

A Joyful Book as a Vehicle for the Protestant Faith? The Case of the *Triumphes de l'abbaye des Conards*, Rouen, 1587

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Why would two Rouen booksellers decide to republish the description of a Carnival celebration held in this city forty-six years after the festivities? Surely, the interest of a topical text originally printed in 1542 would be limited for readers in 1587, who may not have been present (or even born) at the time. Furthermore, the group responsible for the merry parade, the mock Abbey of the Conards, was still active and organising similar events in the 1580s. They could certainly provide fresher texts for the publishers, Nicolas du Gort and Louis Petit, rather than letting them print 'old news'.

Understanding why this text was republished leads us to consider the status of the descriptions of joyful parades – a lively genre in Renaissance France, not only in Rouen but also in other cities with a rich theatre tradition. In Dijon, the *Mère Folle* company had the French and Burgundian patois texts of their plays published well into the seventeenth century. In Lyon, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the printers of the joyful association of the Coquille even took the matter in their own hands by publishing the texts of their satirical plays a few days after they had performed them on the streets. In the eyes of their contemporaries, such festivities were important and worth attending. Gilles de Gouberville, a Norman gentleman, made a specific mention in his diary in 1551 of Carnival festivities he went to see with some of his friends.¹ The Conards or Cornards – a name referring to the horns of the stag, an important Carnival symbol, and of course to the horns of cuckolds – had become a cultural institution in sixteenth-century Normandy.² The printed account of their festivities could be equally important for a local audience as news pamphlets

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- 1 Entry for 1 February 1551 (n.s.), Gilles de Gouberville, *Journal* (3 vols., Saint-Lo: Archives départementales de la Manche et Comité Gilles de Gouberville, 2020), t. 1.
 - 2 Dylan Reid, 'Carnival in Rouen: A History of the Abbaye des Conards', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxxii (2001), pp. 1027–1055; Michel Rousse, 'L'abbaye des Conards dans la vie sociale et culturelle de Rouen', in J.-C. Arnould and T. Montovani (eds.), *Première poésie de la Renaissance, autour des Pys normands, Actes du colloque de Rouen 1999* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), pp. 407–431.

or as commemorative texts. In 1587, however, republishing the account of these ‘festivités conardes’ may well have taken on a new meaning in the troubled context of the French Wars of Religion.

To understand the shifting status of this specific festive text and the impact of its republication, we must understand both the nature of the 1587 edition and the religious context in which this new publication took place. This process raises the problem of the commercial strategy and the legal responsibility of both ‘authors’ and publishers of the text, as well as the question of its status in the larger publishing landscape of merry literature in Rouen during the Wars of Religion.

Two Contrasting Editions of the Same Text

The description of the Carnival parade that took place on the streets of Rouen in February 1541 was published in January 1542, under the title *Le recueil des Actes et despesches faictes aux haultz jours de Conardie* (‘The acts and letters published during the high days of Folly’).³ Unfortunately, the last page of the only surviving copy has been lost, and with it a colophon that would have helped to identify the printer or the publisher. Further investigation is needed, but preliminary research on the typographical material points either to Claude Le Roy or, more likely, to the brothers Robert and Jean du Gort as possible publishers.⁴ The same text was published again in 1587, before 17 January, the date at which an enquiry against the publishers was launched.⁵ Printed under the title *Les Triomphes de l’Abbaye des Conards* (‘The Triumphs of the Abbey of the Conards’), it features the complete text of the 1541 parade with only a few minor spelling variants, most likely re-using the 1542 edition as a source, and includes textual additions from joyful celebrations of the same Conards that

3 *Le recueil des Actes & despesches faictes aux haultz jours de Conardie, tenus a Rouen depuis la derniere sepmaine de Janvier jusques au mardi gras ensuyvant penultime jour de Febvrier mil cinq centz quarante, avec le triumphe de la monstre et ostentation du magnifique & tresglorieux Abbe des Conardz, Monarche de Conardie* (Rouen: s.n., [1542]), in-4, USTC 27233 (only known copy at the Bibliothèque municipale (Méjanès) in Aix-en-Provence). I have converted the years of publication to New Style dating.

