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Introduction: Crimes, Misdemeanors, and Conflict Resolution in the Works of Philippe de Vigneulles (1471-c. 1528)

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Crimes, Misdemeanors, and Conflict Resolution in the Works of Philippe de Vigneulles (1471-c. 1528)

Introduction

Philippe de Vigneulles was an active participant in the vibrant urban culture of Metz at the dawn of the sixteenth century. His voluminous historiographical and imaginative works purport to document the « merveilleuses adventures » and « diverses fortunes » marking the history of his beloved city¹. These events include large-scale confrontations between royal and seigneurial powers, as well as conflicts on the local and regional levels. Philippe accords considerable attention to narratives of crime, punishment, and conflict resolution. His *Chronique* and *Journal* teem with tales of war, murder, rape, abduction, robbery, home invasion, conspiracy, negotiations, trials, and executions ; crimes and misdemeanors are essential ingredients of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.

Historians have long consulted the *Chronique* as a source of information on late medieval judicial practices². More recently, however, scholars have begun to examine the interplay of historical account, collective memory, and contemporary cultural production in Philippe's œuvre³. The three essays collected here pursue the latter approach, confronting depictions of conflict and transgression in Philippe's narrative works with musical traditions, theatrical performances, and storytelling.

Mario Longtin affirms that the chronicler is quite selective in his accounts of crime and punishment. Philippe's choices do not correspond to actual crime statistics (in type or frequency), but rather display a predilection for extraordinary events likely to evoke awe and amazement in his readers. Philippe's version of one such event, the execution in 1437 of a roofer convicted of stealing chalices, is illuminated by comparison with his source text, the *Chronique du Doyen de Saint-Thiébaud*. Read in the context of popular songs and novellas of the period, Philippe's subtle rewriting proves to have hidden interpretive and aesthetic value.

¹ Three of Philippe's principal works have been edited : *La Chronique de Philippe de Vigneulles*, ed. C. Bruneau, 4 vols., Metz, Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de la Lorraine, 1927; *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, ed. C. H. Livingston, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance, Geneva, Droz, 1972 ; *Gedenkbuch des Metzzer Bürgers Philippe von Vigneulles aus den Jahren 1471 bis 1522*, ed. H. Michelant, 1852, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1968. His *mise en prose* of the Lorraine cycle has not been edited in its entirety. A partial edition may be found in *La Chanson de Garin le Loherain mise en prose par Philippe de Vigneulles de Metz. Table des chapitres avec les reproductions des miniatures d'après le manuscrit appartenant à M. le comte d'Hunolstein*, éd. M. de Pange, Paris, Leclerc, 1901.

² See, for example, P. Demarolle, *La Chronique de Philippe de Vigneulles et la mémoire de Metz*, Caen, Paradigme, 1993, p. 51-60 and 73-99 ; N. Gonthier, *Le châtement du crime au moyen âge: XII^e-XVI^e siècles*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998, p. 17-18, 31, 148, 166, 263.

³ See especially J. Enders, « Theater Makes History : Ritual Murder by Proxy in the *Mistère de la Sainte Hostie* », *Speculum*, 79, 2004, p. 991-1016.

Susannah Crowder's essay similarly explores the fertile discrepancies between historical « fact » and Philippe's presentation of events. Examining Philippe's retelling of a 1468 « jeu de ma damme sainte Katherine de Senne » and the subsequent marriage of its principal actor, Crowder takes historical inaccuracy as her point of departure. Philippe reconfigures the accounts given by his predecessors (Jehan Aubrion and Jacomin Husson) to forge links between the events of 1468 and an old, unresolved conflict between the city of Metz and the de la Tour family. Particularly noteworthy is Philippe's foregrounding of female performance, patronage, and sanctity in the interest of civic harmony.

David LaGuardia takes issue with the oft-asserted claims of « realism » in Philippe's *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. Reading the transgressive acts in these tales against contemporary literary and legal conventions, LaGuardia demonstrates that Philippe's novellas constitute a « hybrid » world marked by profound ambiguity. The very crimes against persons and property that are deplored by the chronicler are paradoxically celebrated when translated into a comic code. The narrator's alleged didactic intentions only partially recuperate the unbridled transgressions that drive the plots and give Philippe's tales a distinctive narrative voice.

All three of these essays attest to Philippe's creative engagement with social and political conflict as well as the dominant modes of artistic expression in late medieval Metz. Although he drew heavily upon existing sources in both his historiographical and imaginative works, Philippe's contributions to the cultural memory of Metz are most evident in the intricacies of his rewriting.

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