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Comic Drama in the Low Countries, c.1450-1560

A Critical Anthology

Edited by Ben Parsons

Edited by Bas Jongenelen

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'[Opens] up an entirely new corpus of texts for scholars and readers familiar with and interested in European dramatic texts from this period, but who have heretofore not had access to them due to the language barrier.' Professor David F. Johnson, Florida State University, Tallahassee

During the Middle Ages and early modern period, a dramatic culture of astonishing vitality developed in the Low Countries. Owing to the activities of organisations known as *rederijkerskamers*, or "chambers of rhetoric", drama became a central aspect of public life in the cities of the Netherlands. The comedies produced by these groups are particularly interesting. Drawing their forms and narratives from folklore and popular ritual, and entertaining in their own right, they also bring together a range of important concerns; they respond directly to some of the key developments in the period, reflecting the political and religious turmoil of the Reformation and Dutch Revolt, the emergence of humanism, and the appearance of an early capitalist economy. This collection brings together the original Middle Dutch text of ten of these comic plays, with facing translation into modern English. The selection is divided evenly between formal stage-plays and monologues, and provides a representation of the full range of *rederijker* drama, from the sophisticated *Farce of the Fisherman*, with its sly undermining of audience expectation, to the hearty scatology of *A Mock-Sermon on Saint Nobody*, and the grim gallows humour of *The Farce of the Beggar*. An introduction and notes place the plays in their context and elucidate difficulties of interpretation.

Ben Parsons is Teaching Fellow at the University of Leicester; Bas Jongenelen is teacher of Dutch Literature at Fontys Lerarenopleiding in Tilburg.

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