habsburgs with Austria in 1, modern and ancient Burgundy in 2 and 3, and Brabant in 4 with overall the fess point of the quarter of an inescutcheon of Flanders. The arms of Tyrol are therefore missing in this version. In both A and B, modern Burgundy has been simplified: in A only a single fleur-de-lys remains whilst in B there are only three and the bordure compony has been removed. The two woodcuts show different traditions of representing the arms with varying decisions being made to simplify them. This suggests that the woodcuts were made by different workshops and strengthens the hypothesis that A and B were not produced by the same printer.

Establishing which came first is necessarily the result of a degree of conjecture. The *Bibliographia Belgica* concluded that B preceded A.<sup>19</sup> This was probably based on the fact that version A is to some extent incomplete. At the end of the first verse, the word 'doeul' is missing, as is 'du monde' at the end of the first verse of the fourth stanza, but these are all present in B. Presumably, it was thought that one edition was copied on the other and that therefore B had to have been printed first. Yet this argument does not stand up to close scrutiny. The only logical justification for the errors is that the compositor for edition A was working from a faulty manuscript, not least because this version was the result of careful compositorial work.

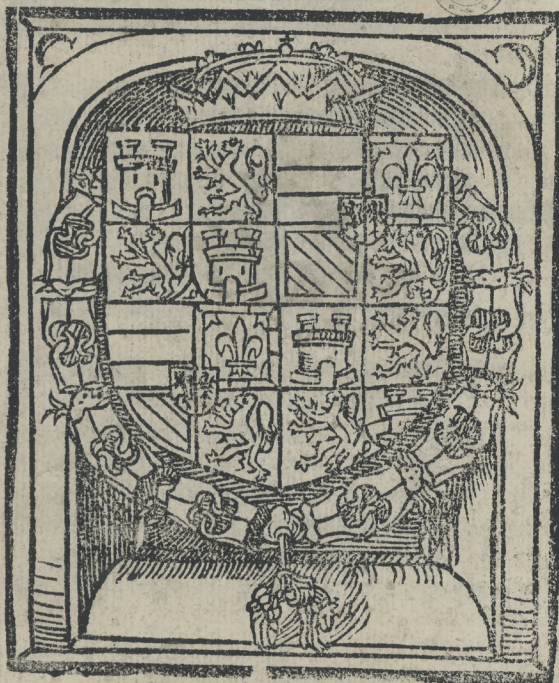
Edition B was obviously produced with less typographical attention than A. In A the use of paragraph marks is consistent throughout (with one exception)

18 Following the template for the identification of type set out by Henrik D. L. Vervliet in his *French Renaissance Printing Types: A Conspectus* (London 2010) and *The Palaeotypography of the French Renaissance: Selected Papers on Sixteenth-century Typefaces* (Leiden 2008), type A is 20 l. 78 × 3.0 : 3.8 whilst type B is 20 l. 104 × 3.4 : 4.4 (all measurements are given in millimetres).

19 *Bibliotheca Belgica* pp. 632-33.



**C**este Joyeux Reveil de le election imperialle au mag  
nifique honneur de treshault trefereient trefilustre  
et trespuissant Prince Charles Par la grace de dieu  
Roy catholique des espaignes etc. Archiduc d'austrie  
et Duc de Bourgoigne de brabant de luxembourg etc.  
Prince et seigneur des pays dembas



**Cum gratia et privilegio**

FIGURE 1 Title page of the *Joyeux Reveil*, version A (Ghent University Library).

