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Author's version

Performing Protestant Identity through Obscene Poetry. The Grenet Manuscript in the Age of the Printing Press.

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"For obscenity to be a problem, it must be public." The famous sentence opening Joan deJean's groundbreaking book *The Reinvention of Obscenity*[1] highlights the main ambivalence of the notion, reflected in its complex etymology. Obscene is what is *scaevus*, ill-omened, as well as *caenum*, filthy. It must be kept invisible, off-stage. But obscenity only exists when put on stage *(ob scena*), publicly displayed. It is therefore not surprising that European obscene literature benefited greatly from the development of the printing press. French satirical writing, with its long medieval tradition of sexually and socially transgressive acts depicted with crudeness, became a particularly successful market for printers in the sixteenth century. And when the supporters of the Reformation clashed with the Roman Church, the old anticlerical literature easily changed into polemics slandering the "obscenity" of the enemies of the new faith.
In this context, the unstable meanings of the term were summarized in two definitions, exposed in Robert Estienne's *Dictionarium latinogallicum*:

Obscenus: qui porte ou signifie quelque malencontre advenir.
Obscoenus: chose vilaine, orde et sale, pleine de paillardise, impudique.[2]

The increasing religious tensions, that prompted the Estienne family to take shelter in Geneva a few years later, explain why shaming the sexual immorality of the Catholic clerics in verse was seen by French Protestants as a means of neutralizing the catastrophic future awaiting Christian believers, if they kept their faith in the Church. But how should these poems be disseminated so that they might strengthen the complicity between informed readers without scandalizing a possibly less controlled audience? Handwritten collections, a booming practice in the sixteenth century, provided a solution, giving satirical obscenity a new "common stage."[3]
This survey aims to shed new light on the making of poetic manuscripts in the age of the printed press. It will focus on the specific functions performed in these collections by polemical poems denouncing Catholic religious and sexual transgressions, taking as a case study a codex unknown to historians until today.
Preserved in the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire of Lausanne,[4] the Grenet collection is an illustrated manuscript of 141 folios conceived and copied by the merchant Gilbert Grenet in Geneva during the decades preceding the beginning of the French Wars of Religion. Around 120 poems of various genres, most of them satirical, are grouped around ten texts, presented as "a sequence of more or less obscene epigrams against monks and priests of the Roman Church" by Chavannes, a scholar who first described the manuscript in 1844.[5] Mostly produced in Geneva,[6] then one of the capitals of the printing press, this personal collection is emblematic of

the crucial shift that happened in the cultural uses of books during the sixteenth century: manuscripts became a half-private, half-public medium allowing their collectors to perform their cultural identities in front of a selected audience. What did obscene epigrams mean for an ordinary reader like Grenet? What was at stake when the medieval satirical tradition of clerical sexual abuses was redeployed on the common stage of Huguenot poetic culture built by the manuscript? A book like the Grenet collection functioned as a tool to fashion the public image of its owner and to present the copyist as an actor of the contemporary mediatic-literary sphere. [7] Copying obscene stanzas in a personal manuscript falls within the scope of this symbolic performance, although the meaning of such a gesture is not easy to grasp.

THE GRENET COLLECTION, CONTEXTS AND STRUCTURE

Gilbert Grenet (15..?-1568) began to collect poems around 1542-1550 and the copying lasted until his death. The making of a poetic anthology was quite usual in the sixteenth century, but the volume shows at least three features which set it apart from other manuscripts.
It was produced during troubled and decisive decades for the Reformed community in France. The copy started when the Protestants of the realm began to flee persecution. Many of them emigrated to Geneva, including the famous poet Clément Marot, who inspired the first part of Grenet's collection. To address the problems raised by the massive migration and to appease the tensions with Swiss cantons like Bern, the city council of Geneva invited Jean Calvin to come back in 1541.[8] However, Calvin's influence on public affairs was strongly challenged over several years. It prevailed in 1555, when sixty French migrants, among them Gilbert Grenet, obtained bourgeois status in Geneva, giving Calvin a decisive political support. This was clearly a turning point for the merchant and his book: Calvin's victory was recorded in a prose note (fo 118v) and a new wave of poems – including the set of obscene texts – was copied, giving the collection a far stronger polemical tone. The ways in which the composition of the manuscript followed the evolutions of his religious community allows Grenet's private book to be read as the cultural and political performance of a committed Huguenot.
Another specificity is the identity of the collector. Grenet was not a man of letters but a wealthy trader; not a man of power but an émigré newly integrated into Geneva's bourgeoisie.[9] His social status may explain why his collection differs from the manuscripts compiled in aristocratic salons[10] and in the Parisian intellectual circles. The physician François Rasse des Nœux, the lawyer Laurent Bouchel and the notary Pierre de L'Estoile, three of the most famous collectors of polemical poetry during the French Wars of Religion, shared the distinctive joyful culture of men with academic training. Their anthologies, both in French and Latin, reflect an extraordinary appetite for rhetorical virtuosity, a taste for sexist humor and for the pornographic use of Latin.[11] On the contrary, the Grenet collection contains no Latin poems, no sexist jokes. Its set of obscene poems has one unique target: the filthy deeds and the scandalous discourses of the members of the Catholic Church.
The comparison with the manuscripts produced a few years later by the French Protestant élite reveals another striking specificity. Unlike the "magasin de ramas" – a store of papers – gathered at random by Rasse and L'Estoile after the first War of Religion broke out,[12] the merchant's anthology displays a range of poems mostly selected before the war, strongly organized in a tripartite structure.[13]
The first 85 folios of the collection are a tribute to Clément Marot, with approximatively thirty satirical epistles and epigrams selected from the poet's works, most of them written between Marot's imprisonment in 1526, his departure for Italy in 1535 and his death in 1544. The selection symbolically paints the portrait of a brilliant satirical poet, exercising his talent against the adversaries of the reformed faith and facing the risks of persecution and exile. This is of course a reconstruction of Marot's life; but it was also possibly a way for Grenet to fashion his

