

# 16 Publishing Obscene Parodies

## From Authorized Joyful Books to Forbidden Editions

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### Introduction

Obscenity and parody were two crucial pillars on which late medieval and early modern joyful culture was built.<sup>1</sup> Obscene texts and situations relying on an inversion of social and sexual norms were at the heart of festive events that included (but were not limited to) carnival celebrations. These events started in the streets of major French-speaking cities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and found their extension in printed books circulating the parodic texts that were performed at such occasions, or that contain obvious performative features even if we have no evidence of an actual performance.<sup>2</sup> While not all such texts were obscene, some undeniably present different facets of what scholars today define as obscene, from a general sense of what should remain out of sight because it offends morality, to the more specific case of sexual obscenity.<sup>3</sup> I have previously studied two cases that illustrate this meeting point of joyful culture and obscenity. One was a joyful summons written by the Burgundian poet Jean Molinet in the late fifteenth century; the other was a series of joyful parades on the streets of Lyon in 1566. In both cases, parody is at play: Molinet parodies official summons such as could be issued by a king, to call to arms an army of female genitalia; the Lyon printers staged a charivari in which actors represented women physically abusing their husbands.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to further investigate the interconnection between sexual obscenity and parody in joyful texts of another register: parodies of legal acts published in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, not just as another example taken from this vast corpus, but as evidence of another of its specificities, namely its complex editorial tradition.

To achieve this, we must in fact follow the editorial genealogy as far as the eighteenth century. The joyful texts that were printed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were fragile imprints. Produced in the form of short leaflets that were meant to be read for enjoyment and not necessarily to be kept in libraries, they belong to the category of imprints that were largely destroyed rather than preserved, along with similarly

short-lived imprints such as news books and broadsheets. It is therefore no surprise that so few have survived. But they also represent a long-lived genre: some of these joyful texts were reprinted in the eighteenth century, which allows us to delineate a corpus of earlier prints that have, to some extent, been lost. To complete the analysis of the sixteenth-century imprints that have survived, we must therefore turn to eighteenth-century editions that allow us to reconstitute an earlier corpus of lost editions. We must also examine the question of the status of such books in their material and legal context of production. Only then can one begin to study texts that have hitherto been neglected by scholars, to understand the literary and social context of the production and reception of these books. A case in point are the parodies of legal acts passed before notaries, in which a young woman rents out her body under a graphic leasehold, such as were printed in the early years of the seventeenth century.

### Starting at the End: Eighteenth-Century Editions of Older Obscene Texts

Many editions of a text known as the *Source et origine des cons sauvages* (literally: “The source and origin of wild cunts”) were printed throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> It is, in fact, composed of two parts:

- *La source et origine des cons sauvages*, a prose treatise with a prologue and four chapters classifying vaginas in various categories and giving guidelines about which ones it is desirable for men to possess;
- *Le bail notable et excellent . . . d'une jeune dame aux beaux yeux de son devant* (“The noteworthy and excellent lease of a beautiful-eyed young woman given for her front side”), a parody in the prose of a notarial act, in which a young woman leases her vagina, with a description of it as a house that the tenant commits to maintaining in pristine condition.

Most of the eighteenth-century editions also add a third text that is sometimes also edited alone. *La grande et véritable pronostication des cons sauvages* (“The great and truthful prognostication of the wild cunts”) is a mock prognostication in verse, dividing the months of the year according to their consequences for the good health of vaginas, followed by an obscene song dealing with syphilis.<sup>6</sup>

However, the *Source et origine* and the *Pronostication* are not isolated texts: they were part of a larger constellation of titles from which each eighteenth-century editor selected those he wanted to gather together in a new edition. In this larger group of texts, we notably find a *Copie d'un bail à ferme faict par une jeune dame de son con pour six ans* (“The copy of a farm lease given by a young woman on her cunt for six years”), a text similar to the *Bail notable et excellent* cited earlier, as well as other

parodic treatises, contracts and poems on the anatomy of women, but also more generally on Carnival. A *Procez et amples examinations sur la vie de Caresme-Prenant* (“Lawsuit against Shrovetide and full examination of his life”) seems to have often been used to solidify the corpus as the first piece of the collection, in many surviving copies. It is also quite clear that eighteenth-century publishers used each other’s editions to replicate the texts. These books did not belong to the imprints protected by a privilege, that was an authorisation to publish the book delivered by the authorities, that also guaranteed the exclusivity of the publication for a period of time. It was therefore easy for new publishers to borrow from one such anonymously produced imprint to make a new edition, without worrying about either the original publisher’s or the author’s privilege or consent to reuse the text.