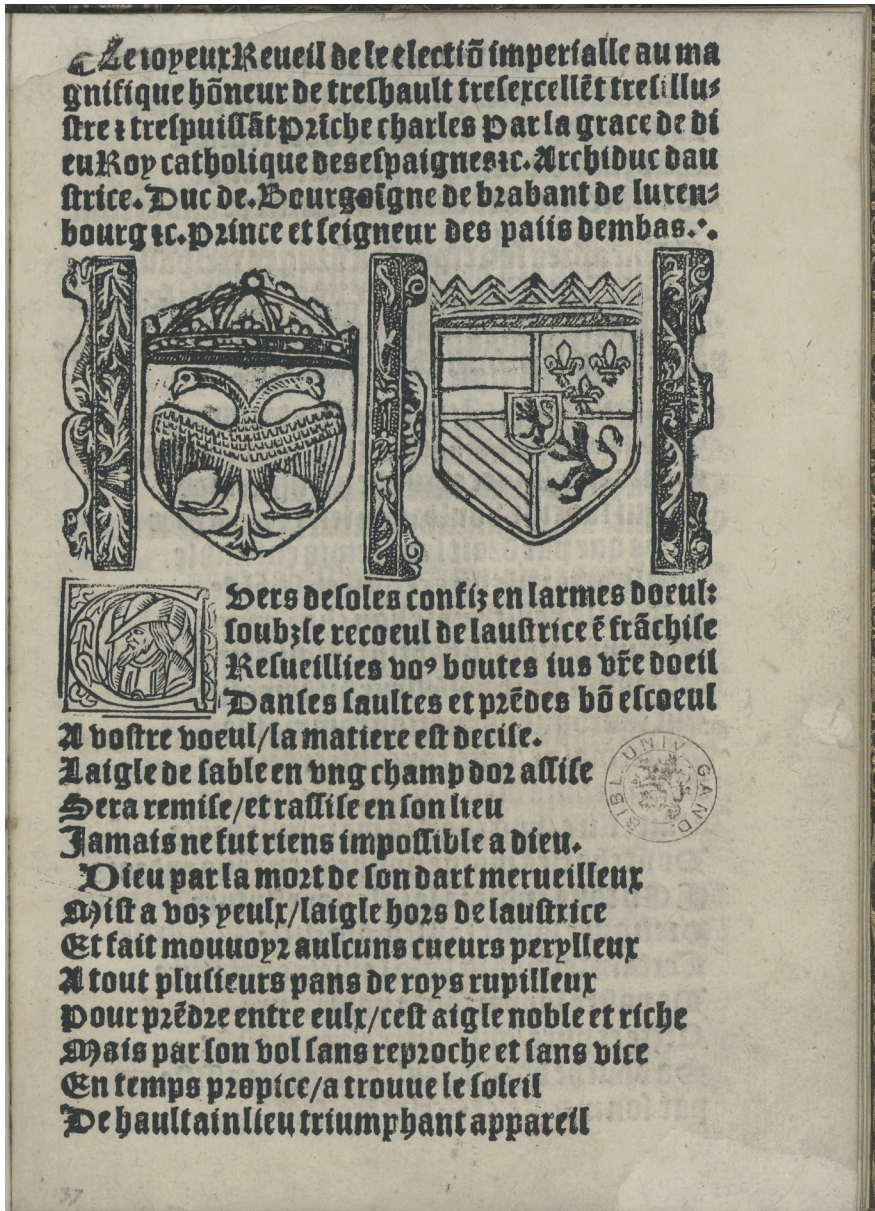


FIGURE 2 Title page of the Joyeux Reveil, version B (Ghent University Library).



whilst in B the compositor seems to have forgotten to employ them on the first page. He also leaves out the paragraph mark in stanzas seven and ten despite having left an appropriate space. Equally, in B the compositor used some letters from a second set of type (see the capital D at the start of the second stanza), whilst in A the type is consistent throughout. A also has its own title page unlike B. The contrast in the overall visual impression is marked and suggests that they were printed with a different market in mind.

Quite apart from the care taken to print the text, there was also the question of the investment made by the publisher. Here too, there is a marked difference between the two editions. In sixteenth-century Europe, paper represented approximately 60% of the total cost of production.<sup>20</sup> As such, the quantity of paper used in an edition played an important part in determining the price at which each copy was put on the market. The cramped style of edition B, with no blank lines, no separate title page, smaller woodcuts, and a change of type size for the final stanza and colophon were undoubtedly all adopted in order to halve the amount of paper required for each exemplar. This meant that the investment needed was much lower. It also meant that, potentially, the reader would have had to pay almost 50% more for a copy of the more lavishly produced edition than for the more functional version of the poem.<sup>21</sup> This opened up a whole new market for the text that became available to a less wealthy readership. This seems at odds with the idea that B was printed first. It was common to produce first of all a more expensive version of a work before reducing the costs and making it available to a wider audience rather than the contrary.<sup>22</sup> Certainly it made more business sense, so much so that this procedure is still followed today.

Further corroboration for this order comes from the inspection of both extant exemplars of edition A. Although this version appears incomplete with words missing from the end of the first and fourth stanza, both surviving copies were corrected by a contemporary hand that added them in manuscript form. The additions were made by different hands and the Harvard exemplar

20 Paper represented between 60 and 65% of costs for Christophe Plantin: L. Voet, *The Golden Compasses. A History and Evaluation of the Printing and Publishing Activities of the Officina Plantiniana at Antwerp. The Management of a Printing and Publishing House in Renaissance and Baroque*, (Amsterdam 1972) II, p. 19.

21 This calculation assumes that other costs would have remained equal. In fact, the cheap copy would have also have benefitted from labour savings too if the item was printed on the same sheet as another imprint.

22 See, for example, the various versions of Amadis de Gaule: A. Pettegree, 'Translation and the Migration of Texts' in his *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden 2007) pp. 203-18, especially pages 208-12.