4 For more information about these Rouen publishers, see Malcolm Walsby, *Booksellers and Printers in Provincial France 1470–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), Claude Le Roy, #1744, Jean I du Gort #930, Robert I du Gort #934. On my analysis of this edition, see Katell Lavéant, ‘Une enquête bibliographique: retrouver et identifier un livre joyeux de 1542 supposé perdu’, *Histoire du livre*, published 01-03-2019 [<https://histoirelivre.hypotheses.org/3740>].

5 Registers of the Rouen Parlement, Archives départementales de Seine-Maritime (hereafter ADSM), 1 BP 9361.

took place in 1580 and 1586.⁶ The comparison of both editions is enlightening for what it reveals about the way the publishers may have wished to position the books on the market.

The *Actes et depesches* is not a typical edition of joyful literature. Joyful texts, such as parodies of legal acts and edicts, comic plays, mock prognostications and sermons, were typically very short. They mostly fitted in half a sheet of paper printed in octavo, the preferred format for these works from the early sixteenth century, and were very often printed in gothic type until the mid-sixteenth century. The *Actes*, on the contrary, is a relatively lengthy text of forty pages (thirty-eight pages still existing plus two missing), published in quarto, in roman type. Its format and appearance bring this book more in line with editions of royal entries such as the description of the entry of Henry II in Rouen in October 1550, which was published by Robert and Jean du Gort in December 1551.⁷ In both cases, a year had passed before the accounts of the parades were published. They also both feature similar layouts for the text and give a prominent place to engravings that display the marching groups and the carts of the parade.

The 1587 *Triumphes*, on the other hand, is an octavo volume that does not accentuate the spectacular nature of the event but instead adopts the traditional presentation of books of poetry. It is interesting to note that the same woodcut, representing the abbot of the Conards sitting on a cart and leading his troops, is present in both the *Actes* and *Triumphes*. The version of the *Triumphes* copies meticulously the composition of the original design of the woodcut in the *Actes*, but some details clearly show that a new woodblock was carved to illustrate the *Triumphes*. This edition reproduces the woodcut on the last page, filling the last blank verso, instead of giving it a prominent place on the title-page, like in the *Actes*. All these characteristics suggest that the *Actes* was designed as a news pamphlet and was meant to commemorate a recent local event that had left a strong visual impression, while the *Triumphes* was published as a re-edition of a text that would be read by individual readers

6 *Les triumphes de l'Abbaye des Conards, sous le resveur en decimes Fagot, abbé des Conards, contenant les cries et proclamations faites, depuis son advenement jusques a l'An present* (Rouen: chez Nicolas du Gort/chez Louis Petit, 1587), in-8 (USTC 84170 and 45420).

7 *C'est la deduction du sumptueux ordre, plaisantz spectacles et magnifiques theatres dressés et exhibés par les citoyens de Rouen ... A ... Henry second ...* (Rouen: Jean Le Prest, chez Robert Le Hoy et Robert du Gort, 1551), in-4 (USTC 10205) and idem (Rouen: Jean Le Prest, chez Robert Le Hoy et Robert du Gort et Jean du Gort, 1551), in-4 (USTC 54006). Another description of the entry was published immediately after the event: *L'entrée du Roy nostre Sire faite en sa ville de Rouen le mecredy [sic] premier de ce mois d'Octobre, pareillement celle de la Roynne qui fut le jour ensuyant* (Paris: Robert Masselin, 1550), in-8 (USTC 54004). On this entry in Rouen and its cultural significance, see Michael Wintroub, *A Savage Mirror. Power, Identity, and Knowledge in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

