

Cities, Giants and Municipal Power

Parody Rituals for the Investiture of Processional Effigial Figures in Northern French Cities

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The rites described here are urban ceremonies in which central importance is assigned to a type of symbols that is characteristic of northern France, i.e. processional giant effigies. These events help to reinstate local collective entity: besides the celebrations are closely linked to municipal authority and to the elite whose relationships they recall and consolidate. In their performance, they emerge as a type of serious parody of the civil ceremonies involved in the life cycle – christenings, marriages and funerals. The importance assigned to the city hall as a republican space, one that is symbolically very marked in the consciousness of the French people should be noted in this context. This reference to the realm of vital records (birth-, marriage and death certificates), which clearly expresses the union between the celebration and the institutions, confers prime importance upon the social actors, in charge of the effigies, as they are often closely connected to the local political power. In addition, the various ritual features (delivering of speeches, signing of certificates, choosing of godparents) reveal the complex pattern of hierarchies within the municipal team.

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In many cities of northern France, at special moments of the yearly calendar, festive processions take place during which giant figures are displayed and marched. Each effigy (over a hundred of which have been enumerated in the *departements* of Nord and Pas-de-Calais) symbolizes the city to which they pertain. Embedded in a specific context, it embodies a local area (region, city, district) a particular social group (craft) or a local historical hero.

The cities to which will be referred in this paper are set within three specific geographical areas: Maritime Flanders, Wallon Flanders and Hainaut. Their particular economic contexts are quite distinctive:

At the north of the coal basin, between the rivers Lys and Escaut, is Wallon Flanders where textile industries have been very developed. Here the cities of *Comines* and *Wasquehal* are situated, close to *Lille*, the well-known

textile city. Maritime Flanders to the west of the Lys river is a landscape of canals, old polders and fertile meadows. This rich Flemish plain includes a.o. *Hazebrouck*, a city of 20 000 inhabitants and close by, the rural towns of *Godewaersvelde* and *Estaires*. Further to the north and west is the large harbour of *Dunkirk*, where important industrial sites shortly will be established. Lastly, between Artois and the north of the Ardennes is stretching the 120 km long coal mine area, the “black country”. In a landscape of factories, nearly totally deprived of rural life, the old Flemish city of *Douai* is situated.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the social cultural significance of a family of rites that are closely associated with the political realm and with municipal symbols via the intermediary of a type of urban symbolic pagentry, i.e. processional effigial figures. The outsized dolls, commonly called giants (*reuze* in



The giants of Cassel on Easter Monday. Photographed by André Pelle, 1985. Cliché M.N.A.T.P. 88-34-255.

Flemish, *gayant* in Picard), valorize the local identificatory patrimonies. In their diversity, they project distinctions (at least, as concerns the most celebrated of these figures)¹ between the cities, which, these days, are often identified by means of a singular emblem. In fact, France's northern cities have long (the tradition apparently dates back to the fifteenth century) been the scene of the perambulations of extremely singular effigies, which in most cases are anthropomorphic figures, and which, under various guises, are signs of recognition and of membership of an urban community. Certain of them have emerged from chronicles of local events or from specific skills that are on the wane (such as, the skills of brewers, dyers, miners, and horticulturists), while still others may incarnate individuals who have won fame through the achievement of outstanding deeds. Chosen and presented in this way, these effigial figures function as the memory of a local collective entity. The beholder perceives them as the living, refurbished image of a community chronicle in which each individual finds his place, for the influence of the past is a central element in their design.

Some towns have chosen to depict a dominant cultural trait, such as humour or mischievousness, supposedly representative of the Flemish "nature". This is the case with *Tisje-Tasje* chosen by the city of Hazebrouck. This giant embodies a XVIIIth century Flemish salesman well known for the tricks he played and for his unbridled loquaciousness. This urban community makes the characteristic traits its own and uses them as an emblem. *Tisje-Tasje* refers to the traditional Flemish spirit that pertains to a specific territory, the French Flanders. As a local amuser, this buffoon points to the parodic vision of the Flemish culture and mocks the world in which he lives. To the people who come to contemplate it, the giant figure brings jokes and puns, as expected. Some of the effigies, may besides embody specific social groups and crafts. The most recent figures belong to this group, because of the revival of regional identities and because of a renewed interest for local traditional festivals. We can mention Gambrinus (1893) embodying the brewers in Armentières; a couple of ribbon-

weavers (1890–1963) in Comines; a couple of market-gardeners in Arras (1891); a couple of tulle-makers in Caudry (1921), and also salesmen, miners, fishermen etc. These various figures refer to dominant local activities.