What many of these editions have in common, is that their title pages display commercial details borrowed from early seventeenth-century editions. According to the information thus provided, *La source et origine des cons sauvages* was first printed in Lyon, by Jean de la Montagne in 1610; the *Copie d’un bail à ferme faict par une jeune dame* in Paris, by Pierre Viart, in 1606; and the *Procez de Caresme-Prenant* in Paris by an anonymous printer in 1605. These editions are often catalogued under these names and dates in libraries, but upon studying them, one discovers that they are not in fact seventeenth-century editions of these texts, but instead are all copies of eighteenth-century imprints. Besides, Jean de la Montagne and Pierre Viart are not known to have been printers or publishers in the early seventeenth century. The name Pierre Viart could be an allusion to a Paris printer who was active at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but also a facetious pseudonym alluding to the “vit,” one of the often-used French synonyms of penis in the literature of the time. The name Jean de la Montagne (“John of the Mountain”) could similarly play on the contrast between the sophisticated city of Lyon and the wilderness of a mountain environment—a name also reflecting the wilderness evoked in the title of the book, referring to ‘wild’ vaginas.

These eighteenth-century editions were certainly using false title pages to protect their publishers: the obscene texts fall into the category of illicit literature that was censored at the time, and was therefore published in the Low Countries or in Switzerland, or in a clandestine manner in France, before being sold under the counter.<sup>7</sup> By creating editions that pretended to be older than they were, their publishers probably sought to cover their tracks and escape censorship rather than truly convince censors and buyers that they were century-old imprints. Although the material features of these books, such as the quality and cleanliness of the paper, betrayed their newness, the false addresses nevertheless offered a cloak of anonymity to their printers and publishers. The reference to older editions may also have been a facetious game with the readers, as

well as a subtle attack on contemporary censorship, by referring to a period in which it was not prohibited to produce and read such books.

One should not however conclude too hastily that the eighteenth-century title pages referring to seventeenth-century imprints were entirely invented by their publishers. On some of these title pages we find mentions of earlier established publishers, such as Jean III Petit in Rouen and later his widow, who had indeed published such texts in the seventeenth century: an edition of the *Procez de Caresme-Prenant* was printed for the “Veuve Jean Petit” in 1612.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there was a wider trend in the eighteenth century of re-editing late medieval and early modern texts, based on sixteenth-century editions.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the printer and publisher Antoine-Urbain I Coustelier (active 1712–1724) created a series published with a privilege of the works of notable Renaissance poets. The corpus included Clément Marot, Jean Molinet and Guillaume Coquillart, as well an edition of the *Maître Pathelin* farces, although these editions do not include obscene literature. Coustelier thus published works that partly belong to the joyful literature of the sixteenth century. In his introductory dedication to the Coquillart volume, Coustelier presents an interesting account of how he worked to prepare re-editions of these works:

*Les Editions de Galiot du Pré & de Jehan Longis, dont la premiere est tres-bien imprimée & tres-estimée des curieux, sont celles que nous avons eues devant les yeux en travaillant à cette nouvelle Edition; nous avons tiré de l'Edition in 4° gothique chez Allain Lotrian quelques pieces qui sont constamment de Coquillart, & qui manquent dans toutes les autres Editions, nous n'avons pas même negligé d'en faire imprimer quelques autres que la meme Edition attribüë à Coquillart, qui pourroient bien n'être pas sortis de sa plume. Quant à l'orthographe & à la mesure des Vers de Coquillart, qui sont l'un & l'autre dans un tres-grand desordre, nous n'y avons fait aucun changement, & cette conduite nous a été singulièrement prescrite par toutes les personnes versées dans ce genre de littérature.<sup>10</sup>*

[The editions by Galiot du Pré and Jean Longis, of which the first is finely printed and very esteemed by collectors, are the ones I had before me while working on this new edition. I have taken from the gothic quarto edition printed for Alain Lotrian some poems that are regularly attributed to Coquillart and that are lacking in all other editions, and I have also included some other poems from the same edition that are attributed to Coquillart, even though he may not have penned them. As for the spelling and the rhythm of Coquillart's verses, which are both rather chaotic, I have not modified them in any way. This way of dealing with the text was prescribed by all people who are knowledgeable in this type of literature.]