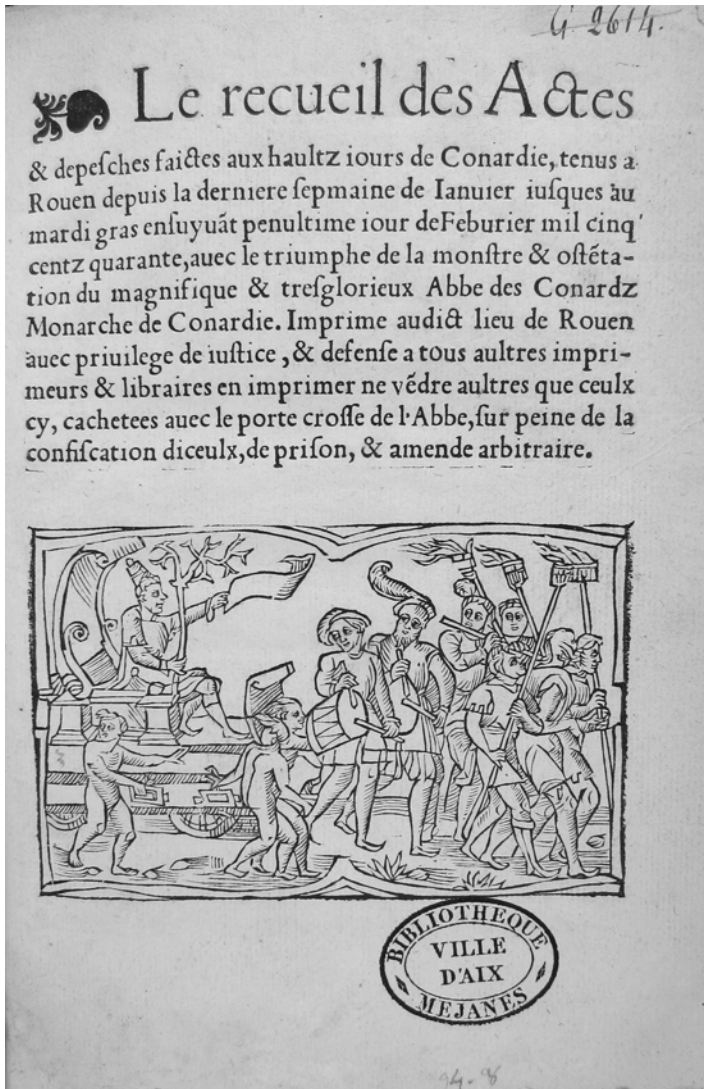


FIGURE 17.1 Title-page of the *Actes et depesches* (1542)

for its content rather than its theatrical dimension.⁸ The *Actes* copied the presentation of pamphlets spreading news of important political events that had taken place in distant places, to commemorate the event among a local

8 On the spectacular dimension of the parade in 1541, see Dylan Reid, 'The Triumph of the Abbey of the Conards: Spectacle and Sophistication in Rouen Carnival', in J. Rollo-Koster (ed.), *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual. Formalized Behavior in Europe, China and Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 147–173.

audience and publicise its importance at a regional or transregional level.⁹ The fact that the publishers of the *Triumphes* gave the text a new title reflects its new status: it erased the topicality of the (past) event and underlined the enlargement of the volume, described as ‘containing the declarations and proclamations that were done since his [the Abbot of the Conards’s] accession to this day’.¹⁰

Despite the new status given to the text, the edition of the *Triumphes* was very thorough in reproducing all the elements of the *Actes*, down to the details of the request presented at the time by the Abbot of the Conards to Jacques Aubert, lieutenant of the bailiff, to obtain the authorisation and a privilege to publish the book, as well as Aubert’s subsequent answer. These were two ambiguous fragments even in the first edition of the text. The request and the answer were presented in two poetic stanzas. They are not excerpts of actual archival documents, yet they seem to reflect the real process of requesting a privilege and contain all the elements usually present in privileges. The complete title of the *Actes* also mentions that it was

Printed in the said place of Rouen with privilege of justice, and [with] prohibition to any other printers and booksellers to print and sell other [copies] than these ones sealed by the crosier-bearer of the Abbot, under penalty of confiscation of these copies, of imprisonment and of arbitrary fine.¹¹