Lastly, other figures point to the local attraction of municipalities for the cult of warriors. These heroic figures magnify martial virtues. For instance, we can mention the *Reuze* of Dunkirk who ever since 1886 has been dressed as a Roman soldier. In 1982, parading on a horse-drawn float, he sports an armour adorned with the coats of arms of the city, his chest is decorated with a red scarf and he wears a red skirt. A helmet covers his head.

At the beginning of the XIXth century, the *gayant* of Douai was clothed with a breast plate decorated with a black lace collar; his head was protected with a short tailed dragoon crested helmet; he wore earrings like republican soldiers. As of 1821, his original garment, that of Renaissance chevalier, was substituted until the contemporary period.

These giant anthropomorphic figures, together with the monsters of the processions, can be affiliated with the Medieval urban culture: they belong to the tradition of secular and sacred Northern liturgies. They were shown each year, at the time of the ducasses² (Hecart 1834, t. 1), celebrating the dedication of a church, and of the kermesses. They were also shown at the guilds meetings, – those salesmen associations that developed in the Xth century in the Flanders cities – and upon Royal Enterings, in the XVIth century, when kings would come and visit a city which set an occasion for lavish urban festivals. As time went by, the giant effigies's importance developed in connection with profane events, and, nowadays, the best chance to encounter them takes place during Carnival time, or when sales are organized in the shopping districts, and sometimes among worker's protest marches³.

Through the extensive array of portrayals of ritual practices that they entail, these investive municipal ceremonies are, first of all, the assertion of a community's will to perform a public representation of the *ideal social order of a model society*. Thus, right in the town's

decision-making spaces – the town hall and its square – are openly “played out” the principal social actions that are normally meant to legalize the fundamental stages in the life of each human individual: birth, represented by the christening ceremony; love, represented by marriage; and death, represented by funeral services. Therefore, as soon as a new effigial figure has been completed, it must be legitimized by the city fathers and baptized. A few years later, it will perhaps be joined in symbolic wedlock with another effigy, amid the same due amount of conformity. These duly united couples can also be brought together with figures of children. Through this effect of reminding of the reinforcement of the state of socialization, the idea is primarily to provide the local citizenry with the reassuring moral image of model spouses. However, these rites are also an occasion for resituating the place of the social categories within the communal order, and thereby confirming the complex interplay of the relationships based on mutual good faith within the municipal hierarchy.

In most cases, these effigial figures are produced by cultural organizations, certain of which may have a political orientation that is sharply divergent from that of the incumbent authority. Such a position poses the problem of the interference of political and social attitudes in the orientation of the newly created figures.

Of the score of cases investigated, the ceremonies depicting baptisms occurred most frequently. These are actually the easiest ones to organize, since they enjoy a first-time status, and it is easier to obtain the financial subsidies necessary for holding them. As regards the marriages, with the exception of the capricious impulses of the quite extensive inter-township alliances, the projects that eventually became realities (four in all) concerned only the localities that had been promoting them, and that had therefore produced the requisite financing for the production of a new effigy. Only very seldom did the disappearances of effigies – in most cases, losses due to their advanced age or to accidents – lead to funeral ceremonies. To our knowledge, only a single case led to such a sham ceremony. The parody was performed on a Shrove Tuesday by the members of the “late”

effigy’s sponsoring organization and by local citizens, in one of the town’s coffee houses, and included the blessing of a small coffin (Millon 1970: 175).

Among the investiture ceremonies witnessed, we have decided to present two, because they involved a contradictory utilization of the ritual. The first one might be described as *positive* in so far as, during the performance of the ceremony, there was genuine consolidation between the organizing groups and the elected political officials, despite the existence of disagreement between the two parties. In contrast, the second one emerges as more *negative*, since, because of intercommunity dissensions, the ritual contributed to still further widening the existing breach between the town hall and the organization leaders.

In Hazebrouck, the philanthropic society known as “Les Amis de *Tisje-Tasje*” was already in possession of three processional figures⁴ when it decided to bestow a female child upon its Flemish-type ritual couple. This gift to the city was an exact duplicate of a figure that had been created for a similar production circa 1810. The new effigy was given the name of “*Babe-Tisje*”, and was christened on May 31, 1980. While the cost of its material production was entirely defrayed by the group, the outlay for the investiture festivities was shared by the city and the group.

