Aside from political tensions, the transcripts reveal that moral transgressions regulated in past years continued to abound in the Consistory. Readers will find countless stories (cases and rulings) on a myriad of sins, for instance fornication, adultery, clandestine engagements and marriages, and blasphemy. The editors have also provided invaluable information (in endnotes) on the socioeconomic identities of parties as well as the outcomes of cases. Finally, readers will benefit from a bibliography and extensive indices of geographic locations, case subjects, and names of individuals appearing before the Consistory.

The Consistory registers remain, and will do so for the future, an indispensable look into the private lives of early modern Europeans as well as the workings of a very important and influential religious institution. These transcripts raise important questions for historians and students, including the success and limits of the Protestant Reformation, the growth of church power, and gender and family relations.

Ronsard et le Livre: Étude de critique génétique et d'histoire littéraire, seconde partie, Les livres imprimés. François Rouget.

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In this programmatic heading, the term “genetic” pertinently echoes the gendered metaphor that, in early modern literary discourse, equates the natural process of giving birth to that of artistic creation. Indeed, Ronsard refers several times to his work as a “son” who, upon leaving the loving presence of the father, will have to confront the calumnies or incomprehension of the public. In the preceding volume (Droz, 2010), Rouget studied both the poet’s sources and the development of his manuscripts, whose numerous revisions reveal the creative gestation of the printed texts. This second part assesses how an increasingly sophisticated technology affects the nature of the writer’s work and how editorial practices also imply the professionalization of the “man of letters,” a category that Ronsard exemplifies. With remarkable erudition, Rouget demonstrates how the poet’s mythological commerce with the Muses is also a mercantile proposition requiring constant vigilance aimed at securing patronage and political protection in a troubled epoch. Ronsard’s craft fully partakes of a “mediatic” and ideological management of his textual offspring. The book convincingly argues that such managerial imperatives have a direct bearing on the facture of Ronsard’s literary oeuvres, a work in progress that the poet continues to nurture and refine through the succession of new editions that he strategically manipulates and amplifies throughout his career.

Initially Rouget investigates Ronsard’s interactions with the editors/booksellers responsible for the selection of material elements needed to enhance the reception of his books: binding, paper, typography, illustrations, errata, and commentaries. Ronsard undertakes his publishing career in 1560, with relatively slim volumes and smaller “plaquettes,” for which he contracts the services of nine successive libraires, who often provoke his dissatisfaction and rancor. In 1550, however, he begins an extensive and fruitful relationship with the reputable Gabriel Buon. Even after the poet’s death, Buon faithfully devotes his professional skills as printer and bookseller to the publication of the seventh edition of the poet’s collected works (1587). Throughout his work, Rouget employs these details and achieves a comprehensive review of a cooperation essential to the development of Ronsard’s literary and public persona, thereby illustrating aspects of literary history that are still little known.
The book then explores how the prefatory and less numerous postface pieces in Ronsard's publications construct a diachronically variable threshold to the six editions punctuating the poet's life. The liminal material includes the first page (with its prominent display of the printer's mark and name), the text of the official privilege that has been granted to the poet and/or the libraire, and a more or less abundant series of circumstantial pieces by diverse hands. The tenor of these texts, mostly in Latin and sometimes in Greek, is both hyperbolically encomiastic and strongly partisan, since they voice the support of a militant brigade endorsing the author's literary and politico-religious proclivities. They have a crucial function since they establish the first liaison of the text with its readers while shaping the audience's response. The metaphorical threshold they organize focuses the attention on Ronsard's arrogant yet justified claims to the noble title. In return, he somewhat sparingly contributes his own liminal tributes to their publications, an exchange benefitting all parties in their insistent search for fame and favor.

The book goes on to retrace Ronsard's carefully calibrated interventions in the shape and content of the successive versions of the collected works. The elimination of previous pieces and the evolving ordering of more recent ones testify to the poet's conception of a monumental literary palace designed to house his fame and that of an elite of writers and intellectuals, and to glorify his royal patrons. Scholars have often employed such architectural metaphors in attempts to grasp the overall structure of the changing avatars of the Oeuvres complètes. Rouget substantially furthers these endeavors through a meticulous reconstruction of the bibliographical data he has gathered in numerous years of research. In the process, he does not abandon the imagery related to the construction of dazzling edifices, which clearly represents the aristocratic aspirations of the epoch. However, he also focuses on the paradoxical nature of an unstable structure that transforms itself from edition to edition. In this regard, Ronsard's products reflect the period's hunger for Cornucopian artifacts that imitate the varietas of nature and resist the rigors of closure through an unrelenting aggregation of new materials.

In the second half of the French Renaissance, esthetics and ideology are often the two conflicted faces of the same coin, and Rouget's work never ceases to shuttle between one and the other pole of this determinant duality. The book addresses the poet's keen understanding of the interpretive consequences of addition and subtraction in an ensemble whose cohesion and solidity are often threatened both in esthetic and ideological terms. Ronsard must therefore rethink permanently how newer and older features of his work will find their appropriate supportive location in the recueil. He is especially haunted by the place that his intensely polemical work, such as the Discours des misères de ce temps and its continuations, should occupy in his oeuvre. In this context, Rouget emphasizes how the unfinished Franciade, although well-received in many circles, continues to plague the poet's aspirations to become the Gallic Virgil and paradoxically resists incorporation in the fold of his creations.

In this short space, it is impossible to give an adequate sense of the depth of the author's insights and methods, and to refer to all of the precious resources of a volume that will certainly be seminal to future Ronsard scholarship. The book's full and uniquely informed "bibliology" impressively reconstitutes the dynamic "graphic labyrinth" (143) that surrounds and intimately penetrates Ronsard's fluid yet lasting monument. At the same time, Rouget hands us a thread to navigate the interminable, wonderfully varied, and imaginative meanders so elegantly conceived by the Prince des poètes français.