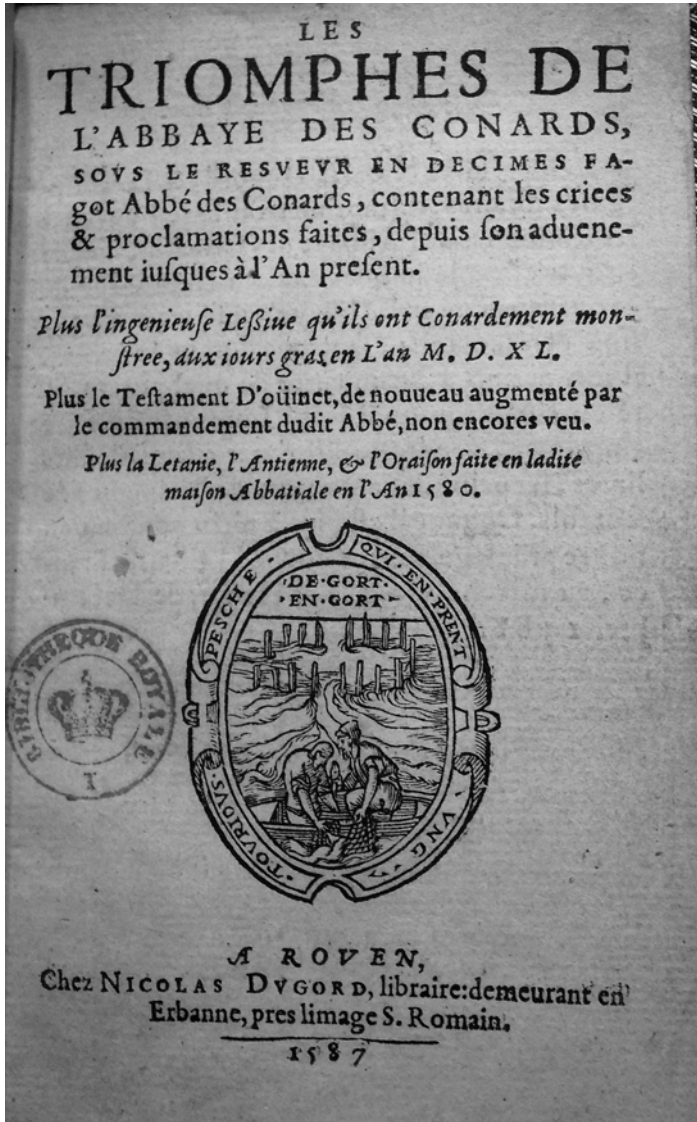
Most likely, a formal request was presented to Jacques Aubert according to the normal procedure in 1541 of which there is no trace in the archives, but which explains the mention of the privilege on the title-page. The two poems are a facetious reflection of this procedure, yet with a serious undertone: their presence reinforces the authority of the Abbot of the Conards on matters related to his celebrations and their publication, as recognised by the legal authorities of Rouen.¹²

9 Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News. How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), especially chapters 6 and 7; Andrew Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), chapter 2: ‘A Provincial News Community in Sixteenth-Century France’.

10 ‘contenans les criees et proclamations faites, depuis son advenement jusques a l’an present’.

11 ‘Imprime audict lieu de Rouen avec privilege de justice, & defense a tous aultres imprimeurs et libraires en imprimer ne vendre aultres que ceulx cy, cachetees avec le porte crosse de l’Abbe, sur peine de la confiscation d’iceulx, de prison, & amende arbitraire’.

12 On the Carnival prerogatives of the Abbey, see Dylan Reid, ‘“Chevauchees, Mascarades et Jeux Acoustumez”, Jurisdiction Over Carnival in Sixteenth-Century Rouen’, in

FIGURE 17.2 Title-page of the *Triomphes* (1587)

M. Bouhaïk-Gironès, J. Koopmans and K. Lavéant (eds.), *La Permission et la Sanction. Théories légales et pratiques du théâtre (XIV^e–XVII^e siècle)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), pp. 165–199.

