Louïze Labé Lionnoize: the making of an early modern author

Matilda Amundsen Bergström

Estant le temps venu, Mademoiselle, que les severes loix des hommes n’empeschent plus les femmes de s’apliquer aux sciences & disciplines: il me semble que celles qui ont la commodité, doivent employer cette honneste liberté que notre sexe ha autrefois tant désirée[...]

Since the time has now come, Mademoiselle, when men’s harsh laws no longer prevent women from applying themselves to study and learning, it seems to me that those who have the means should take advantage of this well-deserved freedom – so fervently desired by our sex in the past[...]1

In the preface to her first and only printed publication, the 1555 *Euvres de Louïze Labé Lionnoize*, Lyonnaise poet Louise Labé (1520/22–1555) wastes no time getting her message across. The text opens with the passage quoted above, challenging the ladies of Lyons to make the most of their newly acquired ‘honneste liberté’ by applying themselves to learning and, as the reader soon learns, to writing. What change is Labé referring to? What new set of norms was replacing the ‘severes loix’ that had previously constrained women?

Though it represents only a partial answer, with a word taken from today’s vocabulary one might reply: ‘market laws’. In the 1530s, French *imprimeurs* began printing books authored by living women for the first time.2 These books were not many – less than 0.2% of the sole-authored books printed in France during the sixteenth century. Labé’s was only the eleventh female author name (pseudonyms included) to appear on the title page of a print

---

1 Louise Labé, *Euvres de Louïze Labé Lionnoize* (Lyons: Jean de Tournes, 1555), 3. The translation is quoted from Louise Labé, *Complete Prose and Poetry: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. and trans. Deborah Lesko Baker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 43.

2 Leah L. Chang, *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 17–25. For the Lyonnaise bookmarket around 1550, see Natalie Z. Davis, ‘Le monde de l’imprimerie humaniste: Lyon’, in *Histoire de l’édition Française: Le livre conquérant – du Moyen Âge au milieu du XVIIe siècle*, ed. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier (Paris: Promodis, 1983), 255–77.

© 2020 The Authors. Renaissance Studies published by Society for Renaissance Studies and John Wiley & Sons Ltd

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and is not used for commercial purposes.
publication. 3 But nonetheless, by mid-century several French women – undoubtedly inspired by Italian precursors – had works printed. And they seem to have found an eager audience, with titles by authors such as Marguerite de Navarre and Hélisenne de Crenne reprinted multiple times. 4 At least in some contexts, a market was developing for women authors.

Being novel figures in the patriarchal world of print, female authors faced, and presented printers and booksellers with, new risks and opportunities. Therefore, it is unsurprising that in books penned by women, the paratextual ‘apparatus of authorship’, as Sarah C. E. Ross has aptly called it, was mobilized both to argue for women’s ability and right to write and publish, and to create an authorial identity in response to the critical, but also curious, horizon of expectation a woman in print could expect to face. 5 Labé’s self-authored preface, where she presents herself as an exemplary female author, is an excellent case in point that rightly has received a fair amount of scholarly attention. 6

However, the poet was not alone in creating the author figure ‘Louise Labé’. For, as Leah L. Chang has expressed it: ‘[A]uthorship emerges through a complex set of interactions between writers and book producers […] and at the intersection of the text and its material imprint’. 7 It was through the book Euvres, and the people who produced it, that Labé became an author. 8 How

3 The others were Christine de Pizan, Saint Bridget, Margaret of Austria, Anne de France, Margarite de Navarre, Hélisenne de Crenne, Jeanne Flore, Pernette du Guillet, Isabella Sforza, and Marie de Clèves.

4 Susan Broomhall, Women and the Book Trade in 16th Century France, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 94. In ‘Power through Print. The Works of Hélisenne de Crenne’ in Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563, ed. Susan Broomhall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018) and ‘Reading Women Writing. Female Readers and the Angoysses Douloureuses qui Procedent d’Amours (1538) by Hélisenne de Crenne’, The Modern Language Review, 108 (2013), 763–781, Pollie Bromilow discusses Crenne’s publishing strategies in a way that provides a useful counterpoint for this article.

5 On the ‘apparatus of authorship’, see Sara C. E. Ross, ‘Early Modern Women and the Apparatus of Authorship, Parergon, 29 (2012), 3. Examples of such texts are Marie Dentière, ‘Défence pour les femmes’ in Épistre très utile faîte et compoîse par une femme chrestienne de Tournoay from 1539, Antoine du Moulin, ‘Aux dames Lionnoises’ in Rymes de gentile, et vertueuse dame d. Pernette du Guillet Lyonnoise from 1545, and Catherine des Roches & Madeleine des Roches, ‘Épistre aux dames’ in Les Œuvres des Mesdames des Roches from 1579. The concept of a horizon of expectation is developed in Hans Robert Jauss, Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1967).

6 See Christine Clark Evans, ‘The Feminine Exemplum in Writing: Humanist Instruction in Louise Labé’s Letter Preface to Clémence de Bourges’, in Louise Labé 2005, ed. Beatrice Alonso and Eliane Viennot (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005); Deborah Lesko Baker, Subject of Desire: Petrarchan Poetics and the Female Voice in Louise Labé (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996); and Kirk Read ‘Louise Labé in Search of Times Past. Prefatory Strategies and Rhetorical Transformation’, Critical Matrix. Princeton Working Papers in Women’s Studies (1990).

7 Chang, Into print, 19.

8 Mireille Huchon argues that Labé did not write the Euvres, but that the author figure is a ‘hoax’ construed by male, Lyonnaise poets. Mireille Huchon, Louise Labé: Une créature de papier? (Genève: Droz, 2006) and Le Labérynette (Genève: Droz, 2019). A will proves the existence of the historical person ‘Loyse Charlin, dite Labé’ but it is not certain that she wrote the poems in the Euvres – something which could be said for a great many sixteenth-century poets. However, Huchon provides no solid evidence that she did not. Furthermore, that Labé is included in François Grude’s 1584 bibliographical work Bibliothèque du sieur de La Croix du Maine – which, for example, known pseudonym Jeanne Flore is not – indicates she was at least believed to be the Euvres’ author by contemporary readers. For a more developed, critical assessments of Huchon’s argument, see Nancy Frelick, ‘Gender, Transference and the Reception of Early Modern Women: The Case of Louise Labé’, L’Esprit Créateur, 60 (2020), 17–20 and Daniel Martin, ‘Louise Labé est-elle une “créature de papier”?’, Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance, 63 (2006), 7–37.
did that fact impact the poet’s authorial identity? I will attempt to answer that question by unpacking the ‘complex set of interactions’ shaping three of the book’s unsigned peritexts: the title page, the royal privilege and a celebratory poem.  