This editorial approach seems to have been common to many eighteenth-century publishers, whether out of scholarly rigour, as is the case for Coustelier, or because it was the easiest way to quickly produce a new edition. It is undeniable that the first eighteenth-century publisher of the *Source et origine des cons sauvages* had at his disposal an original version of the *Pronostication des cons sauvages* from the sixteenth century or early seventeenth century, on which to base his own re-edition. If we consider for instance the copy from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France cited earlier (Res 8-Z-DON-594 (413)), it is apparent that not only is the text with its specific sixteenth-century linguistic features strictly maintained, but also that the page layout points towards an older edition that still exists.

### Going Back to the Source: Preserved and Lost Editions of the *Cons Sauvages*

The page layout of the *Pronostication des cons sauvages* as it was reprinted in the eighteenth century in fact closely follows that which was used in an edition published before or around 1550 by Yves Gomont in Rouen.<sup>11</sup> This edition is typical of the short joyful books produced in the sixteenth century. A slim octavo, gothic imprint, it republished an earlier, slightly different version of the *Pronostication*, probably printed in Lyon or in Normandy in the 1520s.<sup>12</sup> The current condition of this copy of Gomont's edition is rather poor and it has been recut to fit into the composite volume in which it is now found. This makes it impossible to verify the imprint's signatures and other material details that could otherwise indicate if Gomont's prognostication was published as a stand-alone piece. The first page does not resemble title pages as they gradually took shape throughout the sixteenth century, but this is not surprising, since Gomont's book follows the fashion of gothic imprints. These tended to retain archaic features from the incunabula era, sometimes starting the text directly under the title, rather than giving the book a separate title page.<sup>13</sup> The number of pages is a good indication that the book would have been printed as a stand-alone imprint: its 4 leaves (8 pages) are the standard length of such cheap octavo pamphlets as they could be printed on just half a printer's sheet, to save printing costs and time. Other books published by Gomont survive that were similar in format and in content. It was common for booksellers to sell these booklets separately or bound together, since they form a coherent collection, depending on the wishes and the financial resources of the buyer. Other publishers similarly offered re-editions of such joyful booklets towards the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Paris and in Rouen. One of these Rouen publishers, Nicolas Lescuyer, specialised in this type of production, producing booklets in separate editions as well as in numbered leaflets that were meant to be sold and bound

together.<sup>14</sup> This may very well have been the case for the *Source et origine des cons sauvages* and the *Pronostication* too. Even if we have lost track of such volumes, they may have been sold bound together, since their contents were so complementary.

My hypothesis is that the edition of the *Pronostication* which the first eighteenth-century publisher copied for its re-edition, was preceded by the *Source et origine* and by the *Bail notable et excellent*, all gathered together either in one edition, or as copies bound together in one volume, that was faithfully copied from the Gomont edition at the beginning of the seventeenth century and printed under the name “Jean de la Montagne.” A textual detail also points towards the existence of a volume gathering these texts as early as the sixteenth century. The Gomont version of the prognostication mentions the Abbot of the Conards, a joyful group active in Rouen at the time, in its title (the prognostication is “newly printed under the authority of the Abbot of the Conards).”<sup>15</sup> The *Bail notable et excellent*, which immediately precedes the prognostication in the eighteenth-century edition, is signed by a “Venerable Docteur (en Conardise) duquel je ne scay le nom” (“a venerable doctor (in Conardise [the realm of the Conards]) whose name I don’t know).” The text of the *Bail notable et excellent* ends with the mention “*fn sans fn, attendez la farce*” (“ending without an end, stay for the farce,”) which suggests that another theatrical text is expected to follow.<sup>16</sup> The references to the realm of the Conards and to the performative nature of these texts seem to me to be conclusive clues that connect the *Source* and the *Bail* to the *Pronostication* and to the same milieu of production, in a larger set of joyful editions made for Yves Gomont in Rouen around 1550, and subsequently re-edited by other publishers.<sup>17</sup>

One can thus reconstruct the possible transmission of the three texts as follows:

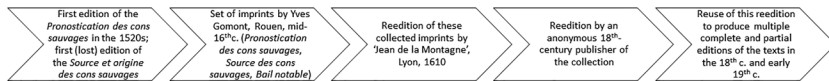


Figure 16.1 Reconstruction of the editorial tradition of the *Cons sauvages*

Although there is no direct evidence of early editions of the *Copie d’un bail à ferme fait par une jeune dame*, following this reasoning we can similarly postulate the existence of an imprint made by or for a certain “Pierre Viart” in 1606 in Paris, that may even stem from an older text. While the numerous eighteenth-century editions of these obscene texts attest to the long-lasting popularity of such texts, the poor survival of older editions is not surprising. Because they were slim, small imprints made for leisurely reading, they were particularly prone to destruction through use.<sup>18</sup> Their format made them more fragile than a heavy,

well-bound volume. They could be placed in a pocket, passed on to multiple readers or read in a group in places such as inns, outdoor gatherings or simple homes, where they might be torn or fall onto a dirt floor and be stained, or read in the cleanliness and quiet of the personal library of a richer reader. Some of these imprints have survived only because they were recycled as reinforcing paper in other books' bindings.<sup>19</sup> In that sense, many of the copies of such books which have survived intact are unrepresentative of their intended use, because they were bound relatively quickly after their production without having been intensively manipulated. This treatment possibly reflected an intent to keep rather than to read the texts. Did the eighteenth-century publishers use such volumes for their re-editions, or did they have worn-out copies at their disposal, that were discarded after they had served as a model for these new publications? This is a question that must for now remain unanswered. Another question is of importance: did the obscene topics of these texts have an influence on how they were produced, read and collected in the sixteenth century?

### Flirting With the Illicit?: the Legal Status of Joyful Obscene Imprints in the Sixteenth Century

While, as mentioned earlier, joyful, obscene books ended up in the illicit circuit of forbidden literature in the eighteenth century, their situation was very different in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. To understand this, it is worth underlining the legal framework of the publishing system in that period. A privilege system was generalised in France in the second half of the sixteenth century. It became a tool for the religious and lay authorities to control the content of books that were published, although it was first conceived by the book world as a way of protecting the work and income of printers and publishers against concurrent editions.<sup>20</sup> Joyful books generally do not bear any mention of these privileges. As long as they were not compulsory, one can assume it was not worth it for the publisher to ask for one, because producing these cheap, slim books was neither an expensive nor a time-consuming and labour-intensive process. A rival edition would not necessarily undermine the selling of a cheap booklet with such an appealing topic.

Although they were ubiquitous, the obscenity of some of these texts may well have raised eyebrows. This is how Malcolm Jones analyses a letter by Calvin to Lambert Daniel evoking the Sorbonne's condemnation of various obscene books in 1533 (including Rabelais' own *Pantagruel*). Jones proposes that the *Sylva cumnorum* evoked in the letter is none other than the *Pronostication des cons sauvages*.<sup>21</sup> If this is the case, the letter documents a rare instance of attempting to censor a joyful imprint in these years—albeit not a very successful one, since we know that the text was reprinted for Yves Gomont before 1550. While we know of

numerous cases of censorship of texts for performances (or else their manuscript texts) attacking religion or the clergy, examples of censoring a performance for its sexual obscenity are very rare indeed.<sup>22</sup> To my knowledge, apart from the *Sylva cunnorum*, there are no cases of forbidding a joyful book for its sexual content after it was printed in that period. Later in the sixteenth century, the Index of the Catholic Church would mention obscenity as a reason to censor a book. The seventh rule of application of the Index in its 1564 version states:

*libri, qui res lascivas, seu obscenas ex professo tractant, narrant, aut docent, cum non solum fidei, sed et morum, qui hujusmodi librorum lectione facile corrumpi solent, ratio habenda sit, omnino prohibentur. Et eos habuerint, severe ab episcopis puniantur.*<sup>23</sup>

[Books that ostensibly deal with, narrate or teach lascivious or obscene topics (since reason should be considered not only for faith, but also for morals, that could easily be corrupted by reading these books), should be entirely forbidden. And those who possess them, should be severely punished by the bishops.]

However, despite this clear prohibition by Church authorities, and even when privileges became compulsory in the second half of the sixteenth century, publishing light literature that could include sexual obscenity does not seem to have been a major issue, contrary to books with a religious topic, in the troubled context of the French Wars of Religion. This is well illustrated by the career of Jean III Petit in Rouen. While Petit, a Protestant, was regularly questioned by judicial authorities for publishing religious and satirical libels, his production of light prose and poetry (among which the *Rabelais ressuscité* by Nicolas de Horry in 1611) does not seem to have raised any concern.<sup>24</sup>

The number of joyful imprints, often published with real commercial details and addresses (as is the case for Yves Gomont and Jean III Petit), especially towards the end of the sixteenth century, leads one to think that censors were primarily occupied with preventing the publication of political and religious satire, rather than literary works containing graphic bodily descriptions or encouraging promiscuity. The situation seems only to have shifted at the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the disappearance of commercial details and the appearance of false addresses on joyful books, when more severe regulations on publishing were concomitant with a change of taste among readers.