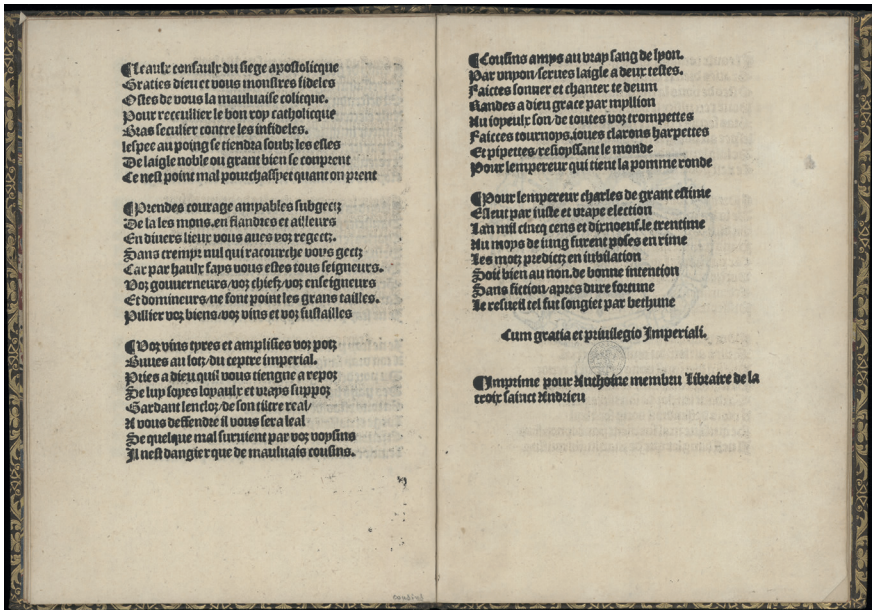


FIGURE 3 Last pages of text of the *Joyeux Reveil*, version A (Ghent University Library).

also features a further correction on the first verse of stanza nine (deletion of 'tu') which was erroneously kept in the Ghent copy. Such variations imply that the changes were not made by the workshop that had originally printed them but by later owners. This suggests that they were made either using other manuscript copies or that edition B was the basis for these corrections.

Another difference between the editions is the mention of an imperial privilege in edition A both on the title page and above the colophon. The lack of indication of a privilege in version B has interesting ramifications. If the work, even in this more compact form, had been printed for Membru, the printer could have found room for the two words 'Cum privilegio'. It is also highly unlikely that the publisher would have petitioned for a privilege after having already printed the text since rivals could have reprinted that unprotected version prior to the second edition. This suggests that either the work was not printed for Membru or it was reprinted after the time allocated for the privilege had elapsed. Because of the topical nature of the work the second solution seems improbable. It is more plausible that version B was in fact a pirate edition.