More clearly than the preface, these peritexts – which have never been analysed together – cater to various interests and agents, making them specifically salient examples of the multifarious ‘apparatus of authorship’. In addition, as ‘thresholds of interpretation’, to use Genette’s term, the peritexts are designed to address the concerns and interests of potential readers. For those reasons, I suggest that they represent crucial, though often neglected, building blocks of Labé’s authorial identity.

Labé’s *Euvres* was the first book by a named, living, non-royal woman, and the first Petrarchan sonnet cycle by a woman, to be printed in France. It represented virgin territory. By exploring how that territory was navigated, we can appreciate how the ‘apparatus of authorship’ was put to use against a backdrop of early modern ideas of gender and authorship, with the goal of promoting the author Louise Labé to an audience still new to the idea of a woman author. Through such an analysis, we can gain a deeper understanding of Labé’s authorial identity, her strategies of self-presentation, and the reception of her work. We can also better understand how the ‘apparatus of authorship’ made use of, and was used, in relation to a new and sensational figure on the sixteenth-century book market: the woman author.

**PRINTING THE EUVRES**

The *Euvres* were printed by the highly esteemed Lyonnais marchand imprimeur Jean de Tournes (1504–64) in August 1555 and was undoubtedly presented to readers and buyers in his combined printing workshop and bookshop. Printed in octavo and comprising 175 thoughtfully but simply designed pages, the edition comes across as modest but well-crafted. Tournes has employed several types, ornamented the volume with small fleurons and decorated initials, and framed the title page with a beautiful floral pattern. In comparison to contemporary titles in the printer’s catalogue, consisting primarily of illustrated Latin editions, the book is quite unassuming. However, one finds similar volumes

---

9 I use the term *peritext* as it is defined by Gerard Genette in *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 10, and qualified in relation to the Early Modern period in ‘Introduction’, *Renaissance Paratexts*, eds. Helen Smith & Louise Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

10 It was preceded by, for example, two anonymous volumes by Marie Dentière in 1536 and 1539, four by pseudonyms Hélisenne de Crenne in 1538, 1539 and 1540, eight by royal Marguerite de Navarre during the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s, and the posthumous publication of Guillet’s *Rymes* in 1545.

11 A. F. Johnson provides an in-depth discussion of Tournes’ titles in ‘Notice sur le caractères d’imprimerie de Jean I de Tournes’, in *Bibliographie des Éditions des de Tournes, Imprimeurs Lionnoises*, ed. Alfred Cartier (Paris: Éditions de Bibliothèques Nationales de France, 1937), 52–63. For Tournes’ catalogue 1542–64, by genre and language, see Davis, ‘Le monde de l’imprimerie humaniste’, 266.
from the earlier years of his career – such as the 1545 edition *Rymes de Gentile, et Vertueuse Dame d. Pernette du Guillet Lyonnoise* – and many comparable, contemporary collections of French poetry produced by other printers.

The typography and format signalled that the *Euvres* were aimed at a relatively wide audience reading for pleasure – *octavo* was a format associated with leisure rather than scholarly reading. The format can also be related to gender. For a woman of Labé’s social standing making her debut, anything but a small format would have seemed inappropriately ambitious. However, simply by their very existence, the *Euvres* must have come across as audacious. Though scholars have attempted to elucidate how Labé managed to venture into print, the question of what print entailed for her authorial identity remains to be answered.

For a woman author, printing was not without risks. Throughout the early modern period, a connection between ‘revealing’ one’s thoughts in text and ‘revealing’ one’s body sometimes served to sexualize female authorship. This connection was exacerbated in print, that held the potential to ‘reveal’ a woman’s writing to a larger, socially mixed group of people in return for money, making her a *fille publique* in all senses of the word. In addition, to present one’s writings so publicly might easily be considered unvirtuously immodest – both because it was remarkable for a woman to do so and because silence was a crucial aspect of a woman’s virtue.

Such considerations may explain why no other woman active in Lyons’ literary circles had their works printed – excepting Pernette du Guillet, whose poetry was printed posthumously. However, after the extraordinary exemplar Marguerite de Navarre, women authors could hardly be dismissed as unacceptable in France. And from a marketing perspective, the *risqué* con-

---

12 On the *octavo* format, see Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers, and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 126–9.

13 As a case in point, Crenne’s first three books were printed in *octavo*, while her final publication, a translation of the first four songs of the *Aeneid* and the pinnacle of her career, was printed in folio. However, Broomhall has noted that most sixteenth-century women’s works were printed in smaller formats. *Women and the Book Trade*, 110.

14 Bromilow makes the same case in relation to Crenne in ‘Power through Print’, 287–90.

15 The most compelling being François Rigolot, ‘Paratextual Strategy and Sexual Politics. Louise Labé’s *Oeuvres lyonnaises*’ in *Book and Text in France 1400–1600. Poetry on the Page*, eds. Adrian Armstrong and Malcolm Quainton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

16 Broomhall, *Women and the Book Trade*, 73.

17 Broomlow, 288.

18 Michèle Clément mentions Jeanne Gaillarde, Claudine and Jeanne Scève, Claude Peronne, Jacqueline de Stuard, Marguerite de Bourg and Claude de Bectone, all of whom seem to have only published in manuscript (or anonymously in anthologies), in ‘Comment un nouveau champ littéraire est créé à Lyon: “En donnant lieu à la main féminine” (1530–1555)’, in *L’Émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon à la Renaissance 1520–1560*, eds. Michèle Clément and Janine Incardona (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2006).