In the *Triomphe*, the text is preceded by a facetious privilege:

Extract from the privilege of the Abbot.

Nicolas du Gort and Louis Petit, booksellers, are allowed to print and let print the Triumphs of the Abbey of the Conards, on everything that has happened until now, as well as everything that will happen at the Abbey for six full years, without anyone else being allowed, whatever their quality, to print or have print, sell and distribute any of the said books, under penalty of hundred marks of Brelingues of seven sols. As it is contained in more details in our privilege, given at the Arms of France, on the Veal's Market, on 12 December 1586. Thus signed, do not run anymore, Drink well and wait for Fagot.¹³

This privilege gives permission to the two booksellers to publish and sell the *Triomphe* as well as other future texts emitted by the Conards, and it protects their work from illegal copies. However, it was signed not by the king's bailiff but by the Abbot of the Conards. Issued at an inn in which the joyful group gathered for their celebrations, it promised a fine to the infringers of the privilege, to be paid in what seems to be a ridiculous amount of money. This privilege is therefore a parody of a legal edict and has no real value.¹⁴ Yet the publishers placed it on the verso of the title-page, where one would expect to find an excerpt of the real privilege granted by the bailiff. Closer inspection of the edition fails to reveal any mention of an actual privilege, which suggests that placing the parodic privilege of the Abbot at this specific place was not merely meant as a facetious interaction with the intended readers. It may also have been put there to mask the absence of a real privilege for this edition.

13 'Extrait du privilege de l'abbé. Il est permis à Nicolas Dugord, et Loys Petit Libraires, d'Imprimer ou faire Imprimer les triomphe de l'Abbaye des Conards, tant de ce qui s'est passé jusques à aujourd'huy, que de ce qui se passera en l'Abbaye, jusques à six ans finis et accomplis, sans que durant ce temps, il soit permis à aucun autre de quelque qualité ou condition qu'il soit, Imprimer ou faire Imprimer, vendre ne distribuer aucuns desdits livres, sur peine de cent marcs de Brelingues de sept sols. Comme il est plus à plain contenu en nostre privilege, pour ce donné à l'Escu de France, au marché des Veaux, le 12. de Decembre 1586.

Ainsi signé ne courez plus le trot, Beuvez tout beau, et attendez Fagot', in *Triomphe*, Aiv. The 'Escu de France' was an inn, and Fagot was the name of the Abbot in 1586–1587.

14 On facetious privileges, see Edwige Keller-Rahbé, '(Re)penser la culture de l'imprimé sur le mode comique. Privilèges et approbations parodiques au XVII^e siècle', in G. Holtz (ed.), *Nouveaux aspects de la culture de l'imprimé. Questions et perspectives (XV^e–XVII^e siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, 2014), pp. 115–142.

This did not go unnoticed, however: an enquiry was quickly launched. The Register of the Rouen Parliament records that the two publishers and booksellers of the *Triumphes* were to be summoned to the court of justice to explain the book's publication. It is followed by a request from the religious authorities:

To punish in exemplary manner some authors and printers of the city of Rouen who have, against and at the prejudice of royal ordinances and bans, printed and sold scandalous books opposing the honour of God and of the Catholic religion, among which was one entitled 'Les triumphes de l'abbaye des Conard'.¹⁵

We do not know if Nicolas du Gort and Louis Petit were subsequently punished and their stocks seized and destroyed – although, if it was the case, it is worth noting that at least five copies are known, which is a high rate of survival for a joyful book, especially for one that incurred the wrath of the authorities.

What prompted this enquiry about a book that had been published without any restrictions or negative reactions from the authorities four decades earlier?