The first public display of this effigy occurred on the occasion of a folk-culture procession that is held on summer carnival day, the Saturday before Trinity Sunday. Since the creation of this procession in 1928, it has consistently been taken in charge by the philanthropic organization (Gueusquin 1985: 73–74). Since 1972, it has been based on themes established in advance by the group’s members. The subjects represented do not refer to local history; rather they are of a more general interest, including the cinema, the circus, festivals, etc. To a certain extent, it is for this reason that this parade, featuring floats designed and produced by the committees and other groups, did not enjoy the success that had been anticipated: the lack of reference to local roots seems to have discouraged participation by the local inhabitants. Decorative themes of the

Roland, the giant of Hazebrouck. The image of the eponymous animal, the hare, is displayed on its shield.

Photographed by André Pelle, 1985. Cliché M.N.A.T.P. 88-33-19.



floats may change over the years, but the three giant figures of which the group is both the instigator and the owner, an ensemble to which had now been added the fourth member, *Babe Tisje* always remain. This continuity should be assigned to their emblematic nature.

However, not until the next day, Sunday, in the late morning, did the official ceremony of the installation of the new giant in the city occur. The event took place in the formal recep-

tion room of the city hall and was presided over by the mayor and his assistants. Throughout the day a number of events took place that are peculiar to this kind of ceremony, including the delivering of speeches the drafting or records designed to commemorate it (birth certificate, guest register, etc.), the performance of characteristic acts (distribution of delicacies, sprinkling champagne or beer on the effigy), the mutual sharing of food.

The operation is attended by an audience whose members supply the sponsors (godfather and godmother) and the witnesses as guarantors of the certificate. The audience remained standing in front of the big table, which served as a central tribune; in the middle stood the mayor, wearing his tricolored sash, along with the godmother (his wife) and the godfather, garbed in apparel evocative of that of the organization's giant, *Tisje-Tasje*, an eighteenth-century Flemish peddler⁵. This same outfit was also worn by the other members of the organizations in attendance, as a sign of their membership in the group. On their side of the room there also stood the festival committee chairman and his assistant⁶, as well as the president of the trade federation. The effigial figure itself held forth at a distance from the table, in one corner of the room.

The audience was primarily made up of members of the sponsoring organization and their families, and also included representatives of the administration, of cultural groups, of tradespeople, etc. After the ceremony, a birth certificate was entered in the official registry by the godfather and godmother and the two witnesses. This registration procedure authenticated the operation and was also designed to ensure the future commemoration of the event.

The mayor's speech marked the official opening of the ceremony. His remarks, fully devoted to the subject of federation, expressed the city's desire to continue its financial assistance to the group that had initiated the action, and, therefore, its attachment to a form of celebratory demonstration in the city. In his reply, the group's president expressed his full gratitude to the city authorities and to the constructor of the effigy, and ended by embracing his fellow sponsor, the godmother. These two speeches can be viewed as a public demonstration of the commitment and determination to perpetuate an understanding that, although it is formal, is carefully maintained by the incumbent political team and by the group⁷. However, they can also be viewed as an opportunity for the tacit renewal of the financial contract for the coming years, and as proof for the group's allegiance to the political authority

no matter what it may happen to be. For that matter, several other indications conveyed by these gigantic structures forcefully underscore this dependency. For example, the new giant, *Babe-Tisje*, signifies these close links with the city by the fact that in the basket it is holding there is a hare. This animal, which has supposed to have given the city its name of Hazebrouck (in Flemish, *haze* means hare and *broeck* means a marsh), is a reminder of the original condition of the town-site – damp and untamed⁸. Although the other giant figure, *Roland*, dates from an earlier time, it is also intricately connected with the prestige of the city because of its shield, which displays the image of the eponymous animal. All these signs confer an emblematic status on the place and, in many cases, definitely legitimize the alliance between the city and the community group.