19 Éliane Viennot has argued for the importance of Marguerite de Navarre in changing the general French attitude towards women authors in ‘La diffusion du féminisme au temps de Louise Labé’, in *Louise Labé 2005*, eds. Béatrice Alonso & Éliane Viennot (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005), 33f.
notations of a woman in print were not necessarily problematic. In the competitive early modern French book market, some printers seem to have specialized in texts by women. Denys Janot, who published four titles by Crenne in the 1530s and 40s, pioneered the practice, with Tournes following suit in Lyons with printed editions of Guillet, Marguerite de Navarre and Labé in the 1540s and 50s. As Chang has pointed out, this suggests that female-narrated poetry and women authors appealed to popular taste, most likely because of rather than despite the nouveauté they represented.\(^{20}\) In addition, women authors could play a part as ‘living proof’, so to speak, in the querelle des amyes – the 1540s and 1550s querelle des femmes outburst that was initiated by Marguerite de Navarre and engaged many French intellectuals in the years preceding Labé’s *Euvres*.

Against that background, the potential scandal of Labé’s *Euvres* would rather heighten than lessen readers’ interest. Yet, it is unlikely that the printed edition of the *Euvres* was considered a breach of decorum. A respected, humanist printer like Tournes was not one to publish scandalous bestsellers and had no reason to print something that might have a detrimental effect on his reputation. Likewise, we can assume that Tournes’ name functioned as a sign of approval protecting Labé’s reputation from being called into question by print publication. Despite the sexual connotations sometimes attributed to print, the circumstances surrounding the publication of Labé’s *Euvres* tells us that the book, and its author, undoubtedly came across as bold and intriguing, but not as a succès de scandale.

Print was not only a meaningful aspect of Labé’s authorial identity in relation to gender. Print befitted a Lyonnaise poet – the city was renowned for its printing shops – as well as one of Labé’s social standing. Being exclusive and expensive, manuscript remained a preferred mode of publication for learned elite authors and courtly circles throughout the sixteenth century. The printed book, instead, became associated with professional authors writing for larger segments of readers.\(^{21}\) This division seems to have applied to women as well. As Pollie Bromilow has pointed out, most courtly women – with the important exception of Marguerite de Navarre – published primarily or exclusively in manuscript.\(^{22}\) Print emphasised Labé’s humble status as part of Lyons’ commercial bourgeoisie, which I suggest had special allure for the poet’s Lyonnaise readership.

The social structures of Lyons differed significantly from those of the capital. In the absence of university, royalty, and high nobility, wealthy tradesmen

\(^{20}\) Chang, *Into Print*, 37–44.

\(^{21}\) See, for example, Alain Viala, *Naissance de l’écrivain: Sociologie de la littérature à l’âge classique* (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1985), 178–185 and Bromilow, ‘Power Through Print’, 287f.

\(^{22}\) Bromilow, ‘Power Through Print’, 287f.
and craftsmen fashioned a vibrant intellectual and cultural milieu. The citizens of Lyons, it is often argued, distinguished themselves from their Parisian counterparts by cultivating a liberal worldview, allowing a degree of interaction across class and gender borders. Labé, the daughter and wife of rope makers, exemplifies such liberalism, as the *Euvres* – published by the most esteemed printer in the city – testify to her connections with Lyons’ cultural elite.

Given the book’s appeal as a sign of their own cultural uniqueness, it is reasonable that the Lyonnaise readership would have been specifically appreciative of a print publication by a Lyonnaise, bourgeois woman author. In addition, several women poets who were celebrated in the Italian literary circles which Lyons’ learned elite sought to imitate and compete with – such as Vittoria Colonna (1490–1547) and Gaspara Stampa (1523–1554) – were published in print during the 1540s and 1550s. That provided Tournes and Labé with a context of cultural and patriotic competition, as well as with printed precedents.

Print emphasized the subversiveness and nouveauté aspects of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’, as well as her difference from Parisian, courtly women writers, and her similarities to Italian poets such as Stampa. Though books by women had been printed in Paris too – notably Janot’s editions of Crenne’s works – printing the *Euvres* seems a very Lyonnaise thing to do, and doing it made Labé appear as a quintessentially Lyonnaise writer. Nevertheless, by appearing in print Labé was sure to raise eyebrows as well as questions. To persuade potential readers to become actual ones, those questions needed to be addressed in the book’s peritexts.

**BECOMING LOUIZE LABÉ LIONNOIZE – THE EUVRES’ PERITEXTS**

With the exception of the prefatory epistle mentioned above, the peritexts included in the *Euvres* are (often unsigned) co-creations, bearing the mark and fulfilling the demands of multiple agents – such as the author, her printer, the censor in Lyons, and the poets who contributed to the volume’s collection of celebratory

---

23 As is described vividly in Huchon, *Louise Labé: Une créature de papier?*

24 See, for example, Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 155–6, and Rigolot, ‘Paratextual Strategy and Sexual Politics’, 166.

25 One example of the Lyonnaise pro-woman sentiment is Claude de Taillemont’s 1553 treatise *Discours des Cahmps faiz, à l’honneur et exaltation de l’Amour et des Dames*, printed in Lyons (though not by Tournes). The process through which women authors seem to have become an important part of Lyons’ cultural identity is explored thoroughly in Clément ‘Comment un nouveau champ littéraire est créé à Lyon’.

26 Six editions of Colonna’s poetry were printed between 1538 and 1556, while Stampa’s poetry was printed posthumously in 1554. On the Italian context, see Virginia Cox, *Women’s Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 64–120. On the Italian influence in Lyons, see Jacqueline Boucher, *Présence italienne à Lyon à la Renaissance: du milieu du xve à la fin du xvie siècle* (Lyons: Éditions LUGD, 1994).
poems. All peritexts do, however, have one thing in common. They all contribute to the presentation and marketing of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’.\(^{27}\)

From a marketing perspective, the most crucial peritext was doubtlessly the title page, which was usually designed by the printer – sometimes in collaboration with the author and/or other agents. From 1551, all books published in France must include an author name and an imprint stating the printer’s name and hometown on the title page.\(^{28}\) Besides containing such mandatory information, an early modern title page – like today’s book cover – served most importantly as a marketing tool aimed at convincing potential readers to read. With a few short declarations enclosed by an ornate frame, the *Euvres*’ title page should convince anyone who picked up the book to buy and read it.