A New, Problematic Context of Publication

The Carnival parade of 1541 had not been entirely innocent. The Conards regularly got into trouble for *ad hominem* attacks against some local canons and Parliament members in the 1540s. That the 1541 festivities could take place without being censored was probably due to the general discourse of the actors. They uttered a satirical discourse against lascivious monks and greedy priests in the form of allegorical performances.¹⁶ However, this discourse was not aimed at specific individuals, and the Conards thus avoided censure: the

15 '... qu'il soit fait punition exemplaire des autheurs et imprimeurs de ceste ville de Rouen ayans contre et au prejudice des ordonnances royaulx et inhibicions y contenues imprimé et vendu des livres scandaleux contre l'honneur de Dieu et de la religion catholique apostolique et romaine et entre autres ung intitulé Les triumphes de l'abbaye des conardz ...'. Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, 1 B 689. See Reid, 'Chevauchees, Mascarades et Jeux Acoustumez', p. 184 and Michel Rousse, *Le Théâtre des farces en France au Moyen Âge* (Doctoral thesis, Université Rennes II, 1983), 5 vols, t. 5: 'La confrérie des conards de Rouen. Textes de farces, documents d'archives', p. 98 (who cites the previous shelfmark 1 B P 9361). See also Sylvain Skora, *Les libraires-imprimeurs de Rouen d'Henri II à Richelieu* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2021), p. 138, who cites the copy of this request in the archives of the printers' corporation, ADSM 5 E 489.

16 As also suggested by Reid, 'Chevauchees, Mascarades et Jeux Acoustumez'.

mediaeval tradition of satirising the clergy in Carnival plays and texts was still alive and well in France during the first half of the sixteenth century.

This radically changed as tensions between Catholics and Protestants mounted in the second half of the century. What could still pass for a general moral judgement under the guise of inconsequential nonsense in the 1540s was clearly regarded as blasphemous in the midst of the Wars of Religion. Already in 1562, the Abbot of the Conards had to publish a narrative poem in which he defended his right to utter his carnivalesque discourse against attempts to curb such festivities.¹⁷ Interestingly, his censors were then the Protestants who had temporarily gained the upper hand in Rouen and felt as outraged by this inverted language as the Catholic authorities before and after them.¹⁸

Although most of the passages of the *Actes* do not implicate the real clergy, but only the mock clergy ruled over by the Abbot of the Conards, they must certainly have sounded blasphemous in the tense religious context of these years. This is certainly the case for the textual additions in the *Triumphes* that reproduced the parodic Church offices performed by the Conards in 1580 and 1586 under the authority of an Abbot named Fagot. These texts contain allusions to the monks and nuns of the Abbey, who were encouraged to take part in obscene activities. It is worth noting that in the 1580s the Conards's festivities were still allowed by the Rouen authorities: the authorisation given for the 1586 parade survives, which seems paradoxical given the controversial nature of the texts in the *Triumphes*.¹⁹ Was there a discrepancy between what was performed on the streets and what was subsequently printed in the *Triumphes*, the printed text being more offensive than the performed one?

The same question can also be asked about a central passage of the *Actes*, that goes beyond the light satire evoked above. The 1541 festivities also displayed a series of carts on which allegories showed Church and Religion consorting with Simony and Hypocrisy, represented doing the laundry. This *Lessive* was presented as *tableaux vivants* with short explanatory poems during the parade: they left no room for a full-blown play but were clear about their accusations against the Church. A Rouen manuscript, now preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, contains an extended version of a morality

17 *Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Le testament et bonne volonté de l'abbé des conars* (s.l.: s.n., 1562), USTC 79798.

18 Katell Lavéant, 'Usages et intérêts d'un recueil factice du XVI^e siècle: la trajectoire d'un Sammelband de Paris à Utrecht', *Histoire du livre*, published 18-01-2019 [<https://histoire.livre.hypotheses.org/3447>]. On this Protestant episode and the period that followed, see Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

19 Michel Rousse, 'La confrérie des conards de Rouen', pp. 94–95.

play of 'Church, Nobility and Poverty doing the Laundry'.²⁰ The similarities between the texts of both the *Actes* and the manuscript, as well as the presence of other Conard texts in the manuscript, are conclusive. This must be the text of the play that was represented during the 1541 festivities, not on the streets but afterwards, during the traditional banquet of the mock abbey. In other words, the evocation of the *Lessive* in the *Actes* may have been printed in 1542 because the *tableaux vivants* and the elliptic content of the poems presented during the parade were less explicit than the play, but the resurgence of this performance in the *Triumphes* in 1587 was highly problematic.