The ceremony was carried out in a highly symbolic setting, i.e. the space in which decisions are made and alliances are sealed, and, also, the space that is the seat of municipal activity. This reference to the symbolic universe of vital records clearly expressed the union of the fête with the municipal institutions under whose authority it comes (sundry federated groups), amid full reciprocity, because, although the organization is acknowledged as wholly integrated with the city, the mayor for his part, is elected to honorary membership in the organization⁹. This consensual spectacle provided to the people (if not everyone is in attendance in the room, the next day's newspapers will cover the event) is additionally reinforced by the gifts exchanged by the partners to the celebration. In fact, a cocktail reception was held by the city for the members in attendance; this social event was reciprocated later by the organization in the form of a banquet of "The Order of the Giant Roland", one which featured an elaborately ornamental tiered cake decorated with a cradle¹⁰.

In conclusion, as far as the baptism ceremonies for the giant effigies are concerned, we noted a number of similarities in the manner in which they were conducted, with very few exceptions. First of all, in regard to the symbolism of the setting chosen, in all the cases there

The couple of Comines-France. Cf. the worker's merit award badge sported by the masculine giant. Photographed by André Pelle, 1986. Cliché M.N.A.T.P. 88-32-11.



was a correspondance between the celebratory space and the political space. The town hall or city hall, the place of secular commitment as a republican space, was consistently preferred for this type of ceremony. It is a singular location, which brings about the performance of the ceremonies by actors close to the realm of power. Thus, by their role in the center of this serious parody, these actors recall and consolidate the relationships between the community power and the elite. In Estaires, for instance, on the 27th May 1983, the mayor baptised in a Republican ceremony, the giant *Mademoiselle Denoselle* with, as the local newspaper mentions, "all the solemnity associated with his status, the mayor having assumed his sash of office, signs the birth record". Secondly, with the respect to the symbolism of sponsorship, there emerges a certain uniformity in their appointments. In the majority of cases, the godmother is the wife of the incumbent mayor, and the godfather is preferably the president of

the organization, except in conflictual situations in which a group was set off against the administration. In such an event, the selection was made from among the members of the municipal staff. In Doullens, for example, on the occasion of the installation of the giant in 1953, the mayor and his wife together served as the sole godparents, but here the town hall was the sole commissioner of the effigy, and no organization intervened in the motivations for the model to be represented. In Lille, today, the wife of the incumbent mayor is the godmother of five district giants, out of a total of seven, her fellow godfathers being generally appointed from among district representatives or from among the ranks of the chairmen of district committees. This kind of appointment consecrates, through the ritual pattern, the alliance between the power and the federated groups. In consequence, the municipal ascendancy can be still further strengthened, as is clearly evidenced by the Lille record, in which

the two members of the sponsorship couple are the exclusive representatives of the community hierarchy: the godmother in her capacity as the mayor's wife and the godfather in his capacity as the delegate of a structure set into place by the governing team¹¹.

The selection of the effigy's name is a matter influenced by local history, whether based on events or more related to a social connotation. For example, in the town of Comines – France, which is a small manufacturing city located near the Belgian border, the two local effigies, representing a couple of ribbon manufacturers (the production of commercial ribbons is the dominant local industry), were baptized with the names of *Gueuloute* and *Chorchire*. These two appellations, supposed to be those of authentic nineteenth-century residents of Comines, have the following meanings: a "gueuloute", in the local patois, is a big, strong woman, and can also mean a loud-mouthed individual; a "chorchire" is a witch, and was the name that a notorious smuggler of those days bestowed on the boat that he used for crossing the frontier river. The effigy in Godewaersvelde was given the name of *Mil Trommeleare*, meaning "Emile the drummer boy". This appellation commemorates the story of a musician who was an active member of the local organization in the 1920s and was a prominent citizen. In the effigy's outfit, which belongs to the municipal brass band, there is a drum, which was the hero's preferred instrument, when he was alive. He wears overalls that symbolises work, and because, so it is said, "he belongs to the people". A red kerchief is tied around his neck. His cap, vividly colored in blue, white and red does not refer to local history, but incorporates the patriotic symbols and thereby expresses a national, stable and harmonious order, while the red of the kerchief would rather express his unassuming social origin and his irreverence towards social order.