### Readers and Lessons of the *Cons Sauvages*

To understand the ubiquity of obscene, joyful imprints until the beginning of the seventeenth century, one must not only consider whether their production was allowed by the religious and lay authorities. It is also



crucial to understand how these texts were perceived in the milieu in which they were produced, and for which audiences they were intended. The two texts I now want to focus on, the two leases granted by young women for their sex, are exemplary of the parodic acts that were written and published in that period to entertain readers of all social strata. As I have shown elsewhere, some of these texts even mention the type of audience that is expected to buy and read these imprints. One of them mentions a rather mixed audience of “lords, merchants and clergymen/ who will read this little book.” The anonymous author adds that he wrote it to infuriate women—signalling that they too were expected to read it.<sup>25</sup> The explicit of the *Pronostication des cons sauvages* mentions the “bourgeoisie” of Rouen, for whom Gomont intended it.<sup>26</sup> It seems that such parodic texts were appreciated by a large audience, without distinction of social or education level, although one can deduce that they were written and particularly enjoyed by jurists, who could appreciate all the subtleties of the legal parody they present.<sup>27</sup>

Although we lack data because of the anonymity of most of the texts which survive, the *Formulaire fort récréatif de tous contrats . . . fait par Bredin le Cocu*, written by Benoît du Troncy (first published in Lyon in 1593) illustrates how such texts could be composed by and for jurists. Du Troncy, a notary in Lyon, indicates in the introduction of this series of parodic acts that he wrote them to “educate and enlighten a young clerk, who has just finished the first part of his curriculum,” so that he can learn, by reading these parodies, how to compose serious testaments and other legal acts.<sup>28</sup>

This context of production and the audience that was originally targeted by the authors of these works justify reading our first obscene lease contract, the *Copie d'un bail*, in a similar manner to that proposed for the *causes grasses* studied by Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès. The *causes grasses*, short texts found in the archives of the Parliament of Paris, were an exercise for young clerks training to become lawyers, in which they wrote a plea with an obscene topic for Shrovetide. One such *cause* shows two lawyers pleading for their clients, two “honest” women living in a brothel, looking to resolve their quarrel over a man.<sup>29</sup> The *Copie d'un bail* presents a similar situation: a notary, known as David Bontemps (a name often used in joyful literature<sup>30</sup>), draws up a lease contract for an unnamed young woman. She will rent her “*con*,” described as a small house with a garden, to an unnamed tenant, for six years, provided that he will pay the rent on time and take good care of the leased good. He will, for instance, tend the garden and cut its hair twice a year to avoid it becoming infested with lice. The contract shows, in fact, a woman engaged in prostitution (whether it was a new or customary activity for her) giving a customer exclusive access to her vagina, for a set period of time. This same scenario is presented in the *Bail notable*, but its insertion between the *Source et origine des cons*

*sauvages* and the *Pronostication des cons sauvages* in the editions that have survived complexifies the meaning of the obscenity that is at play in that particular text.

For a start, the text is more complex. Although it describes the same situation, the *Bail notable* is three times longer than the *Copie d'un bail*. The beginning is quite similar: the female protagonist, referred to as *Dame de Jeunesse aux beaux yeux* ("the Lady of Youth with beautiful eyes"), agrees to lease her vagina to *Simphorien de la Fesse, maistre aprenty de remuër trippes* ("Symphorien of Buttock, master apprentice in the art of stirring tripes/guts," a craft that of course has a double culinary and sexual meaning). This is followed by a description of the leased property and a mention of the tenant's obligation to take good care of it and to visit and sweep it regularly. The addition here consists of an extra clause. To ensure that the tenant will indeed return the *Con* in good condition, he binds to the contract his own place, the *Couillard*, that is to say his testicles. The description insists here not on the payment the tenant will give to the landlady (which is not evoked in the contract), but on the reciprocity of good care the man and the woman will ensure of their partner's genitals, and the regularity of the promised intercourse. In short, in both rental contracts, and more clearly in the second one, although the initial situation is that of paid sex, the contractual agreement accentuates the agency of the woman who takes the initiative of renting her body, and sets clear conditions about the way it and therefore she should be treated. Not only should her lover see to her bodily hygiene,<sup>31</sup> he also commits to regularly giving her pleasure. The woman, in short, remains *grande Maistresse de son con* ("great mistress of her sex"), and of her body.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to this, the insertion of the *Bail notable et excellent* in the sequence inaugurated by the *Source et origine des cons sauvages* adds a moral layer to the obscenity of all the texts printed together in this compilation. As mentioned before, the *Source et origine* is a treatise in four chapters, that describes vaginas by classifying them in different anatomical and medical categories. Its introduction announces that it is supposed to help men choose the right vagina, but also to help widows decide whether they should have intercourse again after the death of their husband. The *Pronostication des cons sauvages* which follows gives indications about how vaginas react to the different seasons of the year, and is concluded by a song that warns readers of the dangers of having sex indiscriminately. They should first inspect the lady's private parts, to spot whether they are at risk of catching syphilis, or "Neapolitan disease" (*mal de Naples*) as it was known in the sixteenth century, and as the text's explicit reminds us: *Ce Livre-cy fut composé/à Naples au pays de suerie* ("This book was composed/in Naples, the country of sweats)."<sup>33</sup> The threat of syphilis was already evoked in the *Source et origine des cons sauvages*.