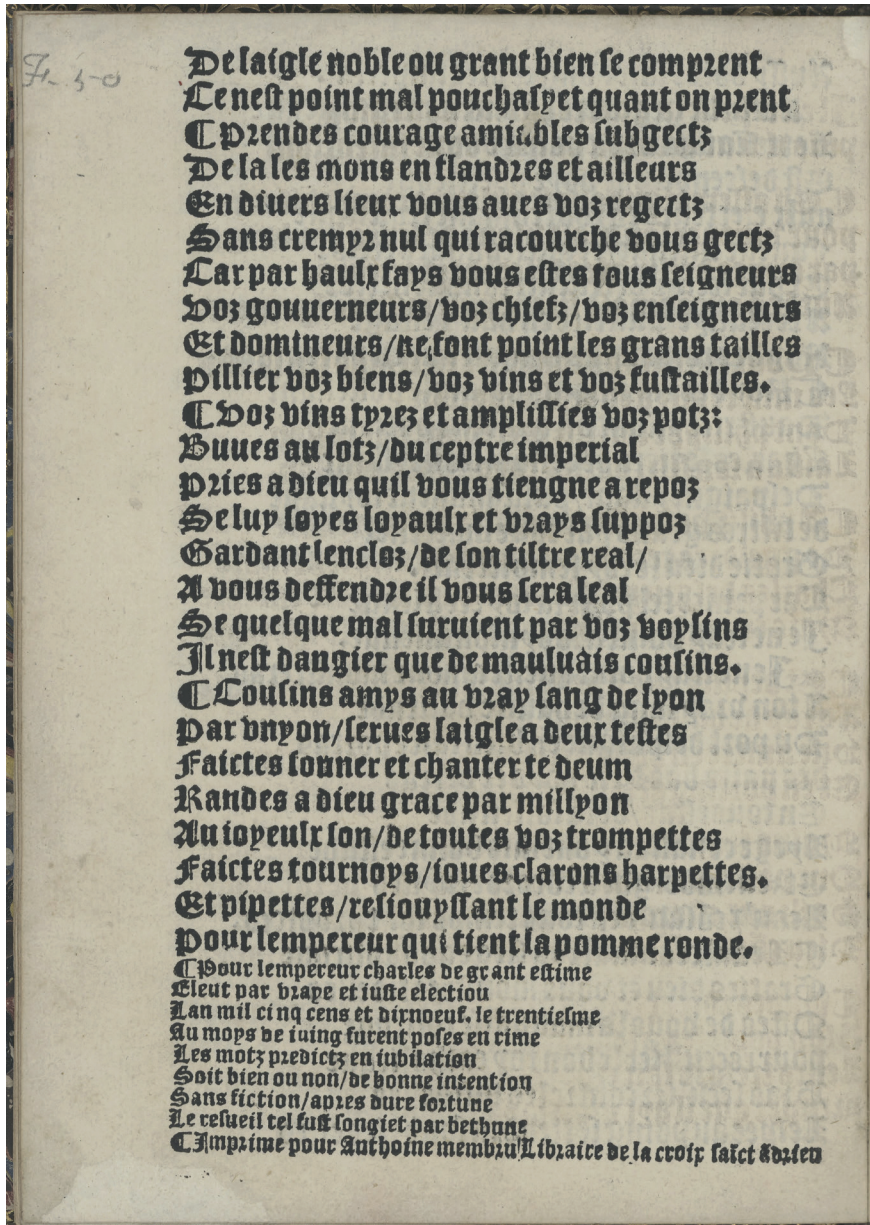


FIGURE 4 Last page of version B of the Joyeux Reveil (Ghent University Library).



The idea that this edition had been published by a rival bookseller is strengthened by circumstantial evidence. First, the edition was not printed by the same workshop. It would have been logical and expedient to have both versions produced by the same printer. Second, the mention of Membru is only made in small type at the end of the work and could well have been done in order to avoid problems with the authorities for producing a print-run of a text protected by Membru's privilege. The hypothesis of a competing bookseller is given further credibility by another work by Ladam published in the very same year. The *Épitaphe de feu digne de bonne memoire tres hault, tres puissant et tres illustre empereur Maximilian d'Austrice* was, like version B, limited to two leaves and does not have a separate title page.<sup>23</sup> This time the edition was printed without any indication of who was responsible for having the text published, but the version B of the *Joyeux reveil* and the *Épitaphe* are closely related. Indeed, the type used is exactly the same in both editions.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, one of the copies of the *Épitaphe* was noted in a nineteenth-century sales catalogue as having been bound with a copy of version B.<sup>25</sup> This evidence points to there being a bookseller intent on distributing Ladam's circumstantial works and ready to compete with Membru by issuing cheaper editions of the same texts.

The printer of these editions is uncertain. The woodcut of the arms of Charles v on edition A is identical to that used in a previous imprint by Thomas van der Noot.<sup>26</sup> But we know that the Brussels printer used woodcuts from other sources in some of his imprints.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the type does not fit that used in his other imprints and Van der Noot's output was also heavily geared towards Dutch vernacular printing. Of his 44 known imprints, only one was in French: an edition of Jean Le Maire de Belges's works.<sup>28</sup> In this one edition, he underlined his pride at knowing real French. Just below the colophon on the final page he scoffed at another edition that had reproduced the local

23 N. Ladam, *Épitaphe de feu digne de bonne memoire tres hault, tres puissant et tres illustre empereur Maximilian d'Austrice*, [s.l., s.n., 1519], USTC 13006, Nijhoff & Kronenberg, op. cit. (n. 16), 3325. It is possible that another version of this work might also exist but is yet to be identified.

24 This was also noted by Nijhoff & Kronenberg, op. cit. (n. 16), under 3325.

25 *Catalogue de la bibliothèque poétique d'un amateur* [26 avril 1869] (Paris 1869), p. 69.

26 See *Tscep vol wonders*, Brussels: Thomas van der Noot, 1520, USTC 402892, [iv]. This is the basis for the imprint's attribution to Van der Noot.

27 'In some cases Van der Noot borrowed existing blocks': M. Nijhoff, *Post-Incunabula and their Publishers in the Low Countries* (The Hague 1978), p. 106.