We have seen that the 'authors and printers' of the *Triumphes* were summoned by the Parliament at the request of the Rouen Church authorities. Why would the Abbot of the Conards decide to have a polemical text republished in the context of 1587, and why did Du Gort and Petit decide to take on this task?

Diverging Publishing Strategies

As regards the Conards, we can only conjecture that the mock abbey wished to remind the public of its past glory at a time when the legitimacy of Carnival parades was contested. This was not an isolated act: the manuscript in which the Laundry play was kept was copied in the 1570s, as a repertoire of past plays by various theatre groups of Rouen, to commemorate their literary and cultural value despite the polemical content of some of their performances.²¹ Similarly, many joyful books that were popular in the first half of the century in Lyon and Paris editions were reissued as Rouen re-editions, especially by Nicolas Lescuyer and Abraham Cousturier, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²² While first editions could often be linked to actual performances or theatrical situations, these re-editions were offering texts that

20 Ms Fr 24341. The text was edited in Jonathan Beck, *Théâtre et propagande aux débuts de la Réforme. Six pièces polémiques du recueil La Vallière* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1986). Its polemical dimension is analysed by Estelle Doudet, 'Le recueil de Rouen, scènes d'une ville au seuil des guerres de religion', *Théâtre, guerres et religion, Europe, XVI^e siècle*, special issue of *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 286 (2020), pp. 45–56.

21 This manuscript is referred to as Recueil La Vallière or Recueil de Rouen by theatre specialists and constitutes one of the most important collection of sixteenth-century morality and comic plays in French. On its commemorative value, see Estelle Doudet and Mario Longtin, 'Le recueil de Rouen: archéologie d'un patrimoine spectaculaire au XVI^e siècle', Sandra Provini, Xavier Bonnier and Gérard Milhe Poutingon (eds.), *La Renaissance à Rouen, l'essor culturel et artistique dans la Normandie des années 1480–1530* (Mont Saint-Aignan: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2019), pp. 295–310.

22 Walsby, *Booksellers and Printers*, #1755 and #1629.

were separated from the original context of theatrical production to a new generation of readers. Although we know very little about the individual members of the mock abbey in these years, it is not likely that this group acted out of militantism against the Catholic Church. Philip Benedict notes that the non-office-holding lawyers, from which part of the members of the Conards were recruited, remained committed to Catholicism in Rouen.²³ In much the same way as the Dijon and Lyon joyful groups at the same time, the Conards seem to have walked a fine line between expressing their criticism against the religious and political troubles that were destabilising local communities and taking care not to alienate the dominant religious party, whichever one was in power when they organised their festivities.²⁴ More than anything else, by commissioning the *Triumphes*, the Conards were preaching to their own parish. They were taking a calculated risk: this book was to remind the Rouen authorities of their own assent to the festivities in the 1540s and petition for the perennity of these joyful activities despite the unfavourable context.

Unless they may have been associated to activities of the mock abbey (for which we have no proof), Nicolas du Gort and Louis Petit must have had other motives to publish the book. The two men were minor actors on the Rouen printing scene in terms of publishing, though not in importance in the printers' community. A descendent of a well-established lineage of printers and booksellers, Nicolas du Gort was a bookseller and printer and the master of the confraternity in 1608. He was appointed several times as warden of the community.²⁵ The *Triumphes* is the only edition with the name of this member of the Du Gort family that has survived, which gives a special status to the book. It seems to have been his first and only attempt to make a living as a publisher, a role he then could have given up after his brush with the law in 1587. One can conjecture that the content of the text may have had a special appeal for a bookseller who was known to be a protestant, as were other members of his family.²⁶ But was the decision to publish the text a 'deliberate poke at the rising power of the ultra-Catholic party in Rouen', as Dylan Reid suggests?²⁷ Or was he, more simply, trying his hand at publishing with a text that his father

23 Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, p. 85.