A logical sequence thus emerges from these assembled texts for the (male) reader: once he has identified which vagina he should choose, and the periods of the year in which he should have sex, he must also check whether his partner is in good health, and draw up a contract with her so that she agrees to give her body exclusively to him, a sure means of protecting oneself against sexually transmitted diseases. While the advice is clearly directed more to men than to women, despite what the introduction of the *Source et origine* promises to widows, the female perspective is not absent from the texts, as I have shown in the way the sections of the contract of the *Bail notable et excellent* are detailed. Despite the objectification of the female body in the description of the vaginas, female pleasure is touched upon (albeit somewhat in passing) in these texts. Moreover, the moral undertone of the texts as well as the larger vision of sexual relationships in joyful literature lay the accent on sexual reciprocity and exclusivity. If men want to avoid catching the great pox, not only should they carefully select their female partner and set down their relationship in a contract, but they should also satisfy them so that they are not tempted to find pleasure with other men.

## Conclusion

Studying the editorial tradition and production logic of obscene, joyful texts written in the sixteenth century, allows us to contextualise both their origins and their reception. Because of the difficulty establishing the existence of the first editions, it is enlightening to look not only for these first and often lost originals, but also to consider the chain of transmission of these texts. This, in turn, enables us to retrace the milieus in which they were most likely to have been produced and circulated.

Considering the material context of these texts in the surviving volumes also allows us to understand the unexpected process of moralisation of obscenity that is at play in sixteenth-century imprints. Taken separately, these texts build up a corpus of very diverse parodic rewritings: legal and official acts, prognostications, proclamations and declamations, etc., that put forward their joyful and disruptive nature. When rearranged in a fixed published collection, they proffer more paradoxical moral views on sexual conduct. A deeper message of moderation appears when one carefully reads beyond the license to copulate that is granted by the parodic contracts signed by the sexual partners.

Finally, studying the long life of joyful books provides clues about the way in which new meanings could be reinjected into such texts throughout the early modern period and the Enlightenment era. While remaining unchanged in their textual characteristics, obscene texts of the Renaissance were associated with a new, pornographic corpus in the eighteenth century, thanks to the new editions that were made. Through a particularly creative process of compilation and recombination, their re-editions

kept a certain urgency for new groups of readers with renewed (im)moral agendas. That these obscene texts were versatile enough in their stylistic and material features to appeal to new generations of readers, is also proven by a further link in the publishing chain: the editions that were produced even later, in the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries—an obscene chain that will be the topic of my future investigations.