The frame visually connects Labé’s book to other similarly adorned titles both in Tournes’ catalogue and in general, and the title *Euvres* – the largest word on the page – immediately informs the reader that this is a fairly ambitious edition of collected works.\(^{29}\) As a title for a debut collection, *Euvres* may seem like an odd choice, as it presents Labé’s debut as her final, finished works. It may suggest that Labé’s works were known to the Lyonnaise readership through manuscripts, though no such documents are known today. However, the most eye-catching aspect of the title page is not the title, but rather the author’s name: ‘Louïze Labé Lionnoize’.

Printed on a separate line equalling the title *Euvres* in length, with ‘Lionnoize’ printed below in slightly smaller type, Labé’s name is given an unusually prominent place on the title page. Such a layout differs from the common practice of printing each line on the title page in decreasing length and type, making the author’s name relatively small. For example, on the title pages of Guillet’s *Rymes* (1545), Clément Marot’s *Oeuvres* (1546), and Marguerite de Navarre’s *Marguerites de la Marguerite* (1547), all printed by Tournes, the author’s name appears in much smaller print than the title. On the title page of Tournes’ edition of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* from 1545, on the other hand, the author’s name is given a prominent place on the title page, suggesting the strategic considerations involved in choosing the size of an author’s name. Labé’s name would not have featured so prominently on the page had it not performed an important function in marketing the book and its author. What was that function?

\(^{27}\) This ‘apparatus of authorship’ is the focus of Huchon’s *Le Labérynthe*. However, excepting the celebratory poems, Huchon contributes little original research or analysis about the texts discussed here, but rather uses them to argue that the author figure ‘Louise Labé’ was a hoax.

\(^{28}\) Michèle Clément and Edwige Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices en France (XVIe-XVIIe s.)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, coll. Textes de la Renaissance, 2017), 11f.

\(^{29}\) Interestingly, Tournes will use the same frame for Pontus de Tyard’s *Discours du temps, de l’an et ses parties* in 1556, thus typographically connecting the two books. The title *Euvres* was relatively new, though already popular. Most commonly it was used for posthumous publications, such as Tournes’ edition of Clément Marot’s *Oeuvres* printed in 1546. But it was also used for collected editions of living authors’ previously published works, such as the 1538 edition of Marot’s *Oeuvres*, and Crenne’s *Oeuvres* printed in 1543.
Before noticing the name, a sixteenth-century reader was likely to observe what did not come before it: extraordinarily enough ‘Louïze Labé Lionnoize’ is not preceded by any version of ‘dame’. On the title pages to all other works by women printed in France until 1555, the authors were introduced with titles such as dame, madame, mademoiselle, princesse or reine.\(^{30}\) To choose an illuminating example from Tournes’ catalogue, Guillet is presented as ‘[La] Gentile, et Vertueuse Dame d. Pernette du Guillet Lyonnaise’ on the title page of *Rymes*, both title and two adjectives underlining her respectability. ‘Louïze Labé Lionnoize’ on the other hand, is written without such epithets – something which had hitherto been an exclusively male practice.\(^{31}\)

Michèle Clément interprets this remarkable choice as an attempt to critique the period’s gendered notion of the author, connected to the ongoing *querelle* and to Labé’s preface. She argues that by excluding ‘dame’, Labé and/or Tournes (and/or whoever else contributed to the title page) allow name to take precedence over gender, tacitly questioning the relevance of gender markers on a title page.\(^{32}\) This is certainly a possibility which resonates well with the pro-women ideals that, if texts like Claude de Taillemont’s 1553 treatise *Discours des Cahmps faëz, à l’honneur et exaltation de l’Amour et des Dames* are anything to go by, permeated the circles Tournes and Labé moved in.

However, it seems odd that the creators of the title page should wish to de-emphasise Labé’s gender, considering how important the poetic speaker’s female nature is throughout the *Euvres*.\(^{33}\) The *Euvres* being the first French Petrarchan sonnet cycle written from a woman’s perspective, it seems more plausible that the author’s gender was seen as an important selling point. Therefore, I believe that the omission of ‘dame’ carries significance in other ways, related to the marketing of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’. Firstly, it highlights Labé’s relatively low social standing. As opposed to almost all other women who appeared in print in the mid-sixteenth century, she was not strictly speaking a dame – that is part of the nobility.\(^{34}\) Against the backdrop of my previous argument about Lyonnaise liberalism, it seems feasible that ‘dame’ was omitted to draw attention to Labé’s social standing, thereby appealing to readers from the commercial classes as well as liberal members of the social elite. Secondly, the removal of ‘dame’ suggests that Labé – a woman printing sensual poetry about a female lover – was no ‘dame’ in the

\(^{30}\) Michèle Clément, ‘Nom d’auteur et identité littéraire: Louise Labé Lyonnaise. Sous quel nom être publiée en France au XVIe siècle?’, *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, 70 (2010), 76f.

\(^{31}\) For example, on the title page of Tournes’ 1546 edition of Marot’s *Oeuvres*, the author is presented as ‘Clément Marot, de Cahors’.

\(^{32}\) Clément, ‘Nom d’auteur et identité littéraire’, 85.

\(^{33}\) An example is sonnet II, where the poetic speaker calls herself a ‘femelle’.

\(^{34}\) However, those few female names that were not noble were given the title ‘madame’. For example, on the title page of *Comptes amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore, touchant la punition que fait Venus de ceux qui contem- nent & n’apprécient le vray amour* from 1531, pseudonym Jeanne Flore, whose name does not indicate her as part of the nobility, is called madame.
moral sense of the world. As such, the exclusion of ‘dame’ serves to raise readers’ curiosity about the poetry to come.

It seems likely that the omission of ‘dame’ was not only a political point, but a marketing strategy aimed at making the title page eye-catching and fascinating, and at highlighting the new and potentially scandalous aspects of Labé’s authorial identity. Still, the omission of ‘dame’ cannot have been a major transgression – as previously mentioned Tournes would have little incentive to create a succès de scandale. Rather, I argue that this was a marketing strategy meant to both intrigue and speak to current debates about female authorship.