28 J. Lemaire de Belges, *Cy commence ung nouveau traictie nomme la concorde du gendre humain* (Brussels: Thomas van der Noot, 1508 [=1509 n.s.]), USTC 80696.

accent rather than giving the correct orthography: 'Ung certain imprimeur, nous a fait Chambray lire la ou nous pronunchons. Par droicture Cambray, ou il cuide enrichir. notre langue. A dire vray ou de sa cocquardise, il nous veult faire rire'.<sup>29</sup> The rogue introduction of a 'ch' instead of the standard 'c' was clearly something he despised. Yet in the title of the B edition of the *Joyeux reveil*, the printer does precisely this, printing 'Prinche Charles' on the third line. Van der Noot seems, therefore, an unlikely culprit for the pirate edition.

Even if it is not possible to find out who made the second edition, the fact that it exists is very telling about the status of this text. Like the poems on the peace of Cambrai, the *Joyeux Reveil* is not so much about spreading the news, as about celebrating it. Ladam took great care to stress the point that the inhabitants of Flanders should rejoice at the news of Charles V's election. He addressed them directly to encourage them to stop mourning the death of Maximilian I; he enjoined them to tap wine and organise festivities to celebrate the election. He also underlined the reciprocal agreement between the emperor and his subjects: in return for their loyalty he offered protection and patronage. Thus Ladam sought to create a connection with a ruler who might have seemed quite remote.<sup>30</sup> In this he served once more the cause of his prince by using his poetical skills and intellectual authority.<sup>31</sup> The tone and purpose is very close to that of the *Paix faite a Chambray*: the *Joyeux reveil* also insists on the celebration of news. The appeal of this text suggests this strategy was effective. Its commercial potential was such that the original imprint was pirated, and a cheaper edition produced so as to be sold to a larger, less well-off audience. This casts Ladam as a reliable and entertaining commentator of the news, and suggests that his texts were much sought after. The impact of Ladam's topical poetry is further confirmed by the publication of his bilingual poem on the fall of Rhodes in 1522.

29 Ibidem, C8r. We have kept the original punctuation in this quote. It is most likely that Van der Noot was attacking the edition of *La paix de Cambrai*.

30 This was a continual concern for Charles V and undoubtedly influenced what Peter Burke has called his 'propaganda', see P. Burke, 'Presenting and Re-presenting Charles V', in: H. Soly ed., *Charles V (1500-1558) and His Time*, (Antwerp 1999), pp. 393-476.

31 Ladam's continued association with the Habsburg court was reflected by his promotion to the position of herald of arms and his use of the sobriquet 'Bethunes' instead of or together with 'Songeur'. From 1519 on, he subsequently signed his books with this sobriquet and the mention of his function, until sometime between 1522 and 1526, he became king of arms and adopted the new sobriquet 'Grenade'. See Thiry, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 18-23.



### Le double des lettres (1522)

*Le double des lettres que le grant Turc escript a monsieur le grant maistre de Rhodes* is the last of the three published texts by Nicaise Ladam retracing important international events. Its subject matter is the siege of Rhodes by the Ottomans. The struggle to retain control of the island proved to be of great interest throughout Christendom with numerous tracts describing the exchanges between the two sides.<sup>32</sup> The edition offers in the first part a translation of the text of the letter supposedly sent by Sultan Suleiman to Philippe de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, the Grandmaster of the Order of Saint-John of Jerusalem, to ask his surrender before besieging the city (on [1]v and [1]2r), before passing on to Ladam's verses commenting on the event. In this way, this edition can be seen as something of a hybrid publication: a first part designed to inform, a second that offered commentary, in this case, to lament the loss of the island to the Turks. In his poem, Ladam lends his voice to Rhodes, whose personification sends an epistle to 'the Holy Catholic Faith' to deplore the lack of help the island received from Christian countries when attacked by the Ottomans.<sup>33</sup> He invites a deeper reflexion on the impact a faraway event could have, from a political and a moral perspective, on readers from the Low Countries.

As with the celebration of Charles v's election, the letter and poem on the siege of Rhodes survives in two editions. However, in this case the two versions were differentiated by language. If the first was in Ladam's native French, the second was a Dutch translation.<sup>34</sup> The fact that this book was printed in both languages indicates the publishers expected the work to appeal to a wide audience that was not limited to a single linguistic area. The analysis of the title page is particularly interesting as in both cases it demonstrates the relationship between the original text and Ladam's versified commentary. The letters are presented as being the central element of the book, with the epistle being

32 See the tracts listed in C. Göllner, *Turcica: Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts. I. Band MDI-MDL* (Berlin 1961).

33 The similar case, some fifty years earlier, of the *Lamento di Negroponte* illustrates, according to Margaret Meserve, the hybridity of such texts, 'between historical commentary and deliberative rhetoric, epic artifice and pious homiletic': Meserve, art. cit (n. 6), p. 463.