## Notes

1. This research is part of the project: “Uncovering Joyful Culture: Parodic Literature and Practices in and around the Low Countries (13th–17th centuries),” financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).
2. Katell Lavéant and Cécile de Morrée, “Introduction—Les festivités joyeuses et leur production littéraire: pratiques parodiques en scène et en textes, en France et en Europe (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles),” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 37 (2019): 275–283.
3. For in-depth definitions and analyses of early modern obscenity, I refer to these recent volumes: *Medieval Obscenities*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press and Boydell and Brewer, 2006); *Obscénités renaissantes*, eds. Guillaume Peureux, Hugh Roberts and Lise Wajeman (Geneva: Droz, 2011); *Obscène Moyen Âge?* ed. Nelly Labère (Paris: Champion, 2015).
4. Katell Lavéant, “Medieval Joy,” in *Gender: Laughter*, ed. Bettina Papenburg (Farmington Hills: Macmillan, 2017), 131–145; Katell Lavéant, “Obscène chevauchée? Théâtre, charivari et présence féminine dans la culture joyeuse à Lyon au milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue d’Histoire du Théâtre* 269, no. 1 (2016): 21–32.
5. There is no exhaustive census of these editions. Some have been listed in two bibliographies: Pascal Pia, *Les livres de l’Enfer du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* (Paris: C. Coulet & A. Faure, 1978), t. 2, 1253; Jean-Pierre Dutel, *Bibliographie des ouvrages érotiques publiés clandestinement en français entre 1650 et 1880* (Paris: J.-P. Dutel, 2009), 242–243 and 306. A comparison of the eighteenth-century editions of this corpus of texts will be part of a larger follow-up project on the long life of joyful books.
6. To analyse and cite these texts, I will use the edition present under the shelf mark Res 8-Z-DON-594 (413) at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, that contains these three texts gathered in one volume.
7. On the workings of this specific book market, see Robert Darnton, *Édition et sédition. L’Univers de la littérature clandestine au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); on the legal publishing framework, see *Histoire de l’édition française*, t. 2: *Le livre triomphant*, eds. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier (Paris: Promodis, 1984); see also Jean Marie Goulemont, *Ces livres qu’on ne lit que d’une main. Lecture et lecteurs de livres pornographiques au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1991), 23–42.
8. Charles Nodier, *Mélanges tirés d’une petite bibliothèque, ou Variétés littéraires et philosophiques* (Paris: Crapelet, 1829), 68; Émile Picot, “Les Jean Petit, imprimeurs et libraires à Rouen,” *Revue des livres anciens. Documents d’histoire littéraire, de bibliographie & de bibliophilie* 1 (1914): 1–14.
9. This is also the case for sixteenth-century erotic and obscene poetry, see David Moucaud, “(Tout) contre le goût classique, la rencontre des ‘badins’, ou comment au XVIII<sup>e</sup> on badine avec le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *La Fabrique du XVI<sup>e</sup>*

- siècle au temps des Lumières*, eds. Myrtille Méricam-Bourdet and Catherine Volpilhac-Auger (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020), 305–333.
10. Guillaume Coquillart, “Lettre à Mr Tartel,” in *Les poésies de Guillaume Coquillart, official de l’Eglise de Reims* (Paris: Antoine-Urbain Coustelier, 1723), n.p. My translation.
  11. Only one copy of this edition seems to have survived, now kept at the B.n.F (RES-Y2-1974): *La grande et véritable pronostication des cons sauvages* (Rouen, for Yves Gomont, s.d.). On Gomont and his period of activity (1535–1550), see Malcolm Walsby, *Booksellers and Printers in Provincial France, 1470–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), #1199.
  12. While bibliographers analyse the typography as characteristic of Lyon printers, the *explicit* of the text points toward a localisation in Normandy: Jelle Koopmans, “La Pronostication des cons sauvages, monologue parodique de 1527,” *Le Moyen Français* 24–25 (1990): 107–129.
  13. On the evolution of the presentation of title pages throughout the sixteenth century, see Malcolm Walsby, *L’Imprimé en Europe occidentale, 1470–1680* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020), chapter 2.
  14. Walsby, *Booksellers*, #1713.
  15. The name of the Conards refers to horns (‘cornes’), both a symbol of sexual vitality and of the cuckolds who were mocked during carnival celebrations, see Maurice Dumas, “Les Rites festifs du mythe du cocuage à la Renaissance,” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 77 (2008): 111–120.
  16. In B.n.F., Res 8-Z-DON-594 (413), l. Ciii v. On the positioning of the farce play in a larger performative scenario in late medieval French drama, see Jelle Koopmans, “Être vu à table. Théâtralisations du repas et de la nourriture à la fin du Moyen Âge,” *Être à table au Moyen Âge*, ed. Nelly Labère (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2010), 93–102.
  17. Another clue points towards a re-use by the eighteenth-century printers of some of the original editions by Gomont. Another title in his catalogue, *La source du gros fessier des nourrices*. . . (Rouen: Jean Lhomme for Yves Gomont, s.d.), was also re-edited in that period, but all the publishers misread the name of the bookseller on the title page as Bomont, because the gothic capital G looks like a B to the modern eye. The first eighteenth-century publisher to re-edit the text must have made the mistake because he read and copied the text directly from the gothic Gomont edition.
  18. These books were literally “used to death,” to borrow the expression coined by Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011) [first edition: 2010], 333.
  19. See Malcolm Walsby, “La Survie improbable: les livres sauvés par leur matérialité,” *La Revue de la BNU, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg* 21 (2020): 60–69; Jelle Koopmans, “Que sont les farces imprimées devenues?” *Histoire du livre. Scientific blog of the SBF (20-06-2020)*, <https://histoirelivre.hypotheses.org/6787>.
  20. Malcolm Walsby, *Entre l’atelier et le lecteur. Le commerce du livre imprimé dans la France de la Renaissance* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2021), chapter 6; Elizabeth Armstrong, *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System 1498–1526* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
  21. Malcolm Jones, “Rabelais and the Sylva Cunnorum (. . . Obscoenos Illos Pantagruellem, Sylvam Cunnorum . . .),” *Études rabelaisiennes* 35 (1998): 191; Peter Frei, *François Rabelais et le scandale de la modernité, Pour une herméneutique de l’obscène renaissant* (Geneva: Droz, 2015), 116–117 and 120–124.