The same can be said for the author name ‘Louïze Labé’, which was clearly strategically chosen. The person usually considered the writer of the Euvres was called Louise Charly, Labé being her father’s business name. Why reuse it as an author name? Because, I suggest, ‘Labé’ could better capture the attention of potential readers. In an analysis of Labé’s sonnet cycle, François Rigolot links the poet’s name to the Latin word labia, lips, arguing that the name was a play on words pointing to kissing – or passionate love – as one of Labé’s major poetic themes.35 To elaborate on Rigolot’s analysis, and connect it to the title page, I want to add that ‘lips’ also alludes to speech. The creation of a female poetic voice, and the multifaceted connections between love and speech, are other, arguably even more central themes in Labé’s poetry – themes that also underpin the writer’s preface. Thus, through its etymological closeness to ‘lips’, the name ‘Labé’ draws attention to the aforementioned association between a woman’s speech and her sexuality, hints at some of the Euvres’ central themes, and contributes to an image of the poet as both lover and lyricist, which will be developed in the poetry. In addition, the alliterating ‘Louise Labé’ resembles Laura, encouraging readers to link Labé to Petrarch’s famous beloved.36 At the same time, ‘Labé’ is a well-known Lyonnaise business name that firmly anchors the author geographically and socially. ‘Louise Labé’ is, quite simply, a perfect name for the first French woman to print a Petrarchan sonnet cycle in Lyon.

The exclusion of ‘dame’ and the name ‘Labé’ both accentuate the extraordinariness of the poet. The epithet ‘Lionnoise’ on the other hand, mitigates Labé’s uniqueness by embedding her in a specific Lyonnaise, literary context. Rigolot has argued that this context was crucial for Labé’s authorial identity, as it served to connect her to a circle of Lyonnaise writers gathered around Maurice Scève, and to bolster the image of her as a

35 François Rigolot, ‘Signature et signification: Les baisers de Louise Labé’, Romanic Review, 75 (1984), 15.
36 The link between Laura and Labé is made explicit in a few of the celebratory poems, such as one by Jacques Peltier du Mans. Rigolot has expanded on the connection in ‘Redonner un voix à Laura’, Louise Labé Lyonnaise ou la Renaissance au féminin (Paris: Champion, 1997).
poet of love by alluding to Lyon’s ancient history as a site for a cult of Venus.\textsuperscript{37}

This account, however, is hardly exhaustive. In 1555, the ancient history of Lyons was certainly alive, but the city was also a modern cultural centre priding itself with liberal ideals. As mentioned above, these seem to have included an appreciative attitude towards – and a desire for – learned women, driven by the ongoing \textit{querelle} as well as by cultural competition with Paris and northern Italy. In that context, I contend that the epithet ‘Lionnoize’ was meant to allude to a pre-existing idea of admirable Lyonnaise, learned women epitomized in a group of characters that feature throughout the \textit{Euvres}: ‘les dames Lyonnaises’. This, real or fabricated, group of learned women was originally introduced in Guillet’s \textit{Rymes} in 1545, where the book’s editor Antoine du Moulin explains how a ‘Climat Lionnois’ has given rise to a group of women of great literary talent and learning. He celebrates learned, writing women and their contributions to the glory and repute of the city.\textsuperscript{38}

Rather than connecting her to a circle of male poets, I would thus argue that ‘Lionnoize’ ties Labé to an esteemed (though possibly fabricated) group of Lyonnaise female writers. The word links Labé to her forerunner Guillet, who is given the same epithet on the title page of \textit{Rymes}, and alludes to Moulin’s preface, which is a pre-existing defence of Lyonnaise women writers. As such, the word ‘Lionnoize’ signals that Labé is both acceptable and interesting as one of several examples of the woman friendly ‘Climat Lionnois’, and that the Lyonnaise readership finally can boast with having their own great female poet.

Early modern women authors were often portrayed as singular, isolated, and extraordinary.\textsuperscript{39} The reference to Lyons on the title page of the \textit{Euvres} has the opposite effect – it integrates Labé in a cultural context, relating her to predecessors and contemporaries. Thereby, it was sure to raise her appeal for all readers who identified themselves as part of the same Lyonnaise \textit{milieu}, as well as for those curious about it. In short, the author name ‘Louïze Labé Lionnoize’ seems designed to raise curiosity, bestow authorial authority, hint at the poetical contents of the \textit{Euvres} and embed Labé in a specific cultural context. It is a great piece of marketing.

Below ‘Louïze Labé Lyonnaise’, in smaller print, there is another name: Jean de Tournes. The printer’s name arguably plays an equally important part in embedding Labé in the Lyonnaise cultural context as the epithet ‘Lionnoize’. Furthermore, it specifies that the poet was part of, and approved

\textsuperscript{37} François Rigolot, ‘Louise Labé et les “Dames Lionnoises”: Les ambiguïtés de la censure’, in \textit{Louise Labé 2005}, eds. Béatrice Alonso and Éliane Viennot (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005), 59.

\textsuperscript{38} Moulin, ‘Aux dames Lionnoises’.

\textsuperscript{39} Broomhall, \textit{Women and the Book Trade}, 75.
by, the city’s humanist elite – a source of both authority and curiosity. Like Janot’s name functioned as a sign of quality legitimizing the unknown Crenne’s works 15 years prior, Tournes’ name on the title page assured potential readers that the *Euvres* were not only acceptable, but admirable.\(^{40}\) It also connected Labé to other poets who had worked with Tournes – such as Marot, Tyard, Scève and Taillemont – thus prefiguring the celebratory poems included at the back of the volume. These were impressive names. But surprisingly, at the very last page of the *Euvres* a peritext is put to use to highlight Labé’s authorial independence in relation to all these writers, and all agents involved in the production of her book: the ‘privilege du Roy’.

The French book-privilege system dates from the early sixteenth century, when the ‘privilege du Roy’ was introduced as a legal document protecting the publisher’s investment by granting exclusive rights to print for a set time period.\(^{41}\) It was usually sought by a printer and/or bookseller, but we know of around 200 privileges sought by authors throughout the century, with writers such as Marot, Pierre Ronsard and François Rabelais requesting privileges to better control the publishing and diffusion of their texts.\(^{42}\) Tournes held the privileges for the majority of titles in his catalogue. But there are exceptions, two of which are specifically interesting: Marguerite de Navarre’s *Marguerites de la Marguerite* and Labé’s *Euvres*. These were the first two privileges to be granted to women in France, making Labé the second woman, and the first non-royal woman, to be awarded a royal privilege.\(^{43}\)

Labé’s ‘privilege du Roy’ might seem like a legal document not worth much attention in a literary analysis – and it has in fact rarely been studied.\(^{44}\) Yet, the privilege is the most unique text of the *Euvres* and, I suggest, essential in relation to Labé’s authorial identity. Not only does the privilege communicate Labé’s remarkable level of legal, financial and textual control – in short,

---

\(^{40}\) Bromilow, ‘Power Through Print’, 300.