In Wasquehal, the name of *Jerôme Le Courtilleux* refers to a man who lived in the early twentieth century and whose main occupation consisted of growing medicinal plants in his garden, gathering and drying them, and then selling them at nearby markets. In his gigantic form, *Jerôme* calls attention to his craft of gar-

dener with a long blue pinafore, a cap and because he wears a pair of wooden clogs. These refer unmistakably to agricultural labor for the people who invent and disseminate the peasant folklore called upon by the Wasquehal municipality which is responsible for the setting up of the effigy. The aim is to develop a collective memory based on a formerly prosperous activity, that is gardening. The word "courtilleux", meaning a gardener, is derived from the Old French word "courtil" which, in the sixteenth century, designated a garden courtyard (Wartburg: 1968). All these specific designations applied to fixed or mobile constructions, help depict the local history from which they stem; the giant figures are the bearers of emblematic differences. As such these figures address themselves exclusively to memory.

For each group that sponsors this type of production, the rite of investiture may also be utilized as a means of bolstering its social image. In most cases these effigies are produced by the organizations, which play the role of *leader* in the management of local cultural life.

In these rites there can also be observed a symbolic reminder of the municipal function of munificence, of generous assistance, which is evident in the custom of distributing delicacies and of sprinkling liquids (beer or champagne) on the crowd or on the effigies. This category of gestures is clearly a substitute for the traditional gesture of offerings (bread or fruit) that were formerly distributed to the needy by the city's authorities, a custom of which traces can be found virtually everywhere in France. This distribution of food (Dumont 1951, Gernet 1982)¹², which is still a very common occurrence in northern France and Belgium¹³, is clearly a symbol of abundance, a mark of prodigality that assigns to the political authority the role of purveyor with regard to the town citizenry. The practice of aspersion is closely related to the sprinkling of water during religious christenings.

To conclude this part of the analysis of these installation ceremonies, we will end with a description of a case of the *negative* use of the ritual that occurred in 1981 at Noyelles-lez-Seclins, a currently booming village in the suburbs of Lille. During the 1980, the "Amicale

Laïque" (Secular Friendly Society) (Gueusquin 1987: 659–677), whose purpose is to keep local celebrations going, sought to give new impetus to the annual festivities. As described by one of its organizers, "This was a small village celebration somewhat lacking in spirit of enterprise, so we wanted to liven it up a bit." It was hence suggested that a ritual effigy be built. As matters turned out, because of intercommunity dissensions, the inauguration of the new effigy was carried out without the presence of the mayor and in premises apart from those of the town hall. However, all the members of the "Amicale", including two members of the town's administrative staff, signed the parchment that served as the birth certificate, each of them considering himself responsible for the legality of the operation. *Here, the primary function of the ritual act was to autonomize and even to marginalize the society's members in relation to the town's political orientations, with no fear of transgressing the social norm.*

The marriages of the giant figures are nothing new. As early as 1498, in Metz, in the East of France, this kind of union was performed during Shrovetide, with one difference from that known today, probably because of the ongoing carnival period. That is, that the action did not stop at uniting them but included having them go to bed so as to produce an offspring¹⁴ (Grinberg: 1983). If the desire to make matches between the effigies is developed within the towns that possess them, to the best of our knowledge, there is no record of such an occurrence of inter-city alliances. For the successful accomplishment of this type of project, the only dominant concern is with the building of new effigial figures. It should be noted that agreement at the administrative level is complex and hard to achieve, since it can take place only between two local groups devoted to the same purposes or two municipalities of similar political obedience, and definitely not between a local group and a city, "because the motivations are not the same". However, should such agreements be possible, they would bring important economic and cultural returns to the cities; it would enlarge their local heritages, and might bring them to share the costs of construction.

At the symbolic level, other reasons are put forward in connection with these impossible marriages. An unduly great *age difference* seems to have motivated the city of Douai's negative response when, in 1848, the Dunkirk town council requested a union between the effigies of these two cities (Warenghein 1888)¹⁵. In Maubeuge, circa 1980, the hope-for marriage of an effigy representing a seventeenth-century noblewoman and another figure from a nearby locality was unable to take place because of a major *historical difference* in epochs, since the coveted partner incarnated a local nobleman of the eleventh century. In the case of Noyelles-lez-Seclins, the fear of a *misalliance* recently justified the refusal to allow the union of their giant, representing the local squire, and one from a neighboring town, which looked more common, since it was suggestive of a peasant woman from the swamps. As we were told, "Of course, we were thinking of having him have a romance with Delphine. She had already come to our town on the occasion of our annual fête. But she's only a little peasant girl from the swamps... In their day, they might have had a brief fling, but marriage is something else again. I think that wasn't Sébastien's way of carrying on, and besides, that would have devalORIZED our giant, because nobility isn't associated with commoners, so we're going to invent a new character"¹⁶.