22. Jelle Koopmans cites only one such case of a performance that was forbidden in Saint-Quentin in 1573 for this very reason, as compared with numerous examples of censored theatrical satires of the clergy: Jelle Koopmans, "Quand la farce fait scandale," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 25 (2013): 93–108.
23. *Index de Rome, 1557, 1559, 1564. Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente*, ed. Jesús Martínez de Bujanda (Sherbrooke: Éditions de l'Université de Sherbrooke, 1990).
24. Walsby, *Booksellers*, #2178; Picot, "Les Jean Petit." Picot conflates Jean II and Jean III.
25. Katell Lavéant, "Comment séduire son public? Stratégies commerciales des éditeurs et lectorats des livres joyeux au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Les Publics de la facétie (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles), Actes de la journée d'étude organisée par le projet Facéties (Labex OBVIL) le 1er juillet 2017*, eds. Louise Amazan and Marie-Claire Thomine, [http://obvil.sorbonne-universite.site/corpus/\\_proceedings/faceties\\_journee\\_2017\\_07\\_01/K-LAVEANT\\_publics-facetie-livres-joyeux.html](http://obvil.sorbonne-universite.site/corpus/_proceedings/faceties_journee_2017_07_01/K-LAVEANT_publics-facetie-livres-joyeux.html).
26. *Pronostication des cons sauvages*, explicit [l. A4 v].
27. Lavéant, "Comment séduire son public.;" Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les clercs de la Basoche et le théâtre comique (Paris, 1420–1550)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).
28. "Ces miens contracts pourront instruire et edifier ung jeune Notaire, sortant tout fraîchement de la premiere partie de la Grammaire [. . .] de dresser son stille en toutes sortes de contracts," in *Bredin le Cocu, Formulaire fort récréatif*, ed. Gabriel-André Pérouse (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009), 48; on Du Troncy, see the entry by Michèle Clément in *Écrivains juristes*, 400–403.
29. Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les clercs de la Basoche*, 156–172; Estelle Doudet, "Parodic Trials at the Parliament of Paris: Laughter, Rhetoric and the Shaping of Communities (15th c.)," in *Orateurs et rhétoriciens. Agir et former par la parole publique au seuil de l'Europe moderne (Pays-Bas / France, XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, <https://rhetor.hypotheses.org/27>.
30. On the generic character of Bontemps, often referred to as 'Roger', in joyful literature and especially drama, see Jelle Koopmans, *Le recueil de Florence. 53 farces imprimées à Paris vers 1515* (Orleans: Paradigme, 2011), 53–54.
31. On shaving one's lover's genitals to avoid lice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see for instance Russell Ganim, "The Destruction and Re-creation of Obscenity in Seventeenth-Century Pornographic Prints," in *Obscénités renaissantes* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 423–438.
32. *Bail notable et excellent*. . . , as printed in B.n.F., Res 8-Z-DON-594 (413, 6), l. Ci r.
33. *Pronostication des cons sauvages*, as printed in B.n.F., Res 8-Z-DON-594 (413, 7), l. Cviii v. The reference to sweating ('suerie') in the text is probably an allusion to the sweats provoked by the treatment of syphilis with mercury at the time, see Claude Quétel, "Syphilis et politiques de santé à l'époque moderne," *Histoire, économie et société* 3, no. 4 (1984): 543–556.