34 N. Ladam, *Le double des lettres que le grant Truc escript a monsieur le grant maistre de Rhodes*, [Antwerp: Adriaen van Berghen], for Antoine Membru [in Valenciennes], 1522, USTC 57772 and Nijhoff & Kronenberg, op. cit. (n. 16), 3324 and *Copie der brieven vanden grooten Turck ghescreven aen mijn Heere de grooten meestere van Rhodes*, Antwerp: Adriaen van Berghen, 1522, USTC 437186 and Nijhoff & Kronenberg, op. cit. (n. 16), 3329. Both books have been digitised and are available on Gallica.bnf.fr.

clearly subsidiary. This may seem surprising as Ladam's text occupies more pages than the copy of the letter itself, but this is consistent with the nature of the imprint. However important Ladam was as a commentator and recognised poet, these were first and foremost news imprints and, as such, the event was their prime selling point.

The consistency in presentation on the title page of both editions is not found in the colophons. The Dutch colophon indicates only that the edition was printed by Adriaen van Berghen in Antwerp and that the text was translated from French. In the French version on the other hand there is no mention of the printer, only of the Valenciennes bookseller Antoine Membru. This difference is important: the colophon was, after the title page, the natural place to which a reader would refer to get information on the book. It gave both indications of the name of the person responsible for the edition and for the authorship of the text. Both refer to the author by way of his sobriquets, 'le Songeur' and 'Bethunes', and his occupation as herald of Charles v, but the decision to publicise different commercial authorities for the edition is telling. It suggested that for French readers the name of Membru carried meaning and would be helpful if they were seeking to obtain this type of text. In contrast, for Dutch speakers, Membru was irrelevant and Van Berghen considered to be a more helpful brand. The two different audiences were catered for by two separate distribution networks working in tandem to disseminate the text across both *Sprachräume*.

The French colophon is particularly revealing as to the role of Antoine Membru. The presence of two publishers on two issues of the same edition was a recurrent characteristic of shared editions in this period.<sup>35</sup> But here we have the same text published in different languages and, technically therefore, two separate editions. Van Berghen as the printer was involved in both versions, but Membru is only explicitly linked to the French original. The financial arrangement between Membru and Van Berghen is not known, but the prominent position of the Valenciennes bookseller would suggest that he would also have been involved in the publication of the Dutch edition. Both texts claim under their respective colophons to have been published with privilege. As the French text came first, this privilege would also have applied to the Dutch edition. Had Van Berghen published the second version for his own profit he would have had to obtain at some cost the right to print the translation from

35 This approach was commonplace in Paris: A. Charon, 'Associations dans la librairie parisienne du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle' in: *L'Europe et le livre. Réseaux et pratiques du négoce de librairie XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, ed. F. Barbier, S. Juratic & D. Varry (Paris 1996), pp. 17-30.

the person who held the privilege. In this regard the manner in which the French colophon clearly credits Antoine Membru for the edition is significant. Membru's central role in the creation of the initial edition means that it was highly unlikely that he was not involved in some capacity in the Dutch venture.

This is emphasised by the French colophon in which Membru is somewhat opaquely described as 'libraire qui fait le libraire'. Here, we think that we should interpret this by taking into account the different meanings of the word 'libraire'. Membru is not simply a retail bookseller but one who is simultaneously acting as a publisher. In other words, he is the man responsible for the edition. In fact, the colophon suggests that his role was even more fundamental. Nicaise Ladam is credited with having written the work at the behest of the bookseller. It reads 'Composé par Songeur dit Bethune, herault d'armes de l'empereur Charles d'Austrice pour Anthoine Membre libraire qui fait le libraire'. Membru therefore appears as not just the commercial facilitator who enabled Ladam to have his text printed and distributed; he was also the person who commissioned the creation of the poem.

This has significant ramifications. It underlines that publishers actively sought to encourage the production of works they could then sell to accompany news. They were looking to profit from the interest in events by not just reprinting texts that they chanced upon, but by soliciting authors to provide commentary. Antoine Membru had already worked with Ladam to produce the *Joyeux reveil* a few years earlier. Indeed, the bookseller is only known as a publisher in these two instances. He was, therefore, ideally placed to commission a poem on the subject of the siege of Rhodes from the poet. But if he used this connection to good effect for these two events and there was a market, as is suggested by the probable pirate edition of the *Joyeux reveil*, one might object that it would have been logical for him to do so more often.