\(^{41}\) Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, 10ff. Elizabeth Armstrong outlines the history of the privilege system in *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System 1490–1526* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), 7–10.

\(^{42}\) Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, 8. Marot requested the privilege for the 1539 edition of his *Oeuvres* and Rabelais for the 1546 edition of his *Tiers Livre*. Like Labé, both claimed to wish to avoid erroneous copies being made by other people. Ronsard’s privilege for his *Le bocage* from 1554 famously, and unusually, claims the author’s right to supervise the printing process to ensure correctness. An overview over authors’ rights is given in Laurent Pfister, ‘Authors and Work in the French Print Privileges System’ in *Privilege and Property. Essays on the History of Copyright*, eds. Ronan Deazly, Martin Kretschmer and Lionel Bently (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), pp. 115–36.

\(^{43}\) Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, 160.

\(^{44}\) The exception is a short but thorough comment by Clément and Keller Rahbé in *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, their anthology of sixteenth-century privileges. The privilege is also discussed by Huchon in the chapter ‘Avec Privilège du Roy’, *Le Labérynth*, where she argues that the privilege was not in fact sought by Labé. However, Huchon presents no more conclusive evidence than deeming Labé’s case too remarkable to be possible. Clément and Keller-Rahbé find her thesis ‘peu probable’ (Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, p. 161), and I agree. A thorough critique of Huchon’s claim about the privilege, as it is similarly presented in *Louise Labé: Créature de papier?* is given in Jean-Paul Barbier-Mueller, ‘Ne vouloir rien fors que toi comprendre: Défense et illustration de Louise Labé’, *BHR*, 77 (2015) 7–42.
authority – over her works to her readers. This decidedly rhetorical text also expounds Labé’s reasons for publishing, thereby adding another layer to the poet’s authorial identity.

As Clément and Edwige Keller-Rahbé have pointed out, the privilege indicates that Labé contributed financially towards the *Éuvres*. Given the precarious position of women authors, it is surprising that a woman of Labé’s social standing could include a privilege issued to herself – a text revealing her to be involved not only in the literary but in the commercial aspects of her *Éuvres* – in a printed book. The possibility of its existence testifies to the pro-woman sentiment of 1550s Lyons. Through its sheer existence, the privilege showcases Labé’s literary (and commercial) ambition in ways that passively agreeing to have one’s works published by others would not. With it, the poet claims authority in her own name rather than by reference to influential protectors, in a way that has little precedence. Simply by being there, the privilege thus adds to the novelty, and subversiveness, of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’.

There are numerous possible reasons why Labé sought a privilege in her own name – not least textual control. I contend that one important such reason was the document’s marketing value, as it showcased Labé as extraordinarily independent and, in extension, as living proof of a woman’s ability to partake in what the poet, in her preface, refers to as ‘afaires domestiques que publiques’. The privilege is an extension of the argument for women’s rights to pursue literature and learning launched in Labé’s preface. As such it undoubtedly spoke to the Lyonnaise cultural elite.

The actual text of the privilege, probably written by the censor in Lyons, also anticipates Labé’s preface in its attempt to explain Labé’s reasons for printing the *Éuvres*. According to the text, the poet needed to print correct versions of her works since erroneous copies were circulating in manuscript. To ensure that these flawed versions never found their way into an unauthorized print publication, Labé supposedly felt it necessary to print correct versions of her texts herself. Such explanations are a standard feature, related to

45 Selected parts of the text reads: ‘Henri II, by the mercy of God King of France […] We have accepted our dear and beloved Louïze Labé’s, Lionnoises, humble request, which describes how she, long ago, composed a dialogue between Folie & Amour: together with several sonnets, odes and epistles, which some of her friends have continued to make public, masked and in erroneous versions, in different places. […] For that reason, let it be known: that we who look upon this request with friendly eyes have with our mercy given her privilege, licence and permission to print the works mentioned above, with the help of whichever printer she sees fit.’ Labé, *Éuvres de Louïze Labé Lionnoize*, 175. My translation.

46 On the literary, and varying, nature of the privileges, see Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, 8.

47 Clément and Keller-Rahbé, *Privilèges d’auteurs et d’autrices*, 160.

48 As is also argued in Broomhall, *Women and the Book Trade*, 119.

49 As Bromilow has pointed out, Crenne also has few male protectors (Bromilow, 289f). However, her books were published with privileges granted to her printer Janot.

50 In her preface, Labé writes: ‘I can do no more than urge virtuous ladies to raise their mind a bit above their distaffs and spindles, and to dedicate themselves to making the world understand that if we are not made to be in command, we nevertheless should not be scorned as partners, in domestic as in public affairs, by those who rule and demand obedience.’ Translation from *Complete Poetry and Prose*, 43.
the rhetorical imperative of humility, in prefaces as well as privileges throughout the century. Marot and Rabelais are among the authors who sought privileges for similar reasons, though in those cases it was a question of avoiding unauthorized copies of already printed works, rather than of manuscripts.

Like the title *Euvres*, the justification of Labé’s choice to print indicates that the poet was already known to (at least some) Lyonnaise readers through manuscript circulation. The story does, however, seem at odds with the image of Labé brought forth by the existence of the privilege. And interestingly, this account of erroneous copies only appears in the privilege – while defending her choice to print in the preface, Labé never mentions them. Thus, the censor’s story about Labé and the *Euvres* seems to somewhat contradict the one that the author herself, or whoever applied for the privilege, was creating by requesting a privilege in the Labé’s name. This might be a consequence of conflicting interests and beliefs. On the other hand, as Deborah Lesko Baker has pointed out, Labé’s preface is distinguished by concurrent boldness and humility. From that perspective, the ambiguous nature of the privilege is in line with a paradoxical aspect of Labé’s authorial identity that returns in other parts of *the Euvres*. It can quite possibly be related to the difficult balancing act of coming across as bold and intriguing, but not unacceptably scandalous.