If the intention of uniting the effigies is a crucial point with which all the procession-effigy-owning associations must cope at some time or another (either through a merger with a neighboring town or by producing a new figure), the fact still remains that the weight of the acquired symbols these groups from manipulating these same symbols precisely for the purpose of forging an original logic. They are hence going to be led to design, within their own territories, the characters of these hoped-for marriages, thereby engendering a sort of spontaneous generation of ritual giants.

The situation is just the opposite in Belgium, where it is a not infrequent occurrence for associations to "twin" effigies from the districts of a single city (Meurant 1979: 603–626). However, it should be noted that although the exogamous alliances are usually refused, encoun-



The giant of Dunkirk with his baby on his knees in the carnival procession in 1904.

ters are nevertheless arranged, in the form of conventual assemblies that respect both town identities and regional identities. These gatherings occur in connection with commemoration of a particularly outstanding event, such as, for example, in 1928, in Cassel, the celebrations in honor of the equestrian statue erected to the glory of Marshal Foch¹⁷. On this occasion, some thirty giant figures from France and Belgium, accompanied by groups of costumed people, paraded through the town streets. Each group was preceded by a herald bearing a sign announcing the name of the band, the town and the giant. This procession proceeded for several hours through the little streets of the ancient Flemish town, and, to quote a local scholar, "This superb, grandiose procession was Flanders itself in thirty tableaux, all its old customs, its archaic usages, the ancient dances of the region, and, in the

historic setting of the old Cassel town square, the Flemish people were in their element, reveling in a country fair, while the bands played old regional tunes" (Tack 1923: 69–76). More recently, in 1982, the city of Lille took advantage of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of its belfry to bring about the participation of eighty giants from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region in a several-mile-long procession.

The ritual practices involved in these mock wedding ceremonies are an accurate imitation of those related to the installations of new effigial figures: there are similarities in the choice of the space adopted (town hall), in the gestures performed (aspersion), in the ostentation displayed (cocktail reception, gifts), and, most importantly, in the quest for the affirmation of the incumbent political authority (witnesses, roles of the mayor and his assistants).

This concern with wanting, at all costs, to

socialize, as it were, the celebratory giants – the representatives that are emblematic of the multiple local cultures, the materialized symbols of a rediscovered collective entity – stems from the principle of the reproduction of a type of exemplary society, a model that aims to be edifying for the younger generations. The obvious appreciation of the evocation of familial good feeling and of work¹⁸ (Gueusquin 1987) greatly contributes to this dramatization of a social archetype whose principal protagonists are the colossal effigial figures: the latter's main function is to offer the citizens a nearly perfect illustration of a moralizing, ordinary Trinitarian order, in which the actors are legitimately wedded, have children who are duly recognized, and carry on professional occupations. The social harmony is not even disrupted, since one is married only within one's own class stratum, while keeping a careful watch over one's historical origins. In addition, the operation is executed in accordance with the strictest republican tradition, with the city hall as a focus, the seat of secular, democratic power, a symbolic place to which are attached the values or morality, good citizenship, and public law and order (Agulhon 1984: 167–193), these being principles that are totally approved by the organizations that sponsor the colossal machines.

However, more indirectly, these practices that are imitative of more serious civil ceremonies contribute above all to enhancing the prestige and popularity of the cities' political forces, as well as to promoting cultural groups to the rank of local elites. All the described rituals seem to make sense only for local authorities which set up and arranged them to pursue clear-cut issues of propaganda and self-celebration.

Moreover, these events are an opportunity for enabling the implicit renewal of the contract between the leader groups and the municipal administration (subsidies, loans of personnel, loans of equipment, etc.). They thus valorize municipal solidarity and hence the latter's unanimity, and this is of no small importance in the event of political disagreements, as, for example, in Hazebrouck, where, during his previous term, the socialist mayor had had to

manoeuvre with a right-wing group. In every case, these celebrations contributed, first of all, to firming the image of the local political power, the guarantor of the town's economic and social development and of the management of its symbolic patrimony, in such a way that these ritual figures show the leaders and promoters off to advantage.

Translated by Barbara Shuey

Notes

1. This is the case for, among other places, the city of Cassel, which is often defined as "the city of Reuze-Papa", and of Douai, which is indicated on the northern expressway by a sign identifying it as *la cité de Gayant* ("the city of the giant").
2. *Ducasses* would always start on Sundays and stretched over a period of days. They would attract a large crowd that attended to the procession; played the games, participated into the local fair. The Flemish version of a *ducasse* is called a *kermesse*.
3. As was the case during the miners' strike in spring 1984. In this circumstance, the giant expresses the coherence of the social group for which he stands as a representative and around whom hopes can be united.
4. The protagonists that form the Flemish couple of *Tisje-Tasje* and *Toria* were produced in 1946 and 1961, respectively.
5. His real name was actually Jean-Baptiste Vangrevelinghe. He was born on November 4, 1767 in Buysscheure and died in 1842 in Noorpeene, both these places being towns located near Cassel, in Flanders. He was an itinerant peddler, and gained fame because of his glib tongue and tall tales. Because his name was so long, it eventually became shortened to *Tisje*, and since his wares included all kinds of drinking cups, he was called "Tisje with his Tasjes", whence the abbreviated form of *Tisje-Tasje* (*tasje*, or *tasse*, meaning a cup).
6. This figure is dressed in the costume of a knight of the Order of the Giant Roland. This effigy, produced in 1931, represents the noble lord of Hazebrouck in the thirteenth century. The "Order", which is a society within the society, was inaugurated on June 8, 1969. It has close ties with the society called "Les Amis de Tisje-Tasje" in so far as, with its hierarchy and the relevant decorations, it publicly officializes and justifies the group's control over its members, which is a more-or-less circuitous way of enhancing their zeal by exalting a feeling of emulation (notably on the occasion of sales of lottery tickets). It is especially interesting to note that occupying a

rank in this "Order" implies a certain prestige on the local scale.

7. It should be borne in mind that there is a sharp conflict between the city and the society over the ownership of the effigial figures.
8. This city lies in the heartland of the Flanders plain, an area known for its swanpiness because of the many marshes that existed through to the late seventeenth century. However, in Hazebrouck itself, the marshes were not drained until the early part of the nineteenth century. By that time, marshland and bogs accounted for only one one-hundredth of the territory.
9. And also of the "Order". Clearly, if it becomes necessary to renew the members of the town government, a new installation will take place.
10. This banquet is held every year in May, after the summer carnival festivities. The invited guests included the members of the society, the representatives of the "twinning" cities, the mayor, and the chief assistant assigned to celebrations.
11. In Lille, a new giant was erected by a *district committee* who has been in charge of the local festival organization. Ever since 1975, the city has been divided into eleven districts who have been assigned, on an autonomous basis, the development of the local social, economic and cultural potentialities. A *district council*, headed by a municipal counsellor, and composed of a group of ten to fifteen persons, chosen by the central municipality among associations delegates, meets regularly to discuss the future plans for social and cultural activities. The district committee is supposed to represent the various social groups of the district and organizes local activities (festivals – trips and visits – activities for the elderly).
12. In connection with the *tarasque*, the processional "monster" that appears in processions in southern France in June, Louis Dumont aptly notes the authorities' concern with the welfare of Tarascon's indigent population. This aspect of the city in the role of a mass food supplier was also underscored by Louis Gernet in his studies of ancient Greece. He notes that after issuing appeals for offerings, the king distributed to the people the food that had been collected, once it has been consecrated. In addition, it is interesting to note that for bull-fighting areas it may happen that after a bull is slain, the various parts of its carcass are distributed to the needy or are sold, with the proceeds reverting to the indigent population.
13. The distribution, by tossing, of the *nieulles* (small ceremonial cakes) in Armentières; the tossing of herrings in Romeries; the tossing of walnuts in Hazebrouck; the tossing of oranges in Binches, Belgium.

14. Barring this one exception, the marriages of the giants did not appear in northern France until the late nineteenth century.
15. The city of Dunkirk therefore resigned itself to undertaking on its own production of the female effigy that it needed, to which it added a "giant" child. In 1896, the couple and its "baby" made a triumphant appearance in the city.
16. Comments recorded in 1986 from talks with members of the society that had custody of the giant figure.
17. Marshal Foch, an outstanding figure in French history and a hero of World War I, had chosen Cassel as the site of his military headquarters.
18. The worker's merit award badge sported by the masculine giant of Comines-France, which is pinned to his blue overalls, identifying him as a ribbon worker.

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