### Manuscript and Print Circulation

The answer to this objection is that Nicaise Ladam probably did have more of this type of poetry published but that no copies have survived. It is striking that the rate of survival of the editions we have analysed in this article is very poor indeed. Four of the five are known only thanks to a single copy, the fifth edition is preserved in one complete and one fragmentary exemplar.<sup>36</sup> This is not uncommon for such short topical brochures produced to profit from

36 The incomplete Harvard copy of the version B of the *Joyeux reveil* (pressmark \*FC5. L1207.519eb) was unknown to the *Bibliotheca Belgica* (see p. 633).

interest in a specific event. Their long-term survival heavily depended on being collected and bound with other similar works in a large sturdy volume. Ideally, this needed to take place soon after their original publication and sale and therefore depended on their perceived collectability.<sup>37</sup>

In the case of the Ladam's works, the question of the books' survival rate is complicated by the manner in which they were marketed during the nineteenth century. If his writing and the brochures' subject matter would have attracted very little interest in the decades and centuries that followed their publication, the rise of antiquarianism rendered them far more collectible. As is demonstrated by the texts assembled in the library of the Duke of Aumale in Chantilly, these short Gothic booklets became very fashionable during the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> This was all the more the case when they were written by a poet such as Ladam and touched on precise historical events. This sudden bibliophilic interest is the scourge of book historians. The items were removed from their original *Sammelbände*, dispersed and rebound in beautiful leather bindings, often with the monogram or arms of the collector embossed into the cover.

This seems to be precisely the fate of the Ladam editions. The *Bibliographia Belgica* noted that copies all seemed to emanate from the sale of the extensive book collection of a Mechelen chemist in 1840.<sup>39</sup> The wealthy Parisian bookseller Techener bought a number of the volumes and proceeded to embellish them to make them more marketable. He removed the items from their original context and rebound each of them separately in elegant new bindings. To make them seem more genuine, he even went to the expense of adding false monograms that made the books look as if they emanated from the collections of well-known bibliophiles such as Adolphe-Jean Audenet.<sup>40</sup> All five complete

37 This explains, for instance, the survival of illustrated single sheet items: A. Pettegree 'Broadsheets: Single-Sheet Publishing in the First Age of Print. Typology and Typography' in: Pettegree (ed.), 2017, op. cit. (n. 4).

38 See Léopold Delisle, *Chantilly. Le Cabinet des livres. Imprimés antérieurs au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1905). Seymour de Ricci noted how nineteenth-century French bibliophiles appreciated 'ces plaquettes gothiques qu'ils se sont disputées avec tant d'acharnement', see his 'Quelques bibliothèques françaises passées en Angleterre', *Journal des savants*, XIII (1915), pp. 417-23 at p. 421.

39 *Bibliotheca Belgica*, p. 641.

40 Audenet's books had been sold by Techener and, though the catalogue was published in 1839 under the title *Catalogue d'une précieuse collection de livres anciens et rares, la plupart en riches et élégantes reliures provenant du cabinet de M. AA.* (Paris 1839), the sale actually took place two years later: *Catalogue d'une collection de très beaux livres tant anciens que modernes* (Paris 1841). This was when other items from Techener's bookstore—and

copies analysed here are bound in this way, three of them bearing Audenet's monogram.<sup>41</sup> As a result the precise provenance of the books is hard to determine, as are references to earlier exemplars which may or may not have formed part of larger volumes that were split.<sup>42</sup>

This poor survival rate suggests that other similar works by Ladam might have initially been printed but were not saved by an early collector. This is all the more plausible as existing sixteenth-century manuscript compendia of his poetry point to other short poems that fitted perfectly into the news template set out by the three texts we have analysed here. The most obvious example is the *Embellissement du voyage et conquête de Lagoullette et de la cité de Thunes*. Ladam celebrated the fall of the pirate 'Barberousse' and of Tunis to imperial forces in July 1535, another signal victory for Charles v in much the same vein as the imperial election. Present in three manuscripts, the text each time has slightly different titles, formulated in the same manner, with slightly variable orthography.<sup>43</sup> This would seem to suggest that the text could have existed in printed form and certainly that it circulated widely, as had Ladam's three other topical works.

### Celebrating and Interpreting News

The editions we have analysed were not primarily designed as news tracts in the sense that their main objective was not to tell the reader what had occurred. Nicaise Ladam's verses were intended to accompany and celebrate an event, as is obvious in the *Double des lettres* by the fact that the poem was preceded by the news itself. This makes Ladam's contribution clear: he offered an interpretative angle, encouraging his readership to understand the text in a given way. Thus, the peace of Cambrai was a triumph of international diplomacy and heralded a new era of peace. The imperial election of Charles v was

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probably the Ladam items—were added to the sale. His monogram consisted of two overlapping A's and three stars in a coat of arms.

41 Both Ghent copies and the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*'s Rothschild 491 have the monogram. Furthermore, Rothschild 492 has the same binding as 491.