own poetical ideal. Indeed, the poet's name is repeatedly entangled with the merchant's signature (fo 8r) and with his anagram "Gentil Bregret" (fo 61r, 118v, 125v).
Obscenity is far from absent in this mirroring strategy. It appears discretely in some Marotic epigrams gathered at the end of the first section (fo 77v-82v) and is more obvious in "D'un gros prieur", chosen to conclude the whole book:

Ung gros prieur son petit filz baisoit
Et mignardoit au matin en sa couche.
Tandis routir sa perdris on faisoit,
Se leve, crache, esmeutit et se mouche[14]…

Marot's denunciation of the priest's gluttony and sexuality (he has a bastard child) drew on the commonplaces of medieval anticlerical satire. In the Grenet collection however, the text, copied after a set of polemical epigrams against the Roman Church, proves them retrospectively to be accurate and gives an authorial legitimacy to these anonymous verses.
In the second section of the manuscript (fo 86-115), the satirical tone is replaced by a moral reflection on the virtues of education. Copied on about thirty folios, some of them in alphabetical order, anonymous stanzas dedicated to young pupils praise the art of writing and its transmission through education. Literacy obviously mattered to Grenet. While he could elegantly write with a quill and knew how to decorate the pages with drawings and colors, he also had difficulties correctly spelling the texts he collected, especially when he found them in unpublished manuscripts. The importance of writing and the desire for knowledge, two key notions in Protestant culture, are equally important in the self-portrait drawn in this section. The Marotic influence is not forgotten. Two poems are successively copied in the heart of these pages: a *contrafacture* of Clement Marot followed by one of his father Jean Marot.[15] They illustrate metaphorically the theme of filiation between fathers and sons, masters and pupils;[16] they also introduce the topic of bastardy, which would be a common thread of the obscene sequence.
The last part of the collection (fo 115-137v) is arguably the most recent since some of the copied texts are dated and others refer to important events, such as the assassination of François Duc de Guise by Poltrot de Méré in 1563 (fo 129r). Their selection took place between 1553 and 1566. Around fifty poems are gathered to defend Calvinist Reformation: canticles, allegorical enigmas, popular songs and above all epigrams against Catholic priests, which spearhead the polemics. The last part of the manuscript enriches the poetical ideal staged in its first folios. After the poet in exile, observing the vices of the world from a satirical distance, the poet in battle is staged, using discursive violence to fight the enemies of his faith. However, the functions performed by the 'great author' change throughout the book. Opened by the prestigious master Marot, who brought cultural legitimacy to his admirer Grenet, the collection becomes a stage animated by the whole Huguenot community, inflamed by a polemical spirit. The poems copied in these folios are mostly kept anonymous. Personal inspiration is replaced by collective dynamics.[17] Finally, the propagandist trend of this section reconfigures the medieval tradition of anticlerical satire, illustrated by Marot's poems, into the "holy and sober laughter" triggered by Calvinist propaganda.[18] It seems that, like Badius, Viret or Bèze, who was his minister in Geneva, Grenet intended to prove du Bellay wrong when he claimed in 1558 that Geneva was a joyless city, whose inhabitants resembled the dead souls imprisoned on the other side of the lake of Hell.[19] On the contrary, the primary objective of the polemic epigrams is to strengthen the inner bonds of the Huguenot community through harsh humor and irony.

Forging the obscene relation: from dirty Catholic jokes to holy Protestant laughter

When he was about to mention the "sequence of obscene epigrams" in Grenet's book, Chavannes recoiled from describing what he saw as the most scandalous poems.[20] Even if his reaction was typical of the prudish Victorian Age, the historian was not wrong to read the sequence as a stylistic dissonance. Indeed, *obscoenitas* in Medieval Latin referred to a musical discord introduced in a melody.[21] I would like to demonstrate that the obscene discord was a conscious choice in Grenet's book, where the objectives were to consolidate the collector's self-presentation as a poetry lover and as a committed member of the Calvinist community, and to position him in Protestant cultural networks.