24 This prudence may also reflect the 'confessional in-between' described by Thierry Wanegffelen in *Ni Rome ni Genève. Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1977).

25 Walsby, *Booksellers and Printers*, pp. 320–321.

26 Émile Lesens, 'Imprimeurs et libraires rouennais et dieppois, protestants: avant 1789', *Bulletin historique et littéraire de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, xxxvi (1887), pp. 331–336.

27 Reid, 'Chevauchees, Mascarades et Jeux Acoustumez', p. 184.

and his uncle had printed? Louis Petit, in any case, seems to have had a very pragmatic approach. He published polemical texts that had some commercial potential, with little regard for the side the book he was releasing was on, as evidenced by the fact that he also published, the same year, a violent anti-protestant pamphlet.²⁸

Conclusion

While Nicolas du Gort pursued a more discreet career as printer and bookseller, and Louis Petit vanished from the records, the Conards seem to have achieved their goal and went on with their parades 'with as much pomp as one had ever seen before', according to the diary of a local priest.²⁹ In the short term, the enquiry they had to face in 1587 after the publication of the book prevented them from organising their Carnival parade that year. They were allowed to resume their activities in 1588 under what may first appear as strict conditions. The Abbot had to give up his religious attributes and changed his name into 'Father of Sobriety' ('Père de Sobriété'), which may well have been a tongue-in-cheek statement from the Conards. Despite the scandal caused by the publication of the *Triumphes*, a year later the Parliament agreed to their request to forbid unauthorised printers from printing the text of their festivities, effectively granting them a privilege on the publication of their works, although we have kept no trace of such editions.³⁰ In the years that followed, and until the beginning of the seventeenth century, they went back to their original name and festivities.³¹ Even if we have not identified any other printed account of these festivities, the Conards retained a certain aura of prestige, as testified by the references to this group in joyful books printed at the turn of the seventeenth century, and by re-editions of comic works under their patronage in that period.

28 *Harangue sur les causes de la guerre entreprise contre les rebelles et seditieux du royaume de France* (Rouen: Louis Petit, 1587), USTC 92366.

29 'Avec autant de pompes que jamais on avoit vu'. Ch. R., 'Journal historique de Rouen, extrait d'un manuscrit de la bibliothèque de l'abbé de la Rue', *Revue de Rouen et de la Normandie*, 8 (1840), pp. 251–259, here p. 252.

30 Archives départementales de la Seine-Maritime, 1 BP 9366, as cited by Rousse, 'La confrérie des conards de Rouen', pp. 99–100.

31 Rousse and Reid cite several records of authorisations given to the Conards for their parade in the following years: Rousse, 'La confrérie des conards de Rouen', pp. 106–110; Reid, 'Chevauchees, Mascarades et Jeux Acoustumez', pp. 198–199.

In this corpus of non-controversial books, the case of the *Triomphe*s stands out for the controversy it caused. The diverging publishing strategies I have described illustrate the multiple ways in which a joyful book could take new meanings for different types of audiences when it was re-edited in another political and religious context. Depending on the people who held it in their hands, in 1587 it could be read as a comforting reminder of happier times during which the Rouen community was united in ludic celebrations (as the Conards intended it), or as a scandalous book that mocked the Catholic clergy and should therefore be banned (as the authorities read it). The multi-layered meanings of joyful and light-satirical literature in changing contexts, and its possible role in the culture of persuasion so aptly described by Andrew Pettegree, are research avenues that will deserve a more thorough exploration in the future.³²

³² Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). This research is in progress, thanks to a VIDI-grant awarded to me by the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) in 2015.