42 This is notably the case for the copy of version B of the *Joyeux reveil* that was sold as part of a larger volume of similar works in London in 1828: *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Robert Lang, esquire, of Portland Place* ([London] 1828) p. 94.

43 Manuscript 21687-21691 f. 40 recto of the Royal Library in Brussels has 'Senssuivent aucuns vers huictains intitulez Embellissement du voyage et conquête de Lagoullette et de la cite de Thunes' whilst ms 14864-14865 f. 298 recto has 'Sens-t lesd' vers huictains intitulez Embellissement du voiaige et cōqueste de Lagoullette et de la cite de Thunes'.

a signal opportunity, a chance to embrace a time of promise under the leadership of a new young Charlemagne. The plight of Rhodes was a warning that the Catholic world had to heed, a call to arms to defend their faith. In modern parlance, Ladam offered an opinion piece, a commentary on news. As Jacques de Bourbon wrote in another tract on Rhodes, it was not sufficient for people to know of events, but they needed to be better informed and told how to interpret them.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, by presenting this in the form of a poem, Ladam increased the potential impact of his ideas. He made his contribution more telling by rendering his writing more entertaining.

The layout of the editions sought to emphasise the accessibility of Ladam's work. They were designed to make his writing enjoyable to read. The presentation of the text, though printed in a bastard Gothic typeface that has traditionally been seen as overloading the page with black ink, consciously strove to create blank spaces that would improve the readers' experience. The space left between paragraphs, the presence of paragraph marks to denote the start of a new stanza, and the wide margins all contributed to the pleasure of reading. They gave the mental space to pause, reflect and enjoy. This attempt to make the book agreeable was enhanced by the use of large illustrative woodcuts on the title pages that occupied well over half of the page. Taken as a whole, these editions also conveyed a sense of luxuriousness. They could have easily appealed to the elites as much as the romances and court literature that had dominated the production of the francophone production of the southern Netherlands over the previous decades.<sup>45</sup>

The only imprint that does not fit into this presentational format is the B edition of the *Joyeux reveil*. In this case the printer has forgone all semblance of luxury, preferring instead to minimise the price of each imprint. This is further proof that the edition was produced for a different publisher and, perhaps, with a different market in mind. It suggests that the audience for these texts was wider than what may have initially been construed by Membru. His realisation that there was widespread interest is perhaps reflected by the later

44 Bourbon listed the reasons for writing his tract, noting that he wished 'que les princes chrestiens et aultres seigneurs soient *mieux* informez de la verite des choses passees' (our emphasis) and, when facing other interpretations of the event, 'dire ce que l'on doit dire': J. de Bourbon, *La grande et merueilleuse et tres cruelle oppugnation de la noble cite de Rhodes*, Paris, vend Gilles de Gourmont, 1526, USTC 14442 a2r-v.

45 On these changing patterns see M. Walsby, 'Printing in French in the Low Countries in the Early Sixteenth Century: Patterns and Networks', in: *The Multilingual Muse: Transcultural Poetics in the Burgundian Netherlands*, eds. A. Armstrong & E. Strietman (Oxford 2017), pp. 54-70.

decision to translate and publish the poems on Rhodes in Dutch. Though this type of commentary was not in itself new as a genre, as is illustrated for instance in the Burgundian territories by Michault Taillevent's *Povre Commun* and Jean Molinet's *Ressource du Petit Peuple*, what makes it so interesting is that it is no longer mainly meant for the court and the elite.<sup>46</sup> Thanks to their publication in print form, such works could reach other less affluent groups in society. They could afford to buy such short imprints and discover the opinion of a well-known and respected poet who was not just a keen observer of the negotiations but also a talented writer. In this, Ladam's interpretative poems could be seen as being comparable to a modern commentator seeking to fashion, or at least influence, opinion whilst entertaining the reader. By making news more enjoyable he also made it of greater interest, as is demonstrated by the manifest success of his editions. By encouraging his readers to celebrate or deplore news through his verses, he was telling people how to interpret the information they were receiving. The impression left by the analysis of Nicaise Ladam's topical poetry is one of a sophisticated and complex news culture; and one in which there was already an appetite for engaging comment pieces.

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46 See R. Deschaux, *Michault Taillevent: un poète bourguignon du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Édition et étude* (Geneva 1975) and in particular the 'poèmes de circonstance' produced between 1431 and 1446 (pp. 39 to 41); T. van Hemelryck, 'Un manuscrit inédit de la Ressource du petit peuple de Jean Molinet: présentation et perspectives de recherche', *Jean Molinet et son temps: Actes des rencontres internationales de Dunkerque, Lille et Gand (8-10 novembre 2007)*, eds. J. Devaux, E. Doudet & E. Lecuppre-Desjardin (Turnhout 2013), pp. 229-35.