The privilege states that Labé may choose any printer to publish the *Euvres*. As previously mentioned, the cooperation with Tournes was undoubtedly essential both for the success of the *Euvres* and for potential reader’s image of and interest for Labé. Yet to her readers, the poet appears unusually independent in relation to her printer, and in full control of her poetical works. To paraphrase the opening line of the *Euvres*’ preface, the privilege clarifies for all who read it that no ‘severes loix des hommes’ can stop the poet from publishing her writings. Through the privilege Labé presents herself as a perfect example of the traits she will later promote for all women. Thus, even this seemingly standardized text points to several of *Euvres*’ central themes and contributes in significant ways to the image of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’.

The same is more obviously true for the third and final peritext discussed here: a Greek ode that opens the collection of 24 celebratory poems included in the *Euvres* under the heading ‘Escriz de Divers Poëtes, à la Louange de Louïze Labé Lionnoize’. Some anonymous, some attributed to prominent Lyonnaise authors like Scève and Tyard, ‘Escriz’ calls forth the image of a community of poets and places Labé at the centre of this eminent literary circle. The poems, rich with wordplay and allusions to ancient culture, arguably serve more to display the rhetorical skill, learnedness, and wit of their authors, than to describe the woman they are celebrating. But nonetheless,

---

51 Lesko Baker, *Subject of Desire*, 5.

52 Huchon analyses several of the poems and the poet’s possible other interests in *Le Labérynthe*, the chapter ‘Laudateurs’. Unlike Huchon, I view the celebratory poems as ‘intersections’ of the interests of the poem’s authors, printer Tournes and author Labé.
I argue that they also play a part in marketing the author figure ‘Louise Labé’. Quite clearly, the poems function as a form of testimonials, verifying that Labé has impressed her Lyonnaise peers – as such, like Tournes’ name on the title page, the poems contributed to the acceptance of and interest for Labé. Though the number of celebratory poems in the *Euvres* is uncommonly high, the inclusion of such poems was a common marketing tool also used in, for example, Guillet’s *Rymes*. But more importantly, I suggest, through what these testimonials say, and how they say it, the poems contribute to Labé’s authorial identity in ways that both supplement and complicate the female author figure presented in other parts of the *Euvres*. This is especially striking in the Greek ode.

Naturally, the average Lyonnaise reader would not be able to read the ode. They would, however, have recognized the language as Greek – the tongue of ancient poets and present-day humanists. Why include a Greek poem in an edition aimed at a French-speaking readership? Chang has suggested that Tournes included the ode to promote his newly acquired Greek type and demonstrate his ability to work with the language. The argument is compelling and foregrounds another commercial aspect of the *Euvres*. However, in addition to promoting Tournes’ printing shop, the ode contributes to the promotion of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’.

The Greek poem alludes (truthfully or not) to Labé’s connections with the erudite readership that Tournes ordinarily served, and indicates that the poet is somehow associated with the humanist revival of ancient knowledge and literary styles of which Greek was a symbol. Such allusions would, I contend, have the power to intrigue both the wider, French-speaking audience for which Labé’s poetry seems aimed, and the learned elites who might not at first glance seem to be the *Euvres*’ intended readership. From that perspective, the ode served to widen Labé’s potential audience. In addition, the ode – who must be the product of an exceptionally learned man – further emphasised that tough representing something new and subversive, Labé was not a scandalous outsider but rather a part of Lyons’ learned elite. The poem, thus, contained a message even for those who could not read it.

In addition, for those who knew Greek, the poem introduced a crucial aspect of Labé’s authorial identity developed throughout her poetical works. In the poem’s first stanza, Labé is celebrated as the French heiress of Sappho. Through her, the ancient Greek poet’s voice who all thought defeated by

---

53 *Rymes* contains only four celebratory poems.
54 For an in-depth analysis of the ode, I refer to Tristan Vigliano, ‘Note sur l’ode Grecque à Louise Labé’, *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, 75 (2012), 191–7.
55 Chang, *Into Print*, 105–9.
56 In that way, the Greek ode has certain similarities with Crenne’s translation of the *Aenied*.
57 It is generally believed that the ode was written by Henri Estienne, printer of Sappho’s works. François Rigolot, ‘Louise Labé et la redécouverte de Sappho’, *Nouvelle Revue du Seizième siècle*, 21 (1983), 27–31.
time, sounds once again.\textsuperscript{58} This is certainly a powerful statement in 1555. Just one year earlier, Parisian humanist printer Henri Estienne printed Sappho’s fragment 31 for the first time, creating somewhat of a French Sappho craze.\textsuperscript{59} Against that background, figuring Labé as a ‘new’ Sappho was a daring marketing strategy certain to raise the curiosity of a humanist readership invested in the glory of French and ancient literature alike – in Lyons as well as in Paris.

Rigolot has argued that image of Labé as a ‘new’ Sappho was crafted by and for the Lyonnaise erudite elite, who strove to cast Labé in a role that, quite literally, contributed to bringing the ancient world to life.\textsuperscript{60} This is quite possibly the case, but I suggest that there is more to the link between Labé and Sappho, and that it was not only aimed at an erudite elite. Importantly, the idea of Labé as a ‘new’ Sappho is reiterated in French in the closing poem of ‘Escriz’, making it accessible for less learned readers. For them, it was arguably equally significant that Sappho connected Labé to the Italian poet Gaspara Stampa, who was celebrated as a ‘new’ Sappho in the posthumous publication Rime di Madonna Gaspara Stampa from 1554.\textsuperscript{61} Thus, the idea of Labé as the French Sappho was also appealing in relation to the above mentioned cultural rivalry between Lyons and Italy.

The idea of Labé as a ‘new’ Sappho, given prominent place in the first and last poems of ‘Escriz’, was clearly significant in relation to several types of cultural competition. What else might it mean for Labé’s authorial identity to be related to Sappho? Given Sappho’s popularity and exclusiveness as an ancient, woman poet, there was arguably no other exemplum that the poets praising Labé could have chosen. That does not mean, however, that Sappho was not meaningful. I contend that most importantly, Sappho made it possible for the poets behind ‘Escriz’ to praise Labé as a specifically female poet, admirable but incomparable to themselves.