The ten poems gathered in the obscene sequence – a sonnet and nine epigrams –immediately clarify their links to precise targets through titles in red-ink: "d'un prieur de nonnains", "d'un cordelier ayant sué la verolle" and so on.[22] The culprits are Catholic clerics, from the basic altar boy ("D'un bastard de curé") to high-ranking clergymen ("De monsieur de Bethlehem", "D'un cardinal"[23]). The stanzas chastise their ignorance, their gluttony, their blasphemy but above all their sexual deviances. Monks and priests are staged as destroyers of their own rules of chastity ("D'un gardien"); as transmitters of venereal diseases ("D'un cordelier ayant sué la verolle"); as liars and sodomites ("Nostre maistre Malhard"). The selection focuses in particular on the obsessive sexual urge which led them to repopulate the world with their illegitimate offspring ("D'un bastard de curé", "D'un prieur de nonnains", "D'un gardien"). These devious behaviors had been commonplaces of anti-clerical satire since the Middle Ages.[24] But what could make them obscene here are two specific features: the clerics are physically monstrous, revealing that they have – and are – hidden diseases; and their profanity provokes a dangerous dislocation of language.

Most of the selected epigrams caricature the physical features of their adversaries, comparing, for example, the acute mind of a famous Catholic polemicist to the sharp-edged butt of a monk.[25] But the ecclesiastical bodies are not only ridiculous; they are *obscoeni*, disgusting and alarming. Some of their details are particularly emphasized, like the "red nose" – a proverbial sign for the great pox – disfiguring a "fat abbot" and a monk from Toulouse ("D'ung abbé a rouge nez", "D'un beau nez", 131r-v).[26] The epigrams underline the inhumanity of both characters ("it is not inhuman" says the monk antiphrastically) and the danger of infection that they carry. Indeed, the abbot declines the cure which could help him to heal, like, in another poem copied on the same page, the Franciscan monk infected by venereal disease who refuses to stop insulting Jesus (fo 131r).[27] The depiction of priests eaten away by internal diseases demonstrates by analogy that the Church, as a spiritual and political body, is equally sick. Moreover, the representatives of Rome are ready to infect the whole of Christian society unless the Protestant holy laughter reveals their corruption. Obscenity defines both Catholic grotesque bodies, their monstrosity announcing greater disorder to come (*obscoenitas*), and the public disclosure (*ob-scena*) of this danger through polemical poetry.

In this context, one may better understand why the main transgression denounced in the sequence concerns the misuses of language by Catholic clerics. The crisis triggered by their profanity is made obvious by the very structure of the poems denouncing them. The sixteenth-century French epigram was indeed a stanza of a dozen verses combining a facetious short story with "le petit mot pour rire":[28] one or two last verses concluding the poem with a joke. In the epigrams collected by Grenet, the joke is always attributed to devious Catholics and quoted directly, giving the readers the impression of hearing their voices.

Here lies the second main source of obscenity. At the end of each poem, the clerics portrayed constantly make fun of the divine precepts. Instead of following them, they desecrate their own beliefs with blasphemous humor. In "D'un cardinal" (fo 132), Louis de Guise, confirming his taste for the delicious fishes from the lake of Geneva, seems ready to accept the abolition of the Mass in Calvin's city (fo 132r). Other mockeries aim at demonstrating the Catholics' ties with

the devil. “De l’invention de l’habit des moynes”, where monks discover that their robes were invented by Satan, confirmed this dangerous relation:

Lors dirent tous : “de ce n’ayons plus soing
Car c’est donc luy qui l’habit inventa”[29].

An *obscene* relation, in the full meaning of the word in the sixteenth century: transgressive, scandalous and heretic, the priests behaving no better than the followers of Mohammed.[30]
If the revelation of Catholic obscenity was a necessary task for Protestant poets, it was also a risky one. The filthy jokes made by the blasphemous Catholic enemies should not infect the holy laughter of the Reformed defenders of the true faith. Therefore, obscenity itself must be kept under strict control. This stylistic and moral necessity may explain several specificities of the epigrammatic sequence copied in the Grenet collection.
Firstly, the collector has greatly restricted the number of poems, which is obvious when one compares the ten texts compiled here to other Protestant collections. The first manuscript of “ramas” composed by Rasse des Nœux in the 1560s preserves more or less the same epigrams as in Grenet’s book but they are entangled with more than a thousand other satirical and pornographic texts.[31] Furthermore, the Genevan collection focuses (almost) only on satirical epigrams. The Marotic inspiration of the whole compilation has certainly influenced this choice. But in the sixteenth century, the epigram was also considered as a genre prone to obscenity. As early as 1528, in his *Ciceronianus*, Erasmus warned the poets against this stylistic trend: “*In epigrammatibus plus tulisset laudis, si vitasset obscenitatem*”.[32] Significantly, the collector selected epigrams that would reach a certain peak of verbal violence in order to purge the religious and social disorders caused by the clerical corruption. Finally, the sequence is firmly framed by other texts. Some stanzas borrowed from Jean Bouchet’s *Douze dizains des abus*, a rewriting of the Pseudo-Cyprian’s *De duodecim abusivis saeculi,*[33] are copied immediately after it. The stylistic dissonance of the obscene poems is attenuated by their material proximity with a general – and most traditional satire – of moral hypocrisy:

C’est un abuz entre doze du monde
Es grans docteurs et autres gens sçavans
Dire et prescher doctrine saine et monde
Et au contraire estre en peché vivans.[34]

Establishing a relation between the Protestant propaganda against the Catholic Church and the medieval tradition of the “abuses of the world” was a strategy shared by many French Protestant polemicists, from Antoine Marcourt, whose *Livre des Marchands* was constantly reprinted in Geneva after his first edition in 1533,[35] to the *Apologie pour Hérodote* published by Henri Estienne in 1566. In these publications, as well as in the manuscripts, the objectives were twofold: justifying the stylistic transgression of obscene writing by the aspiration of every Christian moralist to fight the enemies of the truth; and situating the propagandist action launched by the Reformation within the long history of the conflicts between corruption and purity.[36]

BETWEEN MANUSCRIPT AND PRINTED BOOKS: OBSCENE POETRY AND PROTESTANT NETWORKING

The Grenet collection draws on numerous sources mostly issuing from Huguenot literary production. During the merchant’s life, Geneva was indeed a mediasphere where oral discourses, texts and images circulated intensively. Such textual and material transfers are still perceptible in the current state of the codex: at the end of it, in a separate booklet, is kept *La Monstre des archers*, a hand-written flyer glorifying the great masters of the Reformation. Since

the poem was also copied in the collection, the preserved flyer was probably a "ramas", a paper bought by the collector or added to the codex by another, future owner, a practice described by Pierre de L'Estoile:

Je les copiai moi-même le soir dans mon étude […] et les fis tomber (plus hardiment que prudemment) en beaucoup de bonnes mains.[37]

As mentioned before, L'Estoile's friend Rasse compiled Grenet's sequence of epigrams at the same time.[38] It may hint at the existence of a possible common source; but the coincidence suggests more convincingly that the cultural networks among the Parisian Protestant élite and those in the Genevan Calvinist bourgeoisie were strongly interconnected and shared analog modes of dissemination for polemical poetry, from manuscript to printed books and *vice versa*.[39]

The Grenet collection provides interesting evidence of these circulations, as illustrated by the opening and the closing poems of the obscene sequence, written or inspired by Théodore de Bèze.

"Nostre maistre Malhard" (fo 130r) is a sonnet composed by Bèze against Nicolas Maillard, a Parisian cleric who was chosen to represent the Sorbonne at the religious conference of Poissy in 1561. The poem suggests mockingly that Maillard's absence was due to his involvement in the rebuilding of Sodom ("il est embessogné/ après les fondemans pour rebastir Sodome"), a double entendre alluding to Maillard's alleged taste for sodomy. This incisive poem was edited by Conrad Badius in the second edition of *La Comédie du pape malade* in 1562. The printer's ironic indication that the poem was printed on the advice "of a good friend of our master Maillard"[40] suggests that, before their publication, the verses probably circulated among the Genevan networks. Grenet might have received them on a handwritten note or he copied them directly from Badius' book.

The anecdote about the voracious Cardinal of Guise was published in 1553 in the *Passavant*, a satire by Théodore de Bèze. In the printed book, the short story is written in macaronic Latin prose and introduces a long presentation of the errors found in the Catholic doctrine, in order to propagate the ideas of the Reformation to a literate audience.[41] In the manuscript, the story is reshaped into a French epigram and placed in a set of poems mocking the scandalous behavior of Catholic clerics. What is shocking here is no longer the doctrinal weakness of a Roman cardinal, but his gluttony and careless manners, a social transgression probably significant for the bourgeois Grenet and his circle. Moreover, the copy of this 'Genevan' poem in the merchant's personal book was an invitation for it to be read as praise for the city of the lake, the new capital of Christian morality.

As we see, the Grenet collection offers a remarkable example of the complex circulations of satirical texts between private manuscripts and published books on the eve of the Wars of Religion. On the one hand, it points out the existence of a cultural common stage binding together the Protestant communities of the French-speaking regions. Polemical and obscene poetry performed an essential role in their common self-fashioning as well as in their mutual networking.[42] In exposing, with crudeness, the breaking of divine and social rules by the Roman Church, these writings radically exclude Catholic clerics from the ranks of the true believers. The sharing of such texts, their constant transfers from one group of readers to another reinforced the embedding of specific moral standards in Reformed society.

On the other hand, the Grenet collection reveals that the uses of this satirical production were more complex than we may realize. Despite the connections between the groups exiled in Geneva and those who stayed in the kingdom of France, French Protestants were culturally diverse, and for them so were the meanings of obscene poetry.

For the Parisian literate élite to which François Rasse and Pierre de L'Estoile belonged, collecting hand-written stanzas slandering the Roman Church was an act of cultural resistance, both as supporters of the Reformation and as intellectuals. Their passionate interest for the "ramas de folie […] impies et vilains tout oultre, tant que le papier en rougist"[43] was a way of asserting, more or less publicly, their dissenting beliefs. Their "obscenity propaganda"[44] also showed a taste for violent debate, for pornographic parody and for linguistic harshness, entirely coherent with the traditional culture of intellectuals since the Middle Ages.
There is no doubt that most of the men exiled in Geneva from the 1540s to the 1560s shared the same culture; but they performed it on a different stage and with other means. The "satirical association"[45] linking Bèze, Viret, Badius and Henri Estienne is a famous illustration of the close relationships forged between militant printers and satirical writers. Their conviction that the Word of God could be defended with transgressive weapons, including the holy laughter of obscenity, was reinforced by the increasing tensions in the kingdom of France around 1560. A more tolerant religious policy promoted by the royal power awakened the hope of a conversion of the French political élite to Calvin's doctrine, whereas civic unrest arose among Catholics. In Geneva, where cultural circles perceived themselves as the defenders of the new faith, the shadow of war contributed strongly to the entanglement of obscene literature and the printed press. The first was used to exclude the enemies of the Reformation from the usual standards of civilized society and language. The second aimed at developing this fighting spirit among a wide audience of French readers, the primary target of the propaganda launched from the city.[46]
The Grenet collection reflects this intellectual turmoil. However, collecting poems shaming the priests and the monks for their sexual deviances probably had a different meaning for the bourgeois. An ordinary merchant, Grenet did not show great interest in the "theology of the excrement"[47] brilliantly illustrated by Huguenot polemicists like Viret. Like his model Marot, he rather favored a domesticated obscenity: the anti-clerical texts he selected aimed for reactions of disgust and laughter, but their depiction of Catholic transgressions did not exceed the usual standards of moral satire. Grenet and his probable semi-private readership appear more concerned by an active appropriation of the canons of contemporary literature (the poetical genres promoted by Marot) and by their own political and cultural integration of Calvin's capital. Far from presenting some "vers en vrac",[48] the carefully selected collection focused on poets, events and values in strong relation with Geneva, probably reflecting the owner's ambition to become a full citizen of the city.

Je commenceray par un prestre de Lorraine, lequel tenant une boiste pleine d'oublies qui n'estoyent point consacrees (ainsi qu'ils parlent), les hochoit, disant, Ribaudaille, ribaudaille, lequel de vous sera aujourd'huy dieu ?[49]

When Henri Estienne aimed at demonstrating the obscenity of the Roman Church in his *Apologie pour Hérodote* (1567), he deployed a range of anecdotes to illustrate the different meanings of the word included in his father Robert's *Dictionarium* (1543). The *exemplum,* depicting how a priest from Lorraine made scandalous fun of the communion wafers, had a threefold purpose. It showed that the faith in the Eucharist is an ill-omened attitude (*obscenus*), leading simple minds to the gravest errors; it exposed how priests themselves ridicule the Catholic sacrament (*obscoenus*); it denounced a filthy misuse of language, while attacking a crucial point of Catholic doctrine.
The Grenet collection summarizes the same story in a versified epigram. But is it the same story, and is it the same "obscenity propaganda"? In Estienne's *Apology*, the insanity of Catholic doctrine and the profanity of those who should defend it are obscene. But in the manuscript, the culprit is the priest's bastard:

Le curé dit ung jour a son bastard
Qu'il apportast la boitte des hosties
Avant qu'il soit pour celebrer plus tard
Et que les gens ne soyent deshors sorties.
Le bastard vint apportant ses oublies
Et les branloit, s'arestant en tout lieu :
Hé, disoit il, ribaudailhes joulies
Qui d'entre vous sera le premyer dieu?[50]

'Obscene' in Grenet's book is whatever violates decency. The epigram selected by the collector underlines the priest's lust and the joke's dirty double entendre,[51] two disruptions of the sexual and social order which must have appeared particularly offensive to a Huguenot bourgeois and father.

Such a comparison makes clear the expanding and various functions performed by obscenity in mid-sixteenth-century Protestant French-speaking culture. Used as a tool to dehumanize the Roman Church, poems mocking the clerics' theological, moral and sexual transgression circulated intensively throughout Protestant circles, inside and outside France. Geneva's printing workshops were instrumental in the development of what I call a medialiterature.[52] In the 1560s, they released a flood of anti-clerical propaganda intended for French and local readership: scholarly discourses, popular songs and an extensive set of satirical poems using sexually transgressive humor. But if the Wars of Religion were a turning point for the complex histories of the printed press and of obscene literature, one should not underestimate the key-role of the handwritten collections compiled and disseminated in more limited circles of friends and family. The two media spheres were strongly interconnected, although the concrete modes of transfers that allowed texts to circulate from hand-written folios to printed books and vice versa need to be further investigated.[53] In any case, their circulation was not a one-way communication.

Thanks to the Grenet collection, I hope to have demonstrated that we may go a step further and identify different ways of performing obscenity and, subsequently, different types of concrete literary networking among Protestant collectors.[54] For those who formed an endangered minority in a Catholic country, copying and distributing texts laughing at Catholic sexual deviances allowed them to connect with the broader networks of the French-speaking Reformed Church while asserting an intellectual culture characterized since the Middle Ages by harsh satire and slanderous jokes. For a Genevan merchant like Grenet, including a sequence of obscene epigrams in his personal collection probably meant performing the identity of a fervent reader under Marotic influence, as well as appearing as a committed member of Calvin's city. For all of them, as Georges Bataille later put it, obscenity was not a fact but a relationship.[55]

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[1] Joan de Jean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity. Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 7.

[2] Robert Estienne, *Dictionarium latinogallicum*, Paris: R. Estienne, 1543, 856 ["What announces or signifies a bad future event. / A dirty thing, filthy and shameless, full of indecency and sexual immorality"]. On this lexical ambiguity, Emily Butterworth, "Defining obscenity", in *Obscénités renaissantes*, ed. Guillaume Peureux, Hugh Roberts & Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 31-38.

[3] I borrow the notion from Carol Symes, *A Common Stage. Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), who used it to describe the shaping of a common culture in 13th c. Arras through public performances and the compilation of poetical collections. For another example in Rouen around 1570, Estelle Doudet, "Le Recueil de Rouen, ou la scène partagée d'une ville pendant les guerres de religion", *Revue d'histoire du théâtre* 286 (2020), 41-52.

[4] Lausanne, BCU, M 1016, e-codices, DOI : 10.5076/e-codices-bcul-M1016.

[5] Frédéric Chavannes, *Notice sur un manuscrit du 16e siècle appartenant à la Bibliothèque cantonale* (Lausanne: G. Bridel, 1844), 63. For new complete descriptions, see Estelle Doudet & Guillaume Berthon, "Lausanne, BCUL, M 1016, Recueil Grenet", 2019, e-codices, DOI : 10.5076/e-codices-bcul-M1016 and Jonas, IHRT-CNRS, 2020, http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/82140.

[6] The paper used for the manuscript was bought in Auvergne, Grenet's native region (watermark n°12447, Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les Filigranes* (Amsterdam : The Paper Publications Society, 1968 [1907]), 623). The collection might have begun before its owner migrated to Geneva or after his arrival in the city, at an unknown date. Grenet is mentioned in Genevan official archives from 1552 to his death during the 1568 plague.

[7] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning, from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: CUP, 1980).

[8] Michael W. Bruening, *Le Premier champ de bataille du calvinisme* (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2011 [2005]).

[9] Grenet's specific trade is unknown but all his acquaintances were drapers, silk merchants, and manufacturers of passementerie.

[10] Nathalie Dauvois, "Formes lyriques et sociabilité de cour. L'exemple des recueils poétiques." In *La poésie à la cour de François Ier*, ed. Jean-Eudes Girot (*Cahiers V.-L. Saulnier* 29, 2012), 121-136.

[11] Rasse des Neux, *Recueil poétique, BnF, ms. fr. 22565*, ed. Gilbert Schrenck & Christian Nicolas (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 85-87.

[12] Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal pour le règne d'Henri III*, ed. Louis-Raymond Lefèvre (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 31.

[13] For a new complete survey of the manuscript's content, Estelle Doudet & Guillaume Berthon, "Collection poétique, pratiques littéraires et réseaux culturels: le recueil Grenet (Genève, XVIe siècle)", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* (forthcoming).

[14] "A fat prior kissed his little son/ and cuddled him one morning in his bed./ While a partridge was roasted for him,/ he stands up, spits, shits and blows his nose", fo 137v. Marot's epigram is probably inspired by Henri Baude's *Lamentacions Bourrien*, a satirical poem staging a priest mourning his mistress.

[15] "Mille douleurs vous feront souspirer" is followed by "A tout jamais d'un vouloir immutable", inspired by Jean Marot, fo 101r-v.

[16] Gilbert Grenet was the father of the pastor Abraham Grenet, who played an important role in the dissemination of Calvinist doctrine in and around Geneva at the beginning of the 17th century; see the *Registres de la compagnie des pasteurs de Genève, 8. 1600-1603*, ed. Gabriella Cahier & Matteo Campagnolo (Geneva: Droz, 1986).

[17] An ode about a serious disease, maybe by Bèze, is copied fo 115r-118v with the title *Cantique d'un frere estant prisonnier à Lyon*, suggesting it be read as a canticle sung by Huguenot martyrs.

[18] Conrad Badius, *La Comédie du Pape malade* (Geneva: C. Badius, 1561, DOI: 10.3931/e-rara-6148), 10: "riez tout vostre saoul, de ce rire sobre et sain". The pun on the words *sain* / *saint* (clean / holy) was a commonplace among Protestant propagandists.

[19] "J'ay veu dessus leur front la repentance peinte,/ comme on voit ces esprits qui là-bas font leur pleinte/ ayant passé le lac d'ou plus on ne revient." Joachim du Bellay, *Les Regrets* 136 in *Œuvres poétiques II*, ed. Daniel Aris & Françoise Joukovsky (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009), 107 ["I have seen the repentance painted on their faces/, like one sees those spirits who are complaining/ after crossing the lake from which there is no return"]. As a minister in Geneva, Théodore de Bèze baptized several of Grenet's children between 1560 and 1567 (Geneva, Archives de l'État, EC *Registres des baptêmes et mariages de la paroisse Saint-Pierre*, BM 2). In 1581, Bèze was witness to Abraham Grenet's marriage contract (Geneva, AEG, fonds Notaires, Jean Jovenon 5, f. 90r-91r).

[20] "Nous les supprimons", Chavannes, *Notice*, 63.

[21] This meaning is exposed by Guido d'Arrezzo in *Expositiones in Micrologum* (11th c.), quoted by Estelle Doudet & Jelle Koopmans, "L'Obscénité dans les arts dramatiques d'expression française (1450-1550)," in *Obscène Moyen Âge?*, ed. Nelly Labère (Paris: Champion, 2015), 227.

[22] The complete sequence is composed of the sonnet "Nostre maistre Malhard" (fo 130r) and of the epigrams "D'un bastard de curé" (130r), "De l'invencion de l'habit de moines" (130v), "D'un prieur de nonnains" (130v), "D'un abbé a rouge nez" (131r), "D'un cordelier ayant sué la verolle" (131r), "D'un gardien" (131v), "D'un beau nez" (131v), "De Monsieur de Bethlehem" (132r), "D'un cardinal" (132v). Two poems are copied on each page.

[23] The targets are Philibert de Beaujeu, bishop of Bethlehem, and his superior the cardinal Louis I de Lorraine-Guise (1527-1578). Although less controversial than his brothers and nephews, Cardinal de Guise was to the Protestants a "mediatic figure of the crisis"; Éric Durot, "Les Guises comme figure(s) médiatiques", in *Médialité et interprétation contemporaine des premières guerres de Religion*, ed. Gabriele Haug-Moritz & Lothar Schilling (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2014), 51-63.

[24] Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, "Anticléricalisme et plaisanteries douteuses sur le clergé en milieu protestant", *Siècles* 18 (2003): 73-91.

[25] "Sophiste aussi aigu que les fesses d'un moine" ("Nostre maistre Malhard", fo130r).

[26] This satirical commonplace is illustrated by the *Complainte* against Pierre Lizet by Bèze, printed in the *Satyres chrestiennes de la Cuisine papale* in 1560.

[27] Great pox was a key-metaphor for physical and verbal obscenity in the sixteenth-century French satirical literature ; Peter Frei, *François Rabelais et le scandale de la modernité* (Geneva: Droz, 2015), 50-63.
[28] Joachim du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la Langue Françoyse*, II, 4, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2000 [1948]), 110.
[29] "We do not need to look further, they said,/ it was him [Satan] who invented the robe", fo 130v.
[30] In 1543, the treaty *Mehemetis Abdallae filii theologia* exposed the "*obscoenitas mahometana*", the heretical/obscene faith of the Muslims; Doudet & Koopmans, "L'Obscénité", 228.
[31] The MS Paris, BnF, fr. 22560 gathers more than 1200 poems (Gallica ark:/12148/btv1b107205829), mainly polemical sonnets and anti-clerical epigrams. Françoise Charpentier, "Formes de l'esprit pamphlétaire: quelques questions autour du manuscrit Rasse des Nœux" in *Traditions polémiques* (*Cahiers V.-L. Saulnier* 2, 1984), 82-93; Mark Greengrass, "Desserant les nœuds. François Rasse et les premières guerres de religion" in *Médialité et interprétation contemporaine des premières guerres de Religion*, ed. Gabriele Haug-Moritz & Lothar Schilling (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2014), 64-80.
[32] "You will be more praised if you avoid obscenity in epigrams", Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*, l. 1788 (Paris: Simon de Collines, 1528, online edition: agoraclass.fltr.ucl.ac.be/concordances/erasme_ciceronianus/texte.htm). In 1658, Colletet's *Traité de l'épigramme* still underlined: "the epigrammatic poet must not use obscene terms which represent things too freely and leave dirty images in the reader's mind". Guillaume Colletet, *L'Art poétique*, ed. Pasquale Jannini (Geneva: Droz, 1965), 108.
[33] The stanzas are included in *Genealogies, Effigies et Epitaphes des roys de France* by Jean Bouchet in 1545 and widely disseminated in moral compilations printed during the 1550s. I thank Guillaume Berthon for pointing this out.
[34] "It is an abuse among the twelve worst in the world, / for great doctors and other literate people/ to preach a holy and pure doctrine/ while living in sin", fo 132v.
[35] Geneviève Gross, "Les rééditions du *Livre des marchans* d'Antoine Marcourt au 16e siècle. L'adaptation d'un ouvrage polémique précalvinien face au calvinisme ascendant", in *Le Discours du livre. Mise en scène du texte et fabrique de l'œuvre sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011), 257-277.
[36] Henri Estienne justified his comparative history of antique and modern (Catholic) barbarism saying: "[les lecteurs] apprendront par iceluy à confronter les histoires anciennes avec les modernes, et à considérer la conformité d'icellles, et l'analogie." *Traité préparatif à l'Apologie pour Hérodote*, ed. Bénédicte Boudou (Geneva: Droz, 2007), I 133. ("from this readers will learn to compare the ancient stories with the modern and to consider the conformity of these and the analogy").
[37] "I copied them at night, in my study, and placed them (with more boldness than caution) into many good hands." Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal*, 622.
[38] Pages 126 to 131 of MS Paris, BnF, fr. 22560 (vol. 2) gather five of the ten epigrams selected in the Grenet collection.
[39] For a survey focused on printed books, see Anne Reach-Ngô, "*Rogneure, descoupure et ramas de pieces bigarrées*: une nouvelle rhétorique de la compilation à l'ère de l'imprimé", *Le Français pré-classique* 17 (2015): 91-108.
[40] "Pour remplir cette page vaquante, un des bons amis de nostre maistre Maillard m'a prié de mettre icy ce sonnet", *La Comédie du Pape malade* (Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1562), verso of the title page, DOI : 10.3931/e-rara-33086.
[41] Théodore de Bèze, *Le Passavant*, ed. Jeltine Ledegang-Keegstra (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 160.
[42] Tatiana Debaggi Baranova, *À coups de libelles. Une culture politique au temps des guerres de religion (1562-1598)* (Geneva: Droz, 2012).
[43] L'Estoile, *Journal* III, 48 ["These collected foolish papers, pasquils and other writings, impious and filthy at the highest level, in such way that the paper is blushing"].
[44] David Laguardia, "Henri III et la propagande de l'obscène", *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 68 (2009): 41-52.
[45] *Satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale*, ed. Charles-Antoine Chamay (Geneva: Droz, 2005), 69.
[46] See George Hoffmann, *Reforming French Culture. Satire, Spiritual Alienation, and Connection to Strangers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[47] Frank Lestringant, "Des hauts lieux aux retraits: petite contribution à une théologie de l'excrément (16e-18e s.)", *Revue des Sciences humaines* 261/1 (2001): 65-89.
[48] Michel Simonin, "Ferrailles et farragines: vers en vrac à la Renaissance", *Le Poète et son œuvre, de la composition à la publication*, ed. Jean-Eudes Girot (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 1-8.
[49] Henri Estienne, *Apologie*, II 953 ["I will begin by a priest from Lorraine who held a box full of wafers before their consecration (as they speak) and who shook them saying: 'You gang of lecherous thieves, which one of you will become God today?'"].
[50] Fo 130r.

[51] The use of "ribaudailhes joulies" in the feminine plural form may lead to interpret them as "pretty whores". Though the detail must not be over-interpreted, it echoes the transgressive sexuality implied by the existence of the bastard.

[52] Medialiterature denotes the entangled uses of the literary high-culture (rhetorical codes, poetical genres, etc.) as media in non-intellectual groups and of the uses of media apparatus by ordinary citizens (making of personal books, performances in the public sphere) to fashion a legitimate cultural identity. I am studying the development of Medialiterature in fifteenth-sixteenth-centuries French-speaking regions in the on-going research project *Medialiterature* funded by the Swiss National Fund.

[53] For example, it remains unclear why and how the narrative of the communion wafers insulted by clerics appeared in an epigram of the early 1560s in the Grenet collection, whilst being printed a few years later in a prosaic form in Estienne's *Apologie*. The Geneva Consistory censured the first edition of this book because of its sexually transgressive jokes about the Catholic doctrine, which has "scandalized and hurt […] in France and elsewhere" (*Apologie*, 68).

[54] On this notion, Michel Lacroix, "Littérature, analyse de réseaux et centralité. Esquisse d'une théorisation du lien social concret en littérature", *Recherches sociographiques* 44/3 (2003): 475-497, DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/008203ar.

[55] "Nous ne pouvons dire 'ceci est obscène', l'obscénité est une relation." ["We cannot say: 'this is obscene'; obscenity is a relationship"], Georges Bataille, *L'Érotisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 213.