As Broomhall has pointed out, male writers tended to situate women writers within a separate, feminine literary canon throughout the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{62} Against that backdrop, I want to add an important qualification with regards to the Lyonnaise, appreciative attitude towards women authors: these women tended to be admired as specifically female authors – different from, and often implicitly secondary to, the male counterparts who they were rarely compared to.

\textsuperscript{58} The ode is translated into French by Rigolot in Louise Labé, Oeuvres complètes, ed. François Rigolot (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 142f.
\textsuperscript{59} Joan DeJean, Fictions of Sappho 1546–1937 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 31f.
\textsuperscript{60} Rigolot, ‘Paratextual Strategy and Sexual Politics’, 174.
\textsuperscript{61} In a celebratory poem in Rime, Giulio Stufa calls Stampa ‘the new Sappho of our day’. On Stampa and Sappho, see Jane Tylus, ‘Naming Sappho: Gaspara Stampa and the Recovery of the Sublime in early Modern Europe’, in Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry, eds. Unn Falkeid and Aileen A. Feng (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015) 13–20.
\textsuperscript{62} Broomhall, Women and the Book Trade, 75f. Broomhall exemplifies with texts such as Marot’s Vraydisant advocate des Dames from 1530/35 and Jean Bouchet’s Tabernacle des illustres dames and Jugement poétique de l’honneur féminin from 1538. Another example is the gynaecei genre, popularized by Giovanni Boccaccio’s De mulieribus claris.
Labé provides an excellent case in point. Though she acts the same role in her sonnet cycle as Petrarch does in his, the poets of ‘Éscriz’ compare Labé to Laura, not to Petrarch’s male lover/poet. Put simply, the idea of a separate canon of women writers makes it possible to harmonize a growing interest in women authors with a basic understanding of women as artistically less capable than men.

To bring the argument back to Sappho, the idea of Labé as a ‘new’ Sappho serves to anchor Labé in such a separate, female literary tradition, going back to antiquity. The comparison with Sappho provides her admirers with the possibility to laud Labé as a specifically female poet, wonderful but incomparable to the male poets who contributed poems in her honour. In addition, Sappho represented the archetype of a woman poet, her poems the ur-examples of female-narrated love poetry. In a volume intent on intriguing readers by intervening in current ideas about female authorship, Sappho is a perfect exemplar, demonstrating the ancient history of women poets. And, not unimportantly, in addition to being known as an exceptional female poet, Sappho was known as an exceptionally passionate lover. Thus, the comparison implies that Labé is the poet’s heiress in both poetry and love – a suggestive compliment that would certainly capture the interest and imagination of the wider audience for which the poetry was intended.

To summarize, though the comparison with Sappho – meant to appeal to both an erudite and a less learned readership – accentuates the subversiveness of the author figure ‘Louise Labé’, it also mitigates that subversiveness by separating Labé from male contemporaries. Nevertheless, by establishing Sappho as a model for Labé’s authorial identity, the poets of ‘Éscriz’ introduced a powerful rhetorical tool that Labé could make use of in her poetry. However, to explore that potential, a prospective reader must have been persuaded by the peritextual ‘apparatus of authorship’ to become an actual one.

THE MAKING OF LOUÏZE LABÉ LIONNOIZE – CONCLUSIONS

Whether or not a potential reader of the Euvres became an actual one depended, at least partly, on the appeal of the book’s peritexts. What could be learned from these that might tempt a reader? Firstly, that Labé was rare, new, and intriguing. She was one of only a handful of women who had chosen to publish in print, and the first non-royal woman to do so with her own royal privilege. Hers was the first title page in France that introduced a female poet in the ‘male’ fashion, without titles like dame or madame. Secondly, the peritexts suggest that Labé was one of the admired, learned ladies of Lyons, that she was respected by cultured, influential men, and could contribute to the glory of Lyons in comparison to Paris, Italy and the ancient world. Thirdly, as a daughter of a rope maker turned poet, she seemed an excellent example of

63 DeJean, Fictions of Sappho 1546–1937.
64 François Rigolot, Louise Labé Lyonnaise ou la Renaissance au féminin (Paris: Champion, 1997), 34–7.
the liberalism of Lyons as well as of the arguments about female excellence brought forth by the pro-woman side of la querelle des femmes. And finally – she spoke with the voice of Sappho, the ancient poet and lover.

Labé, Tournes and all other agents involved in the production of the *Euvres* strove to present an image of the book’s author which persuaded people to read (and buy) it.65 They did so through a variety of means. In addition to hinting at the book’s central themes and topics, the peritexts’ authors made use of traditional, well tested rhetorical strategies such as evoking an ancient literary heritage, tying the author to a pre-existing literary context, and emphasizing the support of influential people. In addition, the people behind the book ventured more innovative strategies – most noticeably highlighting rather than downplaying the nouveauté of a woman bringing her literary goods to the (book)market, underscoring Labé’s humble origins and presenting her as a new Sappho. The latter was a rhetorical device that would come to be used throughout the early modern period.

There is no doubt that the *Euvres*’ peritexts can be productively connected to specific marketing strategies. A comparison to Guillet’s *Rymes* makes this clear. Formally, the two books are similar. Both are printed in the same format, by Tournes, and contain a collection of love poetry. Both open with a preface directed to the ladies of Lyons, and end with several celebratory poems. But as opposed to Labé’s title page, the title page of *Rymes* thoroughly underscores Guillet’s female respectability and modesty. And instead of a preface written by the poet, arguing that other women must follow her example, the reader of *Rymes* is faced with a text written by the book’s editor Moulin, describing Guillet as exceptional. *Rymes* was a posthumous publication, which meant that Guillet had not voluntarily exposed her works, and the book’s privilege was issued to Tournes.

That two such different methods of introducing Lyonnaise, female poets turned out to be acceptable and successful, is a sign of the dynamic nature of the emerging book market and of the period’s views on female authorship. Labé may have been overly enthusiastic in proclaiming all restrictive ‘severes loix des hommes’ a thing of the past. But she herself provides an excellent example of how flexible those laws could be for a woman author skilful and daring enough to appeal to the imagination, and purchasing power, of an expanding early modern French readership.

University of Copenhagen

---

65 Tournes printed two editions of the *Euvres*, the second in 1556, and only one pirated edition is known to have existed. This relatively modest number of editions suggest that the book, however intriguing its author may have been, was not